

# Impact Report 2023/24



# Welcome

**Our impact report looks at everything that Soundwell has been doing between April 2023 and March 2024. It is an opportunity for us share our successes and learnings with you, to grow our visibility and voice, ensuring that even more people understand the possibilities of music therapy for mental health in both professional and personal contexts.**

Soundwell was established in 2002 in response to an identified need for specialist community-based music therapy for adults with serious mental health need in the South-West. We are the only specialist adult mental health music therapy charity in the UK. Over the last 22 years; Soundwell has steadily flourished from one group to a range of services providing a unique, inclusive and accessible music therapy service for adults affected by serious mental illness across Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) and Bristol. This has included developing our work with unpaid carers as wellbeing support and introducing singing groups for social prescribing. We offer routes for progression throughout the service, including being in advisory roles for the charity. In this way, the service model is shaped to promote agency and recovery. All of our services are free of charge and we engage people experiencing a range of need, including the most vulnerable, marginalised and isolated adults affected by mental illness.

This year, we have seen the number of people accessing our services returning to pre Covid levels, as many rebuild their confidence to access in person support.

102 people attended regular sessions and another 160 people attended one-off outreaches.

Our outreach work has continued to grow as we look to identify and support those experiencing multiple health inequalities compounded by economic deprivation.

Our vision for 2025 is a thriