



Soundwell Music Therapy Trust: Evaluation of Services 2015-2020

March 2021

Written by
Dr Helen Seers and Dr Marie Polley

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Disclaimer:

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Main contacts:

Helen Seers, helen.seers@gmail.com, Helen Seers Evaluation and Research Ltd

About Soundwell Music Therapy Trust:

Soundwell provides music therapy within the South West for adults whose lives are seriously affected by mental health issues. Soundwell supports people in their mental health recovery and provides emotional support to carers, using music to explore creativity, communication and expression.

About the authors

Dr Helen Seers, BSc, PhD, CPsychol, Director Helen Seers Evaluation and Research Ltd, Co-Founder Meaningful Measures Ltd.

Dr Marie Polley BSc, PhD, PGCertHE, Reiki Master, Director Marie Polley Consultancy Ltd, Co-Chair Social Prescribing Network, Co-Founder Meaningful Measures Ltd.

The evaluators contracted to carry out this work have key strengths in working with vulnerable people, such as young people, those with life threatening diseases or mental health issues. Dr Marie Polley and Dr Helen Seers have worked together as research, evaluation and audit specialists for over 15 years and have worked with the NHS, local authorities, VCSE organisations, sole practitioners, academic institutions and private organisations to support bespoke and meaningful data analysis.

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Executive Summary

Context: Mental health is a growing public health concern, and the need for effective treatments and support is paramount. Music therapy has been shown to be an effective treatment for some mental health conditions, resulting in several improved outcomes. Soundwell Music Therapy Trust was established in 2002 to provide community-based music therapy. Soundwell aims to improve outcomes for people whose lives are seriously affected by mental health issues, including those with complex mental health needs. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for Soundwell and its clients. Soundwell has adapted, however, to provide Covid-secure services to support people at this crucial time and the impact of these services is explored in this report.

Aim: The purpose of this external evaluation is to explore the impact of Soundwell Music Therapy Trust's music therapy services.

Methods: A mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative data collection was undertaken between 2015 and 2020; all Soundwell clients were invited to take part. Interviews were carried out with Soundwell staff and trustees, and one focus group was carried out with clients who are carers. Clients also provided feedback at the end of sessions via questionnaires, post-it notes, and open-ended feedback forms.

Findings:

The 'Soundwell Approach'

Through analysis of qualitative interviews with stakeholders and data from questionnaires with Soundwell clients, key principles that underpin the 'Soundwell Approach' emerged. Soundwell has created an almost unique approach to working with people who experience a range of mental health issues and have unmet needs. Whilst some situations are complex and severe, there is a deep understanding of the power of music to be a non-verbal means of expression, which can lead to some transformational results and, in some cases, prevention of loss of life. Other key principles included:

- The use of a psychodynamic approach in music therapy.
- Creating a safe and inclusive environment through room design, carefully thought through service provision, excellent governance and collaboration with community mental health service providers.
- Providing a broad range of good quality of instruments: communicating a sense of value to the client and options for how clients choose to express themselves.
- Not placing any expectation or demands on clients and allowing them to go at their own pace.
- Compassionate and caring therapists who care deeply about enabling clients to express themselves.
- The ability of Soundwell to collaborate with CMHTs and other organisations to reach client groups that are marginalised or out of contact.

Client Characteristics

Between 2015 - 2020, 890 people accessed Soundwell's services (462 outreach clients, 339 returning clients and 89 carers). Some clients had complex issues causing severe and long-term enduring mental health issues. Often clients had experienced trauma and often reported feeling depressed, anxious, hopeless, had difficulties with social interaction and were socially isolated. Some clients were carers and were frequently feeling isolated.

Client satisfaction

The vast majority of clients reported that they were extremely likely to recommend Soundwell to others (in the Friends and Family Test). Outreach clients and carers reported high levels of satisfaction for accessibility, feeling welcomed and helped, and enjoyment of the music and being with people.

Mental Health Levels

Soundwell's services support improvements in people's mental health. There were increases in all aspects of mental health measured by the Adapted WEMWBS (see glossary of terms) and there was a statistically significant improvement in these scores from first visit to final visit ($p < 0.05$) for clients returning to Soundwell. High ratings on the Adapted WEMWBS were also seen for outreach clients and carers.

Client experiences

Using a range of qualitative data, key themes in the benefits and experiences of clients emerged:

- Clients commonly reported making connections or reconnections to the music; musical connections to people; verbal connections with people. This is particularly important for Soundwell clients who often struggle to express themselves and experience a lot of isolation.
- Clients had improvements in emotional status and mood, e.g., feeling more relaxed and calmer after sessions. Other stakeholders corroborated the client reports of improved mood.
- Clients reported a range of benefits in their daily lives outside of Soundwell, e.g. developing coping mechanisms using music, joining new groups, and self-harming less.
- Some clients reported they would have attempted to take their own lives had it not been for music therapy at Soundwell.
- A proportion of Soundwell clients were able to get paid and unpaid work as a result of their therapy.
- Carers reported sessions to be safe, fun, enjoyable and a welcoming space. For carers, these music therapy sessions created a space to escape and focus on their own needs for a while.

Soundwell work in the era of Covid-19

The effect of the pandemic on clients, staff and community stakeholders was explored in the focus group and interviews.

- All the Soundwell staff felt it was a priority to continue to support their clients somehow, due to the potential impact of the national lockdown on their clients' mental health.
- Some clients reported that Soundwell was the only service to reach out to them during the pandemic.
- Soundwell chose to provide individual phone or Zoom group support or some outdoor sessions, and repurposed what could be offered to still enable aspects of music therapy to be provided.
- Clients have engaged with and enjoyed these services.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Soundwell promote the unique 'Soundwell Approach' (as described in this report) to working with people who experience a range of mental health issues, including those who have severe and enduring mental health issues, and have unmet needs.
2. Soundwell staff should review the positive learning and experiences from providing phone and Zoom services and integrate this to provide a mixture of face-to-face and remote services.
3. Soundwell to review the types of clients their services could cater for in light of the effects of the pandemic on mental health.
4. Soundwell staff focus on establishing or maintaining relationships with key professionals in local authorities, community mental health teams, primary care networks or clinical commissioning groups with a view to Soundwell being commissioned to be a local provider of high-quality support that meets the required governance needs to work with people with complex and enduring mental health needs.
5. Soundwell use its considerable experience to develop a Covid-specific service offer.
6. Soundwell explores ways to ensure marginalised BAME communities can both access services and engage with evaluation and equalities monitoring.

**“Deep down I really don't think I would be still living [without Soundwell].
Music here is a life saver.”**

Soundwell client

Introduction

Founded in 2002, Soundwell Music Therapy Trust aims to support and rehabilitate people experiencing emotional or mental distress due to mental health issues. Soundwell has created a unique approach to support people in their mental health recovery and provides emotional support to carers, using music to explore creativity, communication and expression. The evolving relationship with the music therapist is paramount and this distinguishes Soundwell in terms of providing music therapy instead of providing community music experience. Soundwell offers services that are weekly returning client groups, outreach groups (which can be one-off attendances) and sessions for unpaid carers. They also offer singing groups and a limited number of individual sessions (see Appendix A for full description of all of Soundwell's services and where they are run).

Psychodynamic Music Therapy at Soundwell

Soundwell's therapeutic model is under-pinned by a psychodynamic approach. Psychodynamic therapy is the psychological interpretation of mental and emotional processes¹. The goal of psychodynamic therapy is to bring internal unconscious conflicts to the conscious mind, to enable self-expression, self-awareness, and resolution of inner conflict.

Psychodynamic music therapy brings into the client's conscious, material from the past that has been repressed and kept in the unconscious which employs detrimental psychological effects on the present². The

relationship between the therapist and the client, mediated via the music (and, where appropriate, verbal interaction) is key to enable processing of the unconscious experiences. Music in the form of improvisation, listening, song writing or singing can be used to facilitate the therapeutic process and achieve goals. Music is the motivating and inspiring medium that draws people in and drives the process.



Soundwell's sessions put importance on the client's evolving relationship with therapists and other group members (supported by the therapy). In some groups past relationships are explored, particularly early relationships, as they form our patterns for relating with others. These relational patterns are often expressed primarily in the music that clients make, but also in the talking around the music and through gesture which can be picked up on and explored. Often, Soundwell staff have noted that this exploration leads to release, greater expression, reduced isolation, increased social confidence and better mood. It should be noted that this approach is different to community music and music groups due to the inclusion of the psychodynamic therapeutic approach.

A developing evidence base for the impact and effectiveness of psychodynamic music therapy exists. NICE currently recommends that arts psychotherapists are always considered for adults with psychosis to treat negative symptoms. NICE guidelines recommend the arts therapies, including music therapy, as a cost-effective treatment for schizophrenia and for depression³. Music participation itself is seen to support mental wellbeing⁴. Most recently, Lale and Ntourntoufis (2020)⁵ conducted a review of NHS data for service usage. They found that long-term individual music psychotherapy may be more useful and cost-

effective in comparison to normal mental health care. Their study found that by accessing the music therapy support early on the pathway for patients on the psychotic spectrum, financial savings in reduced hospital admissions and pharmacological support were recorded compared with normal care.

Reach of Soundwell

Up until recently Soundwell services have been run over a wide area in the South West including the whole of Wiltshire, and across Bath and North East Somerset to Weston-Super-Mare. During 2019-2020, however, Soundwell closed services in Wiltshire and Weston-Super-Mare, and focused on Bath and Bristol. Data in this evaluation covers the period of 2015-2020 and therefore includes clients from Soundwell's broadest operating area (See Appendix B for more details on the numbers of referrals per year and location).

Between 2015 and 2020, 890 people accessed Soundwell's services, (462 outreach clients, 339 returning clients, and 89 carers). The average for client attendance was 8.5 sessions (this was 6.3 sessions for carers). Referrals came from three routes:

- 45% from Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) mostly the recovery teams, but also rehabilitation and early intervention in psychosis team and some from inpatient settings;
- 38% from VCSE sector and support organisations;
- 17% were self-referrals or by family members.

Outreach clients come via several routes including self-referrals, GP referral, social prescribing link worker referral routes, or through attending a hosted support group at which Soundwell is present. Carers come from the same sources, as well as the Carers' Centres in Bristol and Bath.

Mental health support services and Covid-19

Covid-19 has had a devastating impact on the world since 2020. Mental health issues have been exacerbated, or even brought about by the pandemic's effect on society, and these problems will rise. Research has shown that people with psychosocial and health-related risk factors, as well as those with low socio-economic status, are most at risk of experiencing moderate or severe depressive symptoms during the Covid-19 pandemic⁶. A 2020 survey of 16,000 people from Mind has shown that more than two thirds of adults with pre-existing mental health problems reported that their mental health got worse during lockdown⁷. There have been moves by the UK government to fund more mental health services⁸. However, there is a rising tide of people with needs, and much more will need to be done, and the work of Soundwell is more important than ever.

Aim of this evaluation

The aim of this evaluation was to investigate the impact of Soundwell Music Therapy Trust's approach for people with often complex and severe mental health conditions.

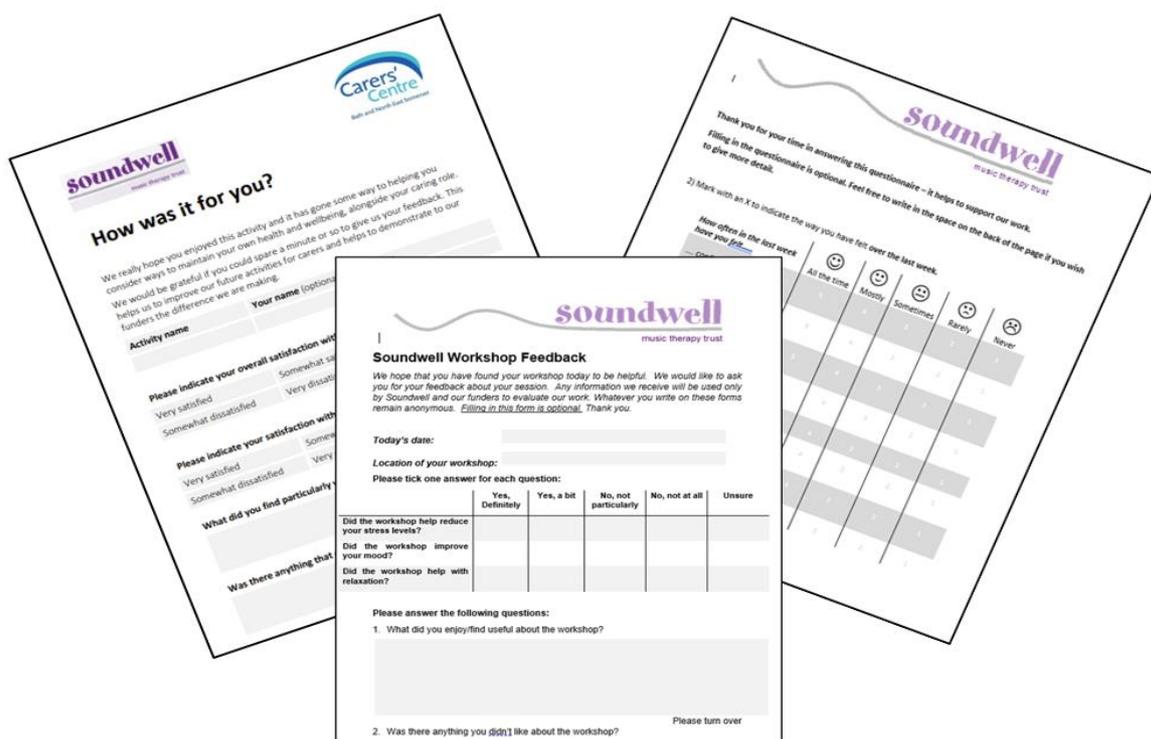
Specifically:

- the impacts and benefits in terms of mental health and wellbeing for clients attending Soundwell were explored;
- the impact that the recent Covid-19 pandemic, and how Soundwell's services responded to support people at this difficult time.

Methods

A mixed-methods approach was taken, gathering a range of data including monitoring data, questionnaires, interviews, and client feedback via post-it notes. Data was collected from Soundwell staff and trustees as well as four groups of people connecting with Soundwell services: Returning clients, Outreach clients, Carers, and Host organisations. Full details of the methods are in Appendix C.

Type of data obtained	Regular Returning Clients	Outreach Clients	Carers	Hosts	Soundwell staff/ trustees
Service Descriptives					
Service use data (numbers of users across time and location)	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Demographic data of clients	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs)					
Friends and Family Test (FFT) and satisfaction	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs)					
Adapted Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing (WEMWBS) Scale	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Stakeholder experiences					
Qualitative questionnaire data	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Post it informal data collection	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Interviews (3 Clients, 2 Carers, 2 Hosts and 3 members of Soundwell staff)					
Qualitative interview data	✓	X	✓	✓	✓



Examples of the questionnaires used in the evaluation

Findings

The findings are split into six parts, representing analysis of different types of data collected. Using different data sources to corroborate findings is an important approach when working with clients who are perhaps vulnerable and perhaps unable to take part in a formal evaluation using questionnaires or interviews.

- Part 1: Who seeks support from Soundwell and why.
- Part 2: The ‘Soundwell Approach’ to supporting clients and the principles that underpin this.
- Part 3: Satisfaction and outcomes data to understand how clients rate the service and aspects of their own health.
- Part 4: Measures of Mental Health Levels
- Part 5: Benefits and impact on clients’ mental health and their ability to engage in tasks of daily living.
- Part 6: The impact of Covid-19 on Soundwell services and clients.

Part 1: Who seeks support from Soundwell and why?

Demographics of clients were collected for: age, gender, sexual orientation, health status, ethnicity and caring duties). The most frequent demographic response is presented in the Table 1 below, to indicate the typical profile of each service user. A full breakdown of demographics is in Appendix D.

Demographic	Returning clients (% of sample of 77 respondents)	Outreach clients (% of sample of 178 respondents)	Carers (% of sample of 34 respondents)
Age	20-24 years old (25%)	35-44 years old (26%)	35-44 years old (64%)
Gender	Male (51%)	Female (58%)	Female (82%)
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual (95%)	Heterosexual (90%)	Heterosexual (100%)
Long term health condition – mental or physical?	Mental health condition (82%)	Mental health condition (73%)	Physical condition (68%)
Ethnicity	White British (89%)	White British (85%)	White British (64%)
Carer status	Not carer (94%)	Not carer (73%)	Carer (100%)

Table 1. Typical demographic profile of Soundwell clients

Further details on why clients come to Soundwell emerged during interviews with staff and trustees associated with Soundwell and from open qualitative questions on surveys given to all clients to complete.

Reasons why clients attend Soundwell:

“The people that come to us who feel most unwell will have a complex set of situations going on, so they will have normally had a very difficult life. There will probably always be some trauma in there or different episodes of trauma throughout their lives. Relationships might have been quite difficult from early on.”

Soundwell staff

When people arrive at Soundwell, they report a range of concerns which are related to mental health issues. Most frequently clients reported low moods or depression, anxiety, panic attacks, feelings of hopelessness and trouble interacting with other people.

“What is your main concern?”

“Anxiety, stress and panic attacks”

Soundwell client

“Feelings of despair and depression”

Soundwell client

Other issues reported by clients includes lack of confidence and self-esteem, obsessive compulsive disorder, social isolation, anger and being uncomfortable with the range of feelings they had inside themselves. A few people reported concerns related to trauma that they experienced in childhood.

“Communicating with other people, social isolation...”

Soundwell client

“Feeling anxious about decision making, linking back to childhood trauma...”

Soundwell client

A similar but more complex picture of the clients’ mental health is painted by the professional stakeholders in this project and demonstrates the challenge that clients present. Clients tend to present with severe and long-term enduring mental health issues. For example, clients may live with bipolar disorder or schizophrenia but manage in the community. Not all clients are people with long-term mental health issues, some people may have recently experienced their first psychotic episode or may belong to a specific group such as the carers’ group or the group for people with autism who also have a mental health need.

“Chances are that most of these people actually will have some level of mental distress , but they are managing it. And there are so many people that manage quite a high level of distress because the services are so stretched or because they have gone under the radar for whatever reason.”

Soundwell trustee

Within this complex picture of unmet needs, clients may have physical problems along with their mental health problems and have differing relationships with the ‘system’ and mental health services.

“Traditionally the clients we have worked with ... are well known in mental health services. But also it can be people who have fallen out of the system and who have fallen so far back that they have nowhere to go and are becoming extremely isolated.”

Soundwell staff



Stakeholders also reported that some clients have had traumatic backgrounds, leading to them being long-term users of mental health services.

“...people might come with not very much sense of identity or sense of self. This identity might be quite shattered by trauma and mental health issues...”

Outreach host/service provider

Some people might be in chaos and may be suffering from social issues and need support to help them connect with people around them.

“We became aware of a lot of people out there who were tremendously isolated. And we certainly had quite a few clients who wouldn’t leave the house more than twice a week - once to go shopping and once for them to come to Soundwell.”

Soundwell trustee

Carers:

Carers in particular experienced high levels of social isolation due to being full-time carers for another person, therefore limiting where and when they can go. This has become more evident due to the pandemic and Soundwell has been a consistent contact for them as they have had to move from in-person to online connections. Some carers have their own significant health needs which require attending to. Carers have cited a need to have a space to release feelings in a safe and supported space, where they can focus on themselves for a while; to remember who they are and to have a space to grow.

“Socially all the carers are isolated. So we miss friends. We miss relatives. Nobody wants to get involved with you because you have lots of problems.”

Carer

“I have so many illnesses, my immune system is below zero. ...So I had no contact with anybody... But no other people contacted me. It was only from this group. Which I highly appreciated.”

Carer

Part 2: What is the ‘Soundwell Approach’?

Through analysis of qualitative interviews with stakeholders and data from questionnaires with Soundwell clients, this section reports on the key principles that underpin the ‘Soundwell Approach’.

Many clients coming to Soundwell have severe and complex mental health situations. Soundwell has developed a very successful approach to supporting people and helping them express themselves through music. Whilst some situations are complex and severe, there is a deep understanding of the power of music to be a non-verbal means of expression, which can lead to some transformational results and, in some cases, prevention of loss of life. The approach developed at Soundwell is testament to the dedication of the staff, who understand and care deeply about their clients. Staff ensure that rigorous procedures are in place, that collaborations are developed with professionals in the community mental health teams and that clients are treated with compassion and sensitivity.

"... connections with the community mental health team and other referrers are really crucial, sometimes when someone becomes unwell, we have to be in touch with their referrer or their care coordinator... that kind of collaborative thinking about how best to support the person's well-being at that time is really helpful and important."

Soundwell staff



Theme 1: Integrating a psychodynamic approach into the service

The therapeutic approach at Soundwell is informed through the psychodynamic approach to music therapy (see introduction). There are a variety of therapeutic approaches that could be used, however the psychodynamic music therapy approach creates an environment conducive to clients engaging and expressing themselves.

"We had one student who was on placement and she trained already as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist ... and she was saying she couldn't believe how quickly the clients were able to get to the main issues. In her talking therapy, it would have taken weeks and weeks. I thought that was very interesting."

Soundwell trustee

As these clients are often very vulnerable, there are many processes Soundwell put in place to create a safe and inclusive environment. This is a key aspect to making clients feel supported and safe enough to engage with the music therapy. Establishing a therapeutic relationship with clients begins prior to them coming to the groups at Soundwell, through introductory phone calls with the therapists. Often, the therapists will also contact a client's caseworker to get further information.

"Even coming into the room is a massive thing and hugely anxiety-provoking, well it would be for anyone walking into a therapy group. ... it's a massive thing and that needs quite a lot of preparation work beforehand to let people know what it's going to be like and introduce ourselves. There's a bit of phone work that happens first."

Soundwell staff

Other aspects to good therapeutic practice at Soundwell include ensuring two therapists are in all group sessions to support the clients more fully, and ensuring all therapists receive really good quality clinical supervision.

"... occasionally there are situations where a therapist might have to spend time with one person and the other therapist is with the group, or contact a key worker if they're really concerned about how someone's presenting in a group. Because they are not in a clinical setting where they

can call on a colleague straight away, Soundwell is extremely rigorous in terms of risk assessment, in terms of taking care of the therapists and clients.”

Soundwell trustee



Theme 2: Come as you are – “no expectations”

In all Soundwell music therapy sessions the staff allow people to work at their own pace and have no expectations or demands on them – one person could just play an instrument on their own, another person may choose not to speak, but to observe and listen to the group they are in. There is no pressure to contribute, no haste to put a person in a situation where they are unable to cope, no requirement to know how to

play music, read music or even to have held an instrument before. The lack of expectation is intended to set up a situation where it is OK and welcomed to be who you are at that point in time. This is an important message for clients, as many struggle fitting into the world they live in.

“I thought go for the cello right now... I've never played... You don't need to be able to play and you can just get involved.”

Carer

Theme 3: The value of the range and quality of instruments

Another very important aspect of the Soundwell approach is to provide a wide range of musical instruments and ones that are good quality, so can produce a good sound. The aim is for clients to pick whichever instrument they feel they can connect with and express a part of themselves with. As many clients struggle to verbalise their emotions – whether through not finding the right words, or not being ready to put words to their experiences – having a wide choice of instruments is very important to provide many avenues for different types of expression.

“...for somebody who doesn't play any musical instrument, it was good because there was a wide range of stuff, from keyboards and electric guitars and all that sort of stuff to lots of really interesting percussion instruments.”

Soundwell community stakeholder

“[People] go, ‘Oh my goodness, these instruments!’...they are really engaging straight away. There's a few favourites like the harp that often people really want to play”

Soundwell staff

Theme 4: Consistency of set-up

Arranging the instruments and the room in exactly the same way each session is taken very seriously at Soundwell, as is making the room as welcoming and attractive as possible. The consistency is seen as an

essential principle by Soundwell staff to create a safe predictable environment, particularly when considering the vulnerability of some of the clients who rarely leave their home.

“[Clients] might come feeling quite resistant ... we try and make the room look as attractive as possible with some really interesting instruments... really good quality...”

Soundwell staff

“The first thing that we always try to do is to build a foundation of trust and stability in offering sessions at the same time every week in the same place. Even in terms of having instruments in the same places so that the setting feels as predictable as possible. So that's a really crucial kind of beginning to the work setting that foundation. And that can actually be a major part of the work as well, building up trust with people that the relationship can be one that they can trust enough to feel that they can open up...”

Soundwell staff

Theme 5: Qualities of the therapists

The other aspect of a safe environment is related to the qualities of the therapists. This is incredibly important to ensure that clients feel safe enough to come to Soundwell and remain in the groups. Feedback from clients was overwhelmingly positive and acknowledged many qualities associated with the therapists that they appreciated. The therapists were frequently described as ‘supportive’, ‘helpful’, ‘skilful’, ‘sensitive’, ‘friendly’, ‘welcoming’, ‘understanding’, ‘inclusive but not intrusive’, ‘patient’, ‘encouraging’, ‘non-judgemental’ and ‘professional’.

“I think the Soundwell staff are supportive and understanding, they let you be who you need to be and say what you need to say.”

Soundwell client

Theme 6: Using music to express oneself non-verbally

Expression via music is an approach that is appreciated by the clients for many reasons. For some, the music is a way to connect and express. For others, the opportunity to actually handle instruments and try out so many different ones is really exciting.

Clients most frequently commented on having the choice to explore new instruments, how they sounded and how they could express themselves via the different instruments, which confirmed that the approach Soundwell staff work so hard to achieve is paying dividends.

“...we can build on the sense of identity and sense of self through the music, through choice of instruments, what kind of music feels right for them at the time.”

Soundwell staff



“I really express myself, how I’m feeling that day with the music I play. Because there are so many different instruments it really helps.”

Soundwell client

“...the miracle of making music and composing without any previous knowledge...”

Soundwell client

In particular, the clients reported having freedom not only to try the instruments but the chance to improvise, channel their musicality, to harmonise randomly with other people, or change the beat if they felt like it. Other clients reported appreciating that there was no right or wrong way to play the instruments and enjoyed exploring and discovering new sounds. Much of this also represents a sense of control over their expression.

“Felt freeing, especially the gong!”

Soundwell client

“Thoroughly enjoyed it, especially the flute...”

Soundwell client

Throughout the evaluation there was a common theme around the unexpected nature of being able to make music with a group of people who had no musical training and who never knew they could do something like this. The instruments become a vehicle to expression and even though the group of people may be the same, the dynamics may differ from moment to moment and week to week. The therapists aim to gently and compassionately support clients to connect with an instrument, connect with a sound, connect with themselves and connect with other people in the group – but at their own pace.

“People come and it's a different day, they'll be feeling slightly differently....we never really know what's going on for people in the room ...We work with the person to just try and figure out what's happening with them or for them...it's very much a collaborative exploratory medium.”

Soundwell staff

The therapists observe the sounds that clients make with their chosen instruments, their levels of interaction, the rhythms of their music and then work to gently connect their own playing with that of clients.

“... people might start playing inwardly, playing their own instruments. Listening to their own sounds and that's encouraged.... if people need to tune into themselves in the room to begin with that's as it is and how it needs to be.”

Soundwell staff

As the therapists observe their clients, it enables the therapists to start to feel or hear what a person is feeling and then to reflect that back to a person when the playing stops. Sometimes it may also be another member of the group that explains how someone's playing made them feel.

“... it's, a sounding board, because, you know, someone in the group, one of the group members or the therapists can say to that person, this is what your music made me feel or this is what I heard, you know? Does that make any sense to you?...”

Soundwell staff

The pacing is very important in this group situation, as the clients all have their own coping strategies and defences in place. The gentleness and pacing is fundamental to allow clients the reassurance that the coping strategies are not going to suddenly be dismantled. As the group develops, and trust is formed, clients then start to open up and contribute verbally to the group.

“...noticing things about relational patterns and then supporting and kind of thinking also alongside that what the person's history might have been, what their early relationships with any parents or caregiver might have been... and then supporting any change that they feel they might want to make.”

Soundwell staff

As well as good governance, having two therapists in every group session allows each therapist to notice different aspects of the clients' playing, and to support different clients in different ways. This makes the therapy session the best quality it can be.

“...we will often have one therapist providing some kind of harmonic background and another being able then free to match and respond to people's individual bits of music. And then two therapists will notice different things as well. So there's that extra richness in noticing and discussion afterwards.”

Soundwell staff

As the therapeutic relationship becomes established through the vehicle of making music with instruments and the therapeutic skills of the therapists, these clients start to move through their emotional situations, to identify new perspectives.

Theme 7: Uniqueness of Soundwell

Soundwell was described as unique in terms of what it provides, and the niche it fills.

“I don't know of any other organisation...to have something where it's free, and it is quite rare that I can find people to come to our support group ... I couldn't get that range of instruments or even if I could bring some songs or pieces of music to listen to, but I wouldn't have the kind of confidence because of my own knowledge, you know, to be able to lead the discussion. So, I think it is probably unique.”

Soundwell community stakeholder

Part 3: Clients' satisfaction using Soundwell

To understand how satisfied clients were with the service Soundwell provided and to see how this translated into measurable outcomes, clients completed the Friends and Family test and a Satisfaction question offered at fixed points for regular clients (first, 6 weeks, 6 months, 12 months), every time for Outreach, and regularly for carers. The results for all of these are presented below.

Friends and Family Test

Returning, Outreach clients and Carers were all asked the Friends and Family Test – which asks: “How likely are you to recommend the music therapy sessions to anyone else?”.

Key finding: Figure 1 shows the majority of clients would be extremely likely to recommend Soundwell to others.

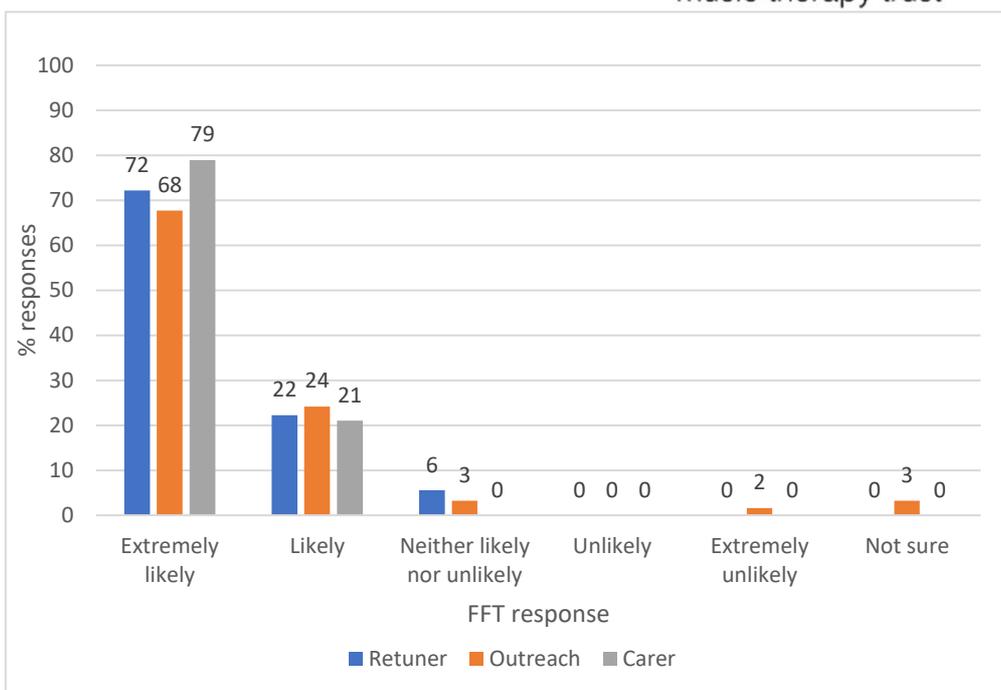


Figure 1. Friends and Family Test percentage responses

Client Satisfaction

Outreach clients and carers were asked the satisfaction question “How was the session for you?” in terms of finding:

- the venue was easy to access
- the group was welcoming
- the session was helpful
- enjoyment of listening to the music
- enjoyment of being with other people

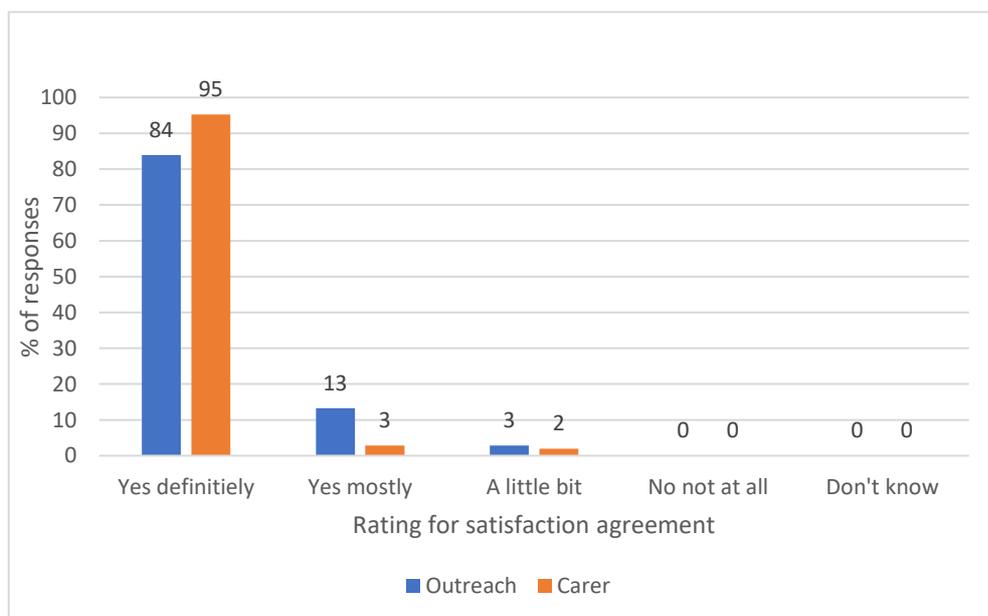


Figure 2. Percentage Outreach and Carers' satisfaction rating across all questions

Key finding: The aggregate score across all measures in Figure 2 demonstrates high levels of satisfaction for outreach clients and carers (for accessibility, welcome, feeling helped, and enjoyment of the music and being with people). Note, returning clients were not asked these questions, instead they were asked for satisfaction feedback from more open questions, which also indicated a high level of satisfaction with the services received.

As well as demonstrating the clients were satisfied with the service and would recommend it, clients were asked to complete an Adapted WEMWBS measure to quantify their mental wellbeing levels.

Part 4: Measures of Mental Health

The Adapted WEMWBS data reported here relates specifically to returning clients, outreach clients and clients who were carers.

Returning clients' data

The Adapted WEMWBS asked people how often in the last week they felt about eight aspects of their wellbeing. (39 people answered this questionnaire at the first visit and 11 at the last visit). The topics covered were: confidence, feeling good about yourself, feeling hopefully about the future, being able to be with others, feeling relaxed, being able to manage feelings, being able to communicate and being able to listen to others. People scored their responses 1-5, where 1= "Never", 2= "Rarely", 3= "Sometimes", 4= "Mostly", 5= "All of the Time". Percentage proportions of positive responses to the question grouping "All the time" and "Mostly" answers at the first visit, and at the last visit using the service (12 months or more after the first visit) are shown in Figure 3 below.

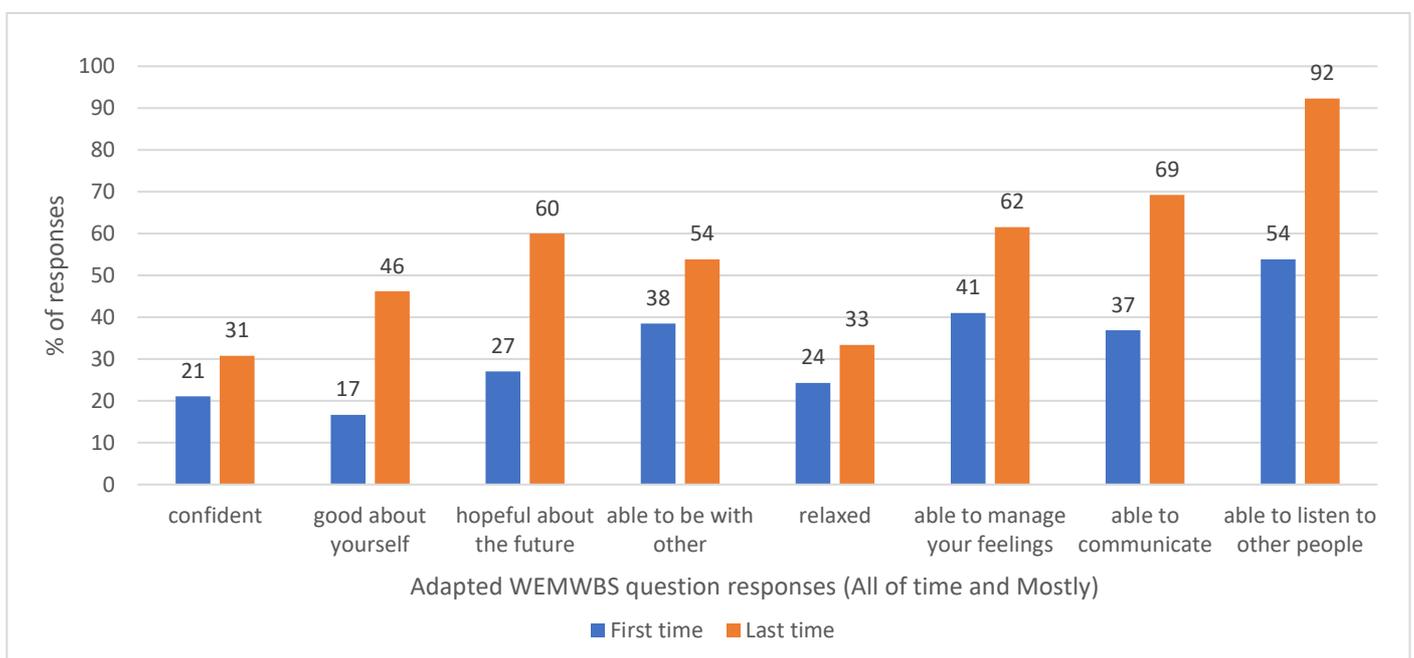


Figure 3. Returning clients' data: Over the last week how often in the last week have you felt...

Key finding: Figure 3 shows that over time the proportion of returning clients answering "All the time" or "Mostly" increased for all questions. The biggest improvement was seen for being able to listen to other people. This shows the majority of returning clients improve in all areas of wellbeing explored by this tool.

Statistical analysis was carried out to see if the change in scores before and after were statistically significant (see appendix for details on score calculation). The total Adapted WEMWBS scores were compared across four time points - first visit 6 weeks, 6 months and last visit. Figure 4 shows the mean scores per time point for the returning clients.

Key finding: Figure 4 shows that the mean Adapted WEMWBS score increased over time for the returning clients. The mean score increases over time, signifying a positive improvement in mental health. Comparing first and last time points shows a statistically significant improvement. (First time mean score = 25 (SD= 5.6), Last time mean score = 27.8 (SD 4.6) ($t(10) = -2.2, p < 0.05$).

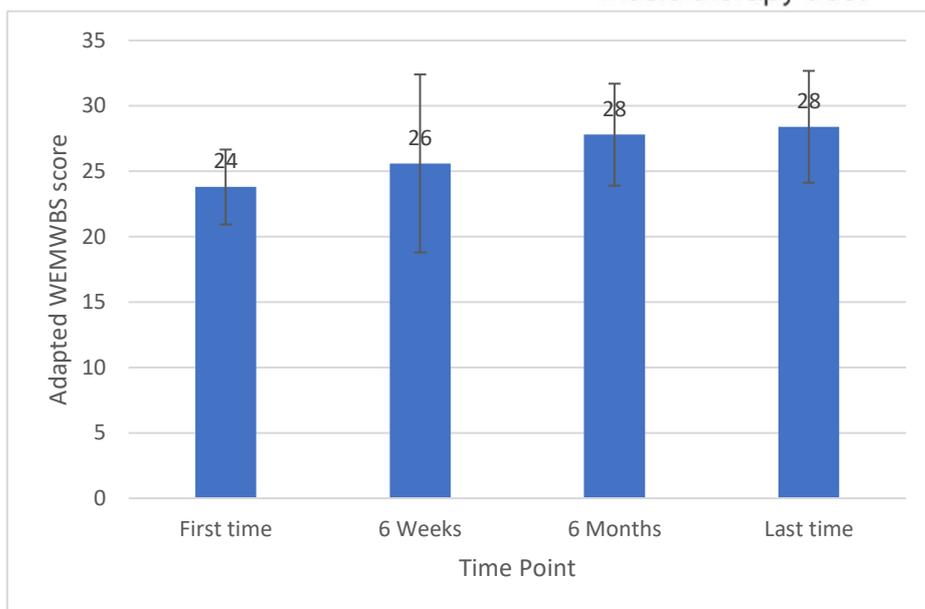


Figure 4. Mean Adapted WEMWBS scores for Returning clients

Key finding: the statistical test shows that there is a significant improvement of scores over time. This shows that Soundwell is having a potentially beneficial effect on clients’ mental health over time.

Outreach clients and Carers’ Adapted WEMWBS

The Adapted WEMWBS was also used for Outreach clients and Carers’ sessions. This question asked: “How did the session make you feel?” with response options ranging from less stressed, mood improved, more relaxed, more motivated, more confident, less lonely, more hopeful, able to release or explore feelings, improved wellbeing, with ratings being “Yes definitely”, “Yes mostly”, “A little bit”, “No not at all”, “Don’t know”. Data is plotted in the figure 5.

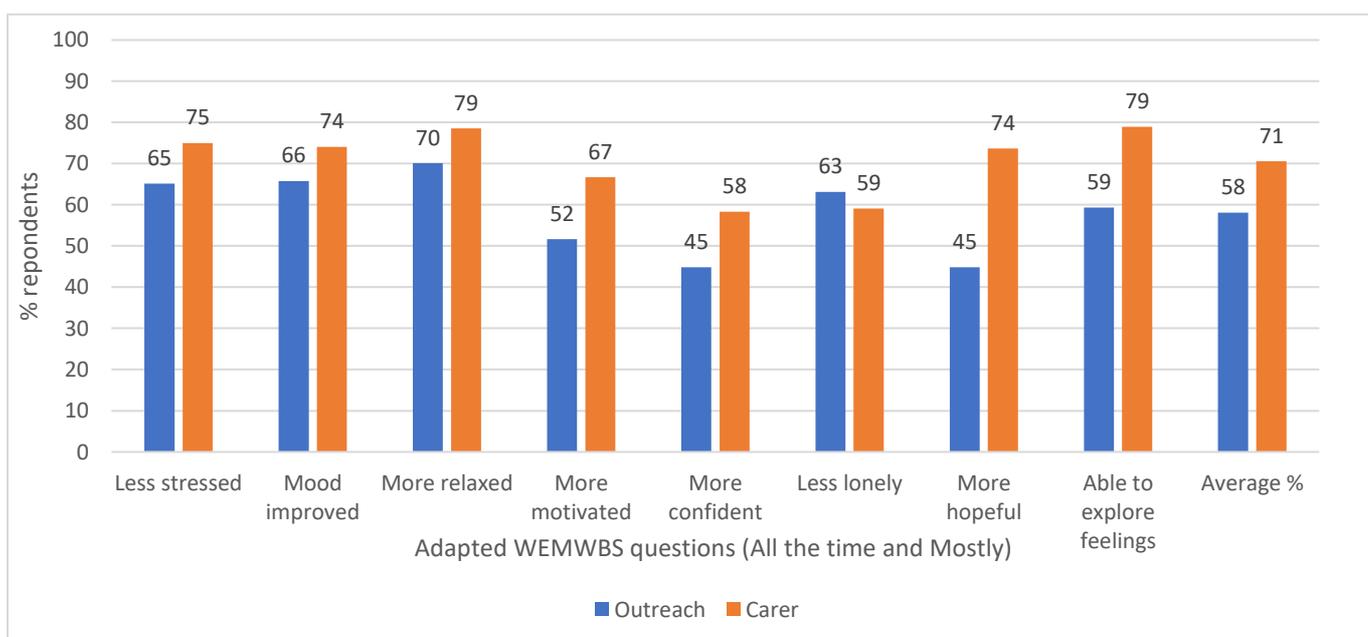


Figure 5. “How did the session make you feel?” Percentage of respondents answering “Yes definitely”

Key finding: Figure 5 shows that the majority of Outreach clients and Carers have positive responses to questions about stress, mood, relaxation, motivation, confidence, loneliness, hope and expressing feelings after attending Soundwell.

Hosts’ Adapted WEMWBS

The host services connected to Soundwell completed an Adapted WEMWBS to measure whether they had observed their clients at Soundwell sessions display the following behaviours. The following percentages of respondents answering “Yes”, stating they had observed clients participating in Soundwell services showing the following behaviours: Relaxation, Mood, Reduced stress, Creativity, Confidence, Motivation, Self-esteem, Participation. Figure 6 displays the percentages for the responses.

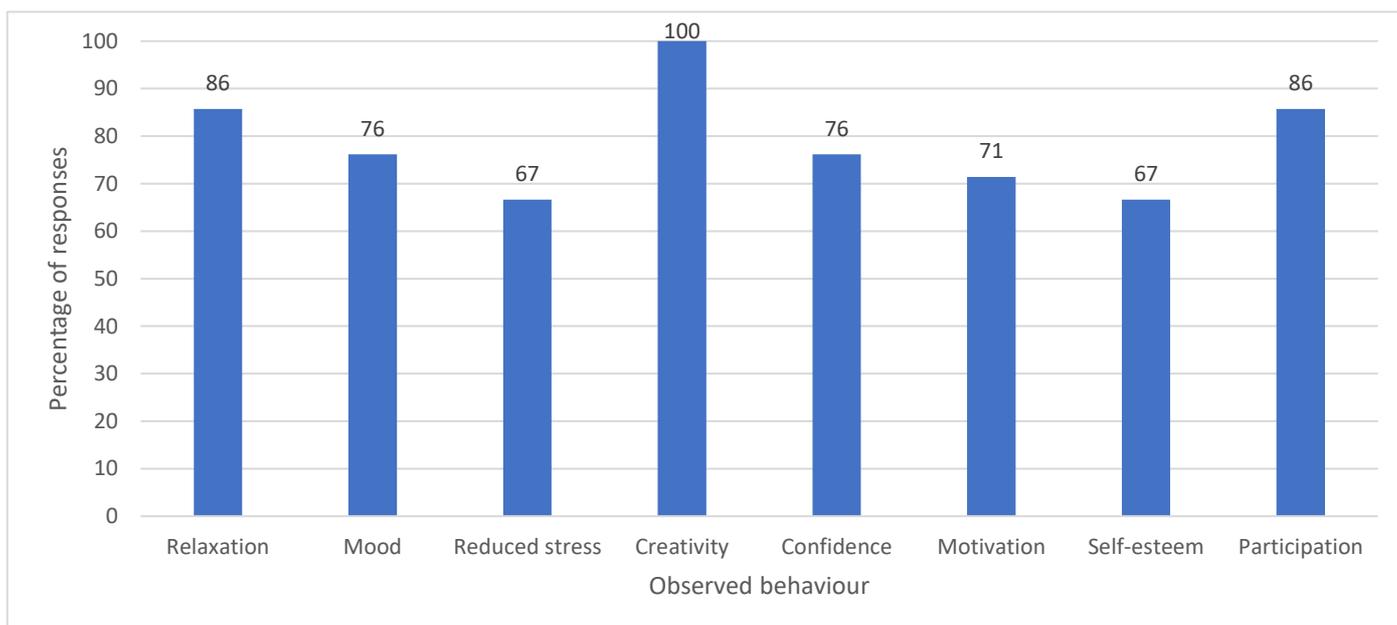


Figure 6. Percentage of hosts stating they noticed improvements in clients

Key finding: Two thirds of all hosts saw an improvement in all the observed behaviours, rising to 100% of hosts who saw an improvement in creativity.

Overall, this section of the results indicates that clients and hosts perceive that mental health is improved after attending Soundwell services. The next section will seek to investigate more deeply about the experience of clients by using qualitative data from interviews and questionnaires.

Part 5: Client experiences of Soundwell

Using data from a focus group with carers, interviews with Soundwell staff and trustees and feedback from clients, key themes in the benefits and experiences of clients emerged and are reported below.

Theme 1: The ability to make connections with the music and with people

Clients arrive at Soundwell reporting problems connecting to other people and concerns with social isolation. A common finding from the data was the different types of connections being established, e.g. connections or reconnections to the music; musical connections to people; verbal connections with people.

Once some clients connected to the sounds of their instruments, they realised they could alter their moods by changing the type of instrument or the rhythm they played – giving them a sense of control over their moods.

“I remember someone saying: ‘Oh I can hear how I feel when I play’.”

Soundwell staff

“I feel more connected to myself, my feelings, my creativity.”

Soundwell client

“The fact that I could alter my mood by changing instruments and/or rhythms.”

Soundwell clients

Connections were also made with the other people in the group. For a lot of Soundwell clients, who find it difficult to express themselves verbally or are concerned what other people may think of them, the connections to other people in the group may first develop via the music. This may be through starting to be in harmony with others in the group, or it may be through feeling more sympathetic to the other person’s feeling. Some clients started to notice the musical connections they were creating with other people.

“Feelings of being in harmony with others, I like listening to what the others are playing and trying to respond to that.”

Soundwell client

“Somebody might support somebody else’s music. And there might be a kind of a sense of a duet happening somewhere. And that generally grows over the session.”

Soundwell staff

As confidence and trust grows in and between the clients, they are able to contribute verbally to the group, which for some people is a huge step forward. The sense of sharing feelings with other people who can understand their perspective and be supportive is highly valued by the clients, as many clients have difficult or distressing feelings that they do not feel comfortable discussing normally.

“Soundwell has given me the ability to speak in a group without falling to pieces. [Without Soundwell] I would still be sat at home housebound, not able to mix with others or speak in front of a group of people.”

Soundwell client

Being unable to express feelings creates isolation, so being able to share can help a client know that they are not the only one having these experiences, thoughts or feelings. Some clients described this as a place to express their suppressed feelings, as a place where they don't have to conform to the societal expectation of 'normal' behaviour. For other people it was important that they didn't feel judged and therefore they had the freedom to express themselves in an authentic way.

"...for some people who do struggle to express themselves, then you know, it just created a completely different vibe."

Soundwell community stakeholder

"[Soundwell has] made a massive, immeasurable difference. Fitting in and the feeling of being accepted and a part of something is priceless."

Soundwell client

"Space to be creative, explore, listen, play. A space where I can be me for a short while."

Soundwell carer

From a therapeutic perspective, enabling clients to connect with their feelings and then to be able to express this via music and then verbally is part of supporting a person to deal with situations and painful experiences that have happened to them. Ultimately this positively impacts the client's mental health and provides coping strategies for some people. It can also help a person to understand why they feel as they do.

Theme 2: Improvement in emotional status and mood

There were many descriptions of how clients had benefitted from improvements in their emotional status directly after coming to Soundwell. The benefits are initially explored as immediate effects of Soundwell therapy and then in the next section, how these improvements carry through into clients' abilities to engage in their daily living activities.

The most predominant reference was to feeling more relaxed and calm after the session.

"It makes me happy and relaxed and puts my huge problems behind me for a while!"

Carer

"I feel more relaxed when I go from here thinking I can play music to my mood."

Soundwell client

From the perspective of the Soundwell staff they noticed how clients would be more grounded, and confident. This often then led to clients being more able to join in with the group and speak to people. The Soundwell staff also observed an improvement in anxiety, a movement through from an angry state to a calmer state.

"Increased confidence in relationships which might be the case by joining other groups and engagement in other activities they wouldn't have done before."

Soundwell staff



These sort of mood changes were also observed by Soundwell community stakeholders, who also had feedback from clients saying they felt calmer, more relaxed, more peaceful and had improvements in self-esteem.

“Somebody said that they were having a really bad day and debating whether to come to the group because he wasn’t really coping very well. But he felt it really sort of calmed him down.”

Soundwell community stakeholder.

The clients themselves were able to explain in more detail how the music therapy sessions supported them. Some clients found that the music helps them to take their mind away from negative thoughts they are having and allows them to focus on something pleasurable and positive – some described it as a respite from their everyday worries.

“...it just takes you to a different world, peaceful and relaxing...”

Soundwell client

“It has helped me deal with certain moods by using music to take my mind away from the negative...”

Soundwell client

This could help to explain why, for some clients they reported a sense of peacefulness and calmness. The calming nature of the sessions then helped to reduce anxiety, improve their OCD and help clients to deal with negative thoughts.

“It helps me to relax and helps me to connect and reflect on my issues and try to diffuse them and turn negative intrusive thoughts into positives...”

Soundwell client

“My mind is so relaxed and returns to normal behaviour without OCD.”

Soundwell client

Quite a few clients also reported feeling happiness, and more self-awareness and increased confidence in themselves.

A few clients also experienced emotions were not always positive as they were connecting with difficult memories and emotions, which is to be expected with this type of therapy. At Soundwell the therapeutic staff ensure that every person is in a suitable state to leave and follow-up with clients after sessions if necessary.

Theme 3: Carers’ positive experiences

The responses from carers were analysed separately to those from clients. It is well understood that caring for a person, whether recognised as a carer on a register or not, can lead to carers needing their own space to release feelings and to focus on themselves for a while.

The carers all reported an overall sense of benefit from the music therapy sessions, e.g. the sessions were a safe, fun, enjoyable and welcoming space. For the carers, these music therapy sessions created a space, to connect to themselves and escape from the thoughts of being a full-time carer for an hour. There was also a recognition of being very isolated as a carer, not just because of the pandemic, but because they are limited in social connections.

“When I came to this session I felt like a human doing and now I feel like a human being.”

Carer

“You know I have found it...helps with your moods. You know because you are isolated, the group coming together and just releasing tensions in that way helps so much...”

Carer

The restorative effect of Soundwell often lasted for days whilst they were at home, making being at home more tolerable and giving them something to look forward to the following week.



Theme 4: The ability to carry out activities of daily living

The research data was also analysed to identify any effects from Soundwell that clients take away with them to help them cope with their activities of daily living. As important as it is to improve emotional wellbeing, the effects of the Soundwell music therapy sessions extend far beyond the therapy room. For instance, some clients had started to explore healthy coping techniques such as using different music to moderate their moods. Other clients reported that Soundwell visits has provided structure to their lives, which is important when a proportion of clients may be living chaotic lives. The increased levels of confidence and structure have helped people return to work, which is a significant step forwards, providing a new level of independence to their lives.

“Helped provide structure and lift my mood enabling me to return to work and live independently. Thanks to [therapist] and [therapist] who have both been excellent...”

Soundwell client

For some clients, the music has provided an alternative means of expressing their feelings instead of self-harming. Some clients went on to say they also feel they would have attempted to take their own lives had it not been for Soundwell music therapy.

“When my anxiety is high I now play my keyboard regularly to calm myself down. I've learnt to express my emotions through music. I believe if I had not had Soundwell I would self-harm more than I am like I did before I found the group. I am so very grateful to [x] who run Soundwell for all their love, support and commitment to me as a person. I feel the sessions need to be ongoing...”

Soundwell client

“I have had the confidence to join a couple of new groups where I don't know anyone. Since joining music therapy I have self-harmed less.

Soundwell client

These all signalled that the sessions were helpful, supportive, fun, enjoyable and engaging. People also reported feeling safe and well supported during the sessions. The impact of the music therapy reached quite deeply for some people and had a positive impact on several aspects of their mental health. For some people the benefit of coming to Soundwell has been profound and life-saving.

“Without it I would have tried to commit suicide or been in a psych unit”

Soundwell client

“Deep down I really don't think I would be still living [without Soundwell]. Music here is a life saver.”

Soundwell client

Impact on activities before and after Soundwell – paid and non-paid

To further corroborate the reports from retuning clients, this section will look at the types of activities or paid work people did before and after Soundwell. Table 2 summarises the data longitudinally showing the percentage of people in each sample taking part in paid and non-paid activities:

Type of activity	First time – activities already doing (n=39)	6 weeks Additional activity (n=23)	6 months additional activity (n=27)	Last time additional activity (n=13)
Paid and Non-paid	74%	26%	48%	77%
Non-paid	66%	22%	44%	46%
Paid	8%	4%	4%	31%

Table 2. Activities (paid and unpaid) after attending Soundwell

At the first time point – before Soundwell, 74% people reported taking part in activities or paid work, 66% for unpaid activities eg. meditation, art group, woodwork; and 8% people had paid work (cleaner, minister of religion and hypnotherapist).

At 6 weeks after starting Soundwell, 26% had reported doing an activity or a paid piece of work. 22% of people from the evaluation cohort of reported new activities (eg. badminton, painting, joining a choir/piano lessons). 1 person had started paid work.

At 6 months follow up, 48% had reported doing an activity or a paid piece of work. 44% people reported new activities: (eg. badminton, tennis, attending a monthly games night, or volunteering. 1 person had started paid work.)



At the last time of follow up (up to 12 months later), 77% reported doing a new activity or paid piece of work. 46% people reported new activities: (eg. joined a local community group, volunteering as a peer support mentor for people with mental health issues. 31% people were working in new paid work (eg. work at a leisure centre, with further opportunities for training, work with an agency as a support worker with adults).



Key finding: 77% of people sampled at the point of finishing Soundwell services had increased paid and non-paid activities.

Part 6: Soundwell work in the era of Covid-19

The final part of this evaluation was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore the effect of the pandemic on clients, staff and community stakeholders was explored in the focus group and interviews.

It was recognised by many stakeholders that the impact of the pandemic has been tough on people’s mental health, whether a person with an existing diagnosed mental health condition that is being managed in the community, or a person who is experiencing mental health issues for the first time. This means that there are an increased number of people who could benefit from the ‘Soundwell Approach’ to music therapy to cope with the effects of the pandemic.

“...the fallout of that's going to be apparent for several years...There will be new people who have been really affected by the pandemic....I know somebody that had their first ever psychotic episode after that because they became very afraid that they were going to give Covid to everybody.”

Soundwell trustee

The impact of the pandemic was sudden and meant that Soundwell were unable to offer face-to-face meetings, which to up to this point had been the only type of provision. All the Soundwell staff felt it was a priority to continue to support their clients somehow, due to the potential impact of the national lockdown on their client’s mental health.

“Especially at the beginning [of lockdown]. We were having the tele on and seeing how many people die every day? It was horrible. You were asking am I the next one?”

Carer

At the start of the pandemic all Soundwell staff were furloughed and one freelance therapist provided phone support for the most vulnerable and isolated clients (whilst still being clinically supervised). When some staff returned from furlough they embarked on phoning all the clients on their database who had accessed Soundwell in the last year, to check in with them and to understand what could be a possible way forward whilst face-to-face meetings were not safe.



“We were trying to find out whether people would want to do a Zoom group, Zoom individual session, phone support, or wait until we came back face-to-face or even whether they wanted to hear back from us again... so we did a kind of scoping to begin with.”

Soundwell staff

As a result of this scoping work, Soundwell staff chose to provide individual phone and Zoom group support. The Soundwell staff repurposed what could be offered via the phone and via Zoom that still enabled aspects of music therapy to be provided.

Despite not being able to offer the experience and impact of music-making and connecting with music face-to-face, there were many benefits to still connecting with people during the pandemic. Indeed, connecting with other people was a key benefit identified by clients, thus connection was still maintained where possible. The support via phone was essential for people who may not have access to technology. These clients received a half hour phone call or Zoom session once a week, or sometimes fortnightly. Multiple Zoom groups were set up – one as an open group, one for carers and a Zoom singing group, which provided a new experience for staff.

“It’s a shame we can’t make a way that we can all play our instruments of the same time. But the Zoom thing for me is good you know? I’m happy to speak to them.”

Carer

On reflection it was felt that these approaches could be good ways to introduce some people to Soundwell and build a relationship and trust with them before bringing them into a physical group situation.

“I think it might really help improve attendance or the possibility of somebody turning up for the first time, could really be that bridge for coming into a session.”

Soundwell staff

“There is something intimate about an individual phone session with somebody you can really hear their voice....There is more listening, possibly... because they're not seen ... they feel they can say more.”

Soundwell staff

The downside to only being able to provide remote group support was identified by one community stakeholder. Their community were digitally excluded hence any digital form of remote support would not

be accessible to those people. To overcome this issue the community stakeholders were developing a 'Zoom room' to create an accessible digital space for people.

"To be fair and we're quite a digitally excluded community. So even if its online it's still not accessible to people...So we're just setting up a Zoom room. That sounds really grand, but really it's just a small TV on the wall and we can put a small laptop on that."

Community host organisation

Soundwell staff had also recognised that many of their clients were not able to access digital services so ensured that the therapists always maintained a telephone service.

Covid-19 represents a challenge for Soundwell, but it is clear that the current support is well received and more of the same well prepared and delivered specialist support is needed.



Conclusions

The purpose of this external evaluation was to explore the impact of Soundwell Music Therapy Trust using a mixed methods approach.

Quantitative findings indicate clients have statistically significantly improving results in their Adapted WEMWBS questionnaire scores, indicating potential improvement in mental health. Clients also report high levels of satisfaction with their experience of Soundwell.

Qualitative data collection and analysis has provided a deep insight into the mechanisms underpinning the Soundwell approach, and also the perceived benefits from the service. Clients report: the ability to make connections with the music and with people, improvement in emotional status and mood and the ability to carry out daily living activities. An increase in activity (paid and unpaid) was recorded in the returning clients group. Some clients profoundly state that Soundwell services prevented them from taking their own lives. Carers reported sessions to be safe, fun, enjoyable and a welcoming space. For the carers these music therapy sessions created a space to escape and reconnect with themselves away from their caring responsibilities.

In terms of service output Soundwell is certainly delivering on its aims to provide community-based music psychodynamic therapy with the aim of improving outcomes for people whose lives are seriously affected by mental health issues, including those with complex mental health needs. (See Appendix E for Soundwell's logic model).

Evaluation of Soundwell

Quantitative data showed positive satisfaction with all of Soundwell's services, and Adapted WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales) PROM showed a statistically significant improvement in mental wellbeing for clients returning to Soundwell over time (albeit in a small n value). This therefore shows that Soundwell is supportive in improving people's mental health. Outreach clients and Carers also reported positive Adapted WEMWBS results indicating positive changes had happened for them in terms of their mental health.

Qualitative data produced a rich analysis of impacts, experiences and possible mechanisms to explain how Soundwell works. The findings in this evaluation add to an existing but small pool of literature exploring the impact of psychodynamic music therapy on mental health. Lale and Ntourntoufis' (2020)⁵ study showing that accessing the music therapy support early on the pathway for patients on the psychotic spectrum led to financial savings in reduced hospital admissions and pharmacological support is pertinent to reflect on in light of our findings. Soundwell's services are providing the specialised support described by this study, and therefore could be providing significant cost saving to NHS mental health services support that would otherwise be needed. Further qualitative evidence from clients showed that there had been an increase in paid and unpaid activities after attending Soundwell services. Some clients indicate that Soundwell has saved their life, and this is a very profound statement, showing the role of psychodynamic music therapy in supporting people with mental health needs.

Further research and analysis looking at the financial and wider societal benefits that Soundwell engagement brings would be very interesting to conduct. Social Return on Investment methodology may be useful to employ to investigate the potential cost savings that Soundwell could make to the NHS.

Context of Soundwell in terms of Covid-19

Soundwell undertook extensive scoping with its clients to determine how best to adapt its music therapy services during the pandemic. Both Zoom and 1:1 telephone support were offered to include clients with digital capabilities and those without. Clients have engaged gratefully with these emerging services, and much learning for the organisation has been achieved.

Rates of Covid-19 transmission in the community remain high (at the time of writing) and it is anticipated that they will ebb and flow over the next 12-18 months. It is now an opportunity for Soundwell to incorporate the learning on how to provide services for its clients, dependent on the operative environment. Music interventions on the phone and Zoom have been greatly adapted to accommodate latency issues. There has been more listening to and reflecting on pre-recorded music, some singing together and some pared back playing as a group. There has been more opportunity for listening to the musicality in client's voice in verbal interactions and taking cues from this. The therapeutic relationship has continued throughout the ups and downs of the pandemic. Clients were grateful for the continued connection with Soundwell and each other. For some clients that continued connection may still be enough to enable them to cope with the world they live in.

The increase in mental health issues brought about by the pandemic's effect on society is starting to emerge and it is likely that these effects will be felt for some time to come. People with psychosocial and health-related risk factors, as well as those with low socio-economic status, are most at risk of experiencing moderate or severe depressive symptoms during the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore Soundwell should anticipate a great rise in demand for its services in the coming months.

Limitations of this evaluation

There was no control group to compare changes that occurred between the baseline and follow-up groups, therefore we cannot be sure if any positive or negative changes in people's lives were due to Soundwell's supportive work, or other factors which have not been controlled for. The quantitative dataset is small, limiting the strength of the conclusions that can be made from the results. However, in contrast, qualitative results from this evaluation are more robust, and represent a rich and deep dive into the experience of clients and staff at Soundwell, serving as a good understanding of the impact and benefits of the work of the organisation. Even though there is no control group for the evaluation, the qualitative findings are extremely compelling and overwhelmingly positive.

Recommendations

1. Soundwell has created a unique approach to working with people who experience a range of mental health issues, including those with severe and enduring mental health issues, and have unmet needs. The learning over the past 20 years could be more widely shared to enable other services to safely and effectively support this cohort of society.

It is therefore recommended that Soundwell promote the 'Soundwell Approach' and its underlying principles as described in this report.

2. As the pandemic abates and support organisations in general begin to open up again, it is unlikely that services will return to the pre-covid-19 structure and that support will need to flex to changing operating environment depending on the levels of community transmission over the next 12-18 months.

It is therefore recommended that Soundwell staff should review the positive learning and experiences from providing phone and Zoom services and integrate this to provide a mixture of face-to-face and digital services.

3. The effect of the pandemic on mental health is already emerging in society with sharp increases in referrals for mental health support across children and young people through to older adults. In particular, people are experiencing increased levels of isolation, depression and anxiety. Some people will find themselves in situations they have never experienced before such as unemployment, poverty or having a psychotic episode for the first time. Soundwell is very well placed to provide high quality support for the mental health effects of the pandemic.
It is recommended that Soundwell review the types of clients their services could cater for in light of the effects of the pandemic on mental health.

Soundwell clients could include:

- Existing clients and community groups with mental health issues who are being cared for in the community.
 - People who are presenting to health services with their first episode of a mental health issue.
 - Staff in organisations who may be experiencing mental health issues as a result of their experiences of working through the pandemic – particularly frontline health and social care professionals.
 - Children and young people identified by local schools and colleges who are experiencing mental health issues, especially children with additional educational needs.
 - Young adults and people with Autism and Asperger's who are finishing school and will lose existing support structures or are transitioning between support agencies.
 - People who are at risk of severe mental health issues and where these could be prevented by early intervention through liaising with link workers in local social prescribing schemes.
4. As social prescribing becomes a more embedded aspect to primary care structure, and primary care networks become more collaborative with the third sector, there are new referral and commissioning opportunities that will open up that could positively serve Soundwell.
It is therefore recommended that Soundwell staff focus on establishing or maintaining relationships with key professionals in local authorities, community mental health teams, primary care networks and clinical commissioning groups with a view to Soundwell being commissioned to be a local provider of high-quality support that meets the required governance needs to work with people with complex and enduring mental health issues.
 5. The short and long-term effects of Covid-19 mean that new sources of funding may come available for services which specifically address key Covid-19 symptoms.
It is therefore recommended that Soundwell use its considerable experience to develop a Covid-19-specific service offer.
 6. The data collected indicates that only a small number of evaluation respondents from Soundwell's services over the last five years have been from BAME communities.
We recommend that the reasons for this are investigated and Soundwell explores ways to ensure marginalised communities can both access services and engage with evaluation and equalities monitoring.

Appendix A: Soundwell's services

What services does Soundwell Music Therapy Trust offer?

All services are designed and delivered with psychodynamic theory and thought underpinning sessions. Musical instruments used in the sessions are high quality, accessible to all and include: string, percussion, keyboard and digital pianos. Music apps on iPads and recording opportunities are also offered when suited to the client's experience and need. Singing groups are also offered. Staff and freelancers delivering the music therapy are all highly skilled and registered with the Health and Care Professions Council. The team specialise in working with adults with a range of mental health issues, including severe and enduring mental illness.

Careful thought and collaboration with the client inform which type of session a client might most helpfully access. Three main groups of clients exist in terms of this report: Returning clients, Outreach clients and Carers.

Outreach Clients

Soundwell have set up and facilitated various outreaches (one-off attendance), in response to demand, for the following purposes:

- To offer session(s) where an established group is running and to maximise possibilities for attendance for clients;
- To provide a taster session, which might act as a feeder into regular groups;
- To offer one-off specific, themed or tailored support, e.g., songwriting, or music therapy for those who hear voices, experience substance misuse, or experience homelessness;
- To reach people who might be on the fringes of services or who have bad experience with/mistrust in services, or who might not accept mainstream service for cultural reasons, so would not necessarily access Soundwell through referral or commit to anything regular straightaway.

Outreaches have happened at the following types of organisation, in order to achieve the above.

- As part of Carers' days and events;
- At substance misuse support agencies, as part of a 12-week programme;
- At established mental health support groups;
- At client-led support groups;
- At organisations with a focus on inclusion of BAME communities.

Returning clients

Short series of sessions (mainly groups) 6-12 weeks. These short series offer a greater sense of support and some continuity between sessions. They can act as a taster for those who might want to access a longer-term group, without committing to more. It can be a way of Soundwell piloting new types of work. They might be offer at a host organisation (e.g., Mind or DHI). They might be themed in the following ways:

- Singing group;
- Intentional music listening group;
- Songwriting group;
- Women's group;
- Assessment for an individual.

Ongoing groups At the start of the 2015-2020 period, ongoing groups in Bath, Weston-super-Mare and Wiltshire were one of the main means of service delivery for Soundwell. Clients who attended these ongoing groups were offered a place for as long as they needed it. Often this was around 2 years, although sometimes longer and up to 7 years. Clients received support throughout dips and improvement in their health. Some clients needed to go back to inpatient care during their therapy and appreciated being able to return to their Soundwell group for support on discharge home. These ongoing groups often saw members move towards reduced isolation, improvement in social connections, increased sense of identity, general improvement in mental health and sometimes voluntary and paid employment/resuming their career.

During the five-year evaluation period documented, Soundwell had a reformat of services, in response to demands on services and efficiencies. The new model of shorter length returning groups began in April 2019. Before this, groups were often continuous, and clients would attend for many years. The new shorter model became sessions run over a series of 20 weeks, with an option (where possible and needed) for further series. Weekly sessions are suggested for those who are struggling more with mental health issues or might prefer the 20 week stretch of sessions in order to explore their inner world or make connections with others more easily. The 20-week model came about after research into the benefits of shorter-term therapy groups and consultation with the Soundwell team. The groups would be more likely to be goal orientated, focus on the 'here and now', emphasize the transfer of skills from the group to the outside world and focus on interpersonal issues.

Ongoing groups were offered where people might prefer a lighter level of support to maintain wellbeing, such as monthly Open Groups and Singing for Wellbeing. Some people might move from a weekly group to an Open or Singing Group, for example. (Please note, singing groups are not separately evaluated in this report.)

Carers' service

A special type of monthly group has operated for carers (note, these were carers for anybody, the person they cared for did not need to be a Soundwell client). A carer is anyone, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. They can also be called informal caregivers and the support they give is unpaid. A monthly group for carers was run providing access to Soundwell music therapy services in a similar way to the other support provided for other clients.

Summary of changes to Soundwell services between 2015 and 2020

Geographic: During 2015-2018, Soundwell was far-reaching, including across the whole of Wiltshire, the whole of B&NES and Weston-super-Mare. During a 2018/19 review of services, Soundwell closed services in Wiltshire and Weston-super-Mare and focused on Bath and Bristol.

Sessions: Changes were also made to the longer-term nature of sessions. Formerly these were on-going with some clients accessing services for 5-7 years. Through a desire to offer more of a range of services, to appeal to more people and to widen openings to the service, Soundwell decided to instead offer a menu of services, including a 20-week series of sessions. People could access more than one block if needed. Crucially, this allows more of a flow between types of groups, and between varying levels of support as and when needed in the recovery journey. Consultation externally and internally informed this change.

Covid-19 response and remote services in 2020

Since March 2020, due to Covid-19 outbreak, most services have been online. Between Mid-March and July, Soundwell offered some phone/Zoom contact to clients who were most in need/isolated. Since July 2020, all Soundwell clients have been consulted and have received receive their session of choice, whether that is a phone call, individual Zoom session, or Zoom group. Some clients attended 1-2-1 sessions in parks. Some clients chose to wait until face-to-face session resume.

Appendix B: Method of referral

45% of referrals for clients were from Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs), mostly the recovery teams, but also rehabilitation and early intervention in psychosis team, and some from inpatient settings. 38% of referrals were from VCSE sector and support organisations. 17% of referrals were self-referrals or from family. The following organisations are a list of VCSE services which may refer to Soundwell: 1 in 4 (WSM), Addaction (WSM), Addiction Recovery Agency, Alabare (Wilts), Bristol Autism Service, Bristol Drug Project, Developing Health and Independence, Mind, Places for People, Rethink, Richmond Fellowship, Safe Link, Second Step, St Mungo's, various supported housing projects in Bristol, Bath and Wiltshire, Voices (Bath).

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
No of returning clients	118	107	104	94	85	508
No of outreach clients one-off	85	78	94	95	83	435
No of carers	26	20	19	40	26	131
Total	229	205	217	229	194	1074
Total attendances	530	776	703	774	456	3239

Table 3. Number of clients per year between 2015 (year 1) and 2020 (year 5). Please note: these numbers do not match our overall totals because people return over time showing up in multiple years.

Location of services

Table 4 shows the frequency of services run in different locations between 2015-2020. Note, some of this data does not tally with the above frequencies due to missing or duplicated data about location.

	Returner	Outreach clients	Carer
Wiltshire	76	102	10
Bath/B&NES	148	160	33
Weston-Super-Mare	63	149	0
Bristol	47	52	10
Total	334	463	53

Table 4. Location of Soundwell Clients

The table below shows the number of people attending Soundwell and the percentage of people providing demographic and evaluation data.

	Total number of clients	Numbers of people providing demographics	% of total sample for demographics data	Numbers of people providing evaluation data (dates)	% of total sample for evaluation data
Total participants 2015 to 2020	890	289	32%	191 May 15- March 20)	21%
Returning clients	339	77	23%	39 (Oct 15 – Feb 20)	11%
Outreach clients	462	178	39%	121 (May 15 – March 20)	26%
Carers	89	34	38%	30 (Jan 17- Feb 20)	34%
Hosts		-	-	21	-

Table 5. The number of people attending Soundwell and the percentage of people providing demographic and evaluation data.

Appendix C: Details of methodology used

Data collection overview

A mixed-methods approach was taken, gathering a range of data including monitoring data, questionnaires, interviews, and client feedback via post-it notes. Data was collected from Soundwell staff and trustees as well as five groups of people connecting with Soundwell services: Returning clients, Outreach clients, Carers, and Host organisation. Table 6 provides a summary of the types of data collected by this evaluation.

Type of data obtained	Regular Returning Clients	Outreach Clients	Carers	Hosts	Soundwell staff/ trustees
Service Descriptives					
Service use data (numbers of users across time and location)	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Demographic data of clients	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs)					
Friends and Family Test (FFT) and satisfaction	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs)					
Adapted Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing (WEMWBS) Scale	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Stakeholder experiences					
Qualitative questionnaire data	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
Post it informal data collection	✓	✓	✓	x	x
Interviews (3 Clients, 2 Carers, 2 Hosts and 3 members of Soundwell staff)					
Qualitative interview data	✓	x	✓	✓	✓

Table 6. Types of data used for the Soundwell evaluation 2015-2020

Participants

Data was collected from Soundwell staff and trustees as well as four groups of people connecting with Soundwell services: Returning clients, Outreach clients, Carers, and Host organisations. Consent was obtained from all participants and the data was collected and stored within GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and DPA (Data Protection Act) (2018) standards.

Data collection

Descriptive Service Data: was collected at the point of referral and was separate to the evaluation and formed part of Soundwell's equality and monitoring process.

Between January 2015 and September 2020 PREMs and PROMs, post-it and open text questions providing qualitative data were collected during the Soundwell sessions, in person. Returning clients data was collected at first, 6 weeks, 6 months, and last time (end) sessions. Outreach clients, and Carers were asked for their feedback at regular intervals, but not on every visit. Hosts were asked at every time they had contact with Soundwell.

Qualitative interview data was collected between September and November 2020 and was collected by the evaluators (see below).

Questionnaires used: This data collection was co-produced with clients and therapists in 2015. A mixture of closed PROM and PREMs (Patient Reported Outcomes Measures, and Patient Reported Experience Measures) were used. The PROM used was Adapted Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). The PREMs were Friends and Family test (FFT) and a general satisfaction scale. In addition, several open questions allowing for qualitative data to be collected about people's wider experience of Soundwell were used.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale (WEMWBS) is a validated tool which is used to monitor mental wellbeing in the general population and is often used in the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. WEMWBS' wording was adapted and altered for the Soundwell evaluation to enable it to make sense within the context of music therapy. Adapted WEMWBS data was collected for 5 years, across returning, outreach and carers (note the returning clients' questionnaire was different to the outreach and carers, therefore the data cannot be pooled together, and was reported separately). The adapted WEMWBS data gives insight into the perceived impact of Soundwell on aspects of wellbeing. The responses to the Adapted WEMWBS questions were scored 1-5 (as in standard WEMWBS), and the numerical response was totalled per person to get an overall score.

Stakeholder interview experiences: To understand the full range of stakeholder experiences, data was collected in a variety of ways to suit the clients. The groups of people accessing Soundwell services are often vulnerable and fragile, and some do not wish to provide evaluation responses. To respect their situation and remain unintrusive, feedback was collected via post-it notes at the end of therapy session.

Some clients (e.g. those who are carers and do not necessarily suffer with a mental health conditions) were invited to take part in a focus group. This was conducted over Zoom. Clients were contacted via Soundwell therapy staff initially and asked if they were happy to take part. They were given a participant information sheet and consent form to complete. The participants then joined a Zoom focus group with Dr Marie Polley (MP) and Dr Helen Seers (HS). The focus group explored their experiences of using Soundwell before and during the pandemic and lasted approximately 40 minutes.

Two members of staff and one trustee at Soundwell and two host service providers were also interviewed via the telephone or Zoom. The interviews explored their experience of Soundwell, the impact that they perceive Soundwell makes to the clients and their experiences of the pandemic. Each interview lasted between 35-70 minutes. The focus groups and interviews were recorded, transcribed using Trint software, anonymised and checked by MP, and uploaded into Quirkos software for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis: The qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews were reviewed independently by MP and HS to derive codes. MP thematically analysed the interview and focus group data. Qualitative feedback on post-it notes and the qualitative questionnaire data was analysed using content analysis. Data from carers was analysed separately for the content analysis and the themes between carers and clients was compared to understand any differences that may exist. Quantitative data was analysed in terms of descriptive statistics, and where possible statistical tests. Quantitative data was compared between baseline and follow up timepoints where possible. Statistical tests are a technique used to determine how similar two sets of data are to each other, and if any differences are due to chance alone. The test used is a conservative estimate of statistical significance, therefore if any positive result is found, this shows that the data is showing a robust difference and that the use of Soundwell services are making a difference, and this result is not simply due to chance, or noise in the data. For this evaluation work a t-test (repeated measures was used) using SPSS software.

Appendix D: Demographics detail

Full breakdown of demographics of evaluation sample

Table 7. Percentage of clients in each demographic category, modal highlighted in purple.

Age	Returner (n=75)	Outreach clients (n=86)	Carer (n=11)
15-19	4	0	0
20-24	25	1	0
25-34	19	10	18
35-44	20	26	64
45-54	17	23	9
55-64	8	15	0
65-74	7	19	0
75-84	0	5	9
85+	0	1	0
Gender	Returner (n=77)	Outreach clients (n=178)	Carer (n=34)
Female	47	58	82
Male	51	39	18
Transgender/other	1	2	0
Prefer not to say	1	1	0
Sexuality	Returner (n=64)	Outreach clients (n=118)	Carer (n=5)
Hetero	95	90	100
L, G, Bi	5	6	0
Prefer another term	0	2	0
Prefer not to say	0	3	
Long term health condition	Returner (n=51)	Outreach clients (n=117)	Carer (n=19)
Physical	18	21	68
Mental	82	73	32
Prefer not to say	0	6	0

Ethnicity	Returner (n=73)	Outreach (n=132)	Carer (n=22)
Asian Bangladeshi/ Indian	0	2	5
Asian any other	0	1	0
Black African	0	0	0
Black Caribbean	0	1	0
Black any other	0	0	5
Mixed Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed any other	3	2	23
White British	89	85	64
White any other	8	10	5
Religion	Returner (n=62)	Outreach (n=115)	Carer (n=8)
Atheism	0	4	0
Buddhist	6	4	0
Christian	37	46	75
Hinduism	0	1	0
No religion	50	27	25
Islam	0	6	0
Another term	6	8	0
Prefer not to say	0	3	0
Carer status?	Returner (n=62)	Outreach (n=120)	Carer (n=34)
No	94	73	0
Yes	6	25	100
Prefer not to say	0	2	0

Appendix E: Logic model for Soundwell

In 2018, as part of the current evaluation project, the team carried out a workshop with Soundwell staff to develop a Logic Model setting out planned activities, anticipated outputs and four desired outcomes. This model is summarised in Figure 7.

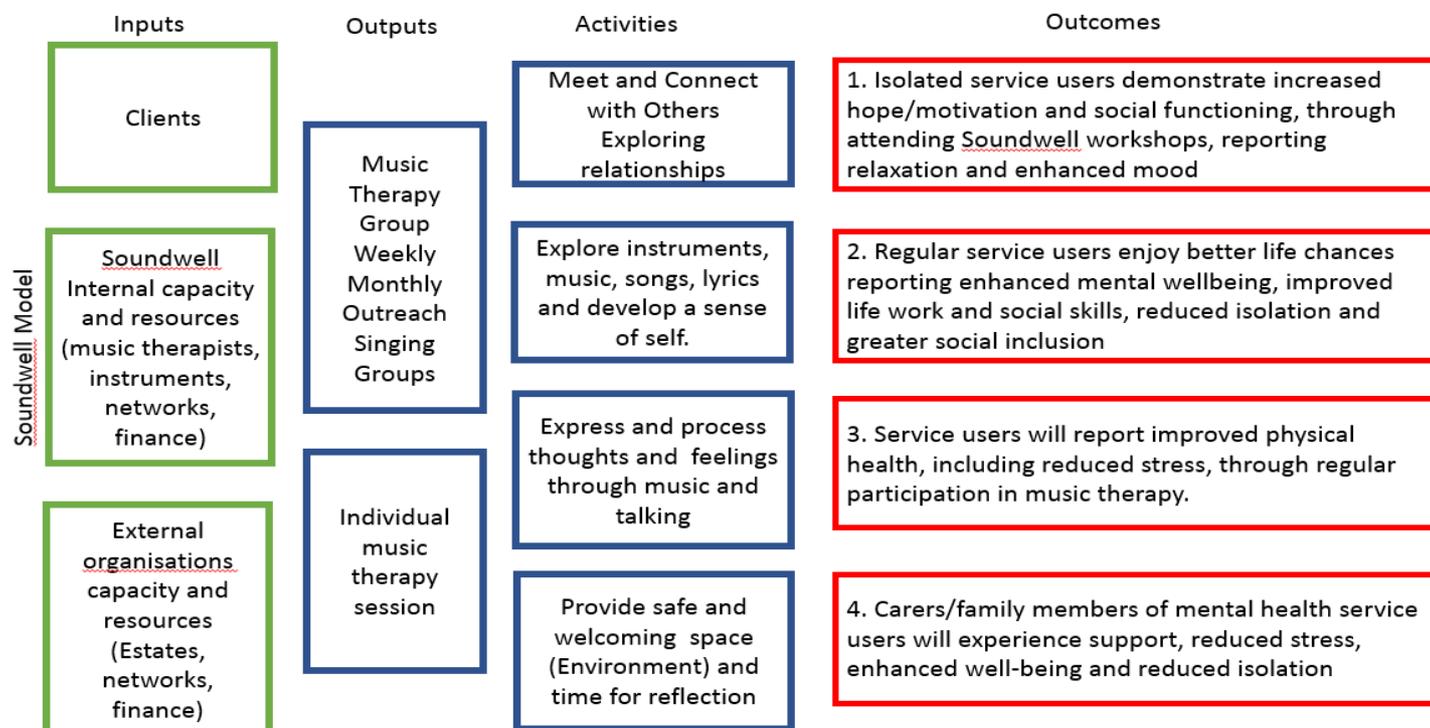


Figure 7. Soundwell’s Logic model (2018)

It is interesting to contrast the logic model developed part way through the 2015-2020 project with the qualitative findings produced. The evaluator generating the qualitative findings in this current report was not part of the 2018 Logic model generation project and was not using this model to guide the emerging themes¹. Contrasting the red boxes outcomes model with the four impact themes from the qualitative analysis (see Findings, Part 5) the following comparison can be made:

- Theme 1: The ability to make connections with music and with people (equivalent to Outcome 1)
- Theme 2: Improvement in emotional status and mood (equivalent to Outcomes 1 and 3)
- Theme 3: Carers’ positive experiences (equivalent to Outcome 4)
- Theme 4: The ability to carry out activities of daily living (equivalent to Outcome 2)

Therefore, all aspects of the logic model have been accounted for by this current evaluation, apart from the physical health improvement, which should be instead re-framed as mental rather than physical health.

¹ The person who produced the Logic model was another evaluator who wrote an interim evaluation report in 2019 – Dr Emma Gibbard

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Glossary of terms

Carers – A carer is anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. They can also be called informal caregivers. The support they give is unpaid.

Clients – A person who uses a service such as Soundwell.

Covid-19 – Coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated as COVID-19. In COVID-19, 'CO' stands for 'corona,' 'VI' for 'virus,' and 'D' for disease.

FFT – The Friends and Family Test was introduced into the English NHS in 2013. It is a single question survey which asks patients whether they would recommend the NHS service they have received to friends and family who need similar treatment or care. It has been adapted to be used in this evaluation.

Logic model – A logic model is a graphic which represents the theory of how an intervention produces its outcomes. It represents, in a simplified way, a hypothesis or 'theory of change' about how an intervention works.

NICE is the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence – an organisation improving health and social care through evidence-based guidance.

Outreach clients – People that access Soundwell services on an ad hoc basis, typically once.

PREMs – Patient Reported Experience Measures (questionnaires measuring experience).

Primary Care Network – Groupings of Primary care services in the NHS in England.

PROMs – Patient Reported Outcome Measures (questionnaires measuring outcomes).

Psychodynamic therapy – A type of psychotherapy that draws on psychoanalytic theory to help people understand the roots of emotional distress, often by exploring unconscious motives and needs.

Qualitative data – qualitative data (also known as categorical data) is data that can be arranged into categories and does not have number associated with it. It is usually written words.

Quantitative data – Quantitative research is concerned with gathering and interpreting numerical data.

Returning clients – People accessing Soundwell services that return for more than one session.

Social prescribing – A means of enabling health professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services.

Soundwell Music Therapy Trust – A registered charity that provides music therapy within the South West for adults whose lives are seriously affected by mental health issues.

WEMWBS – The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale – a questionnaire used for measuring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing.

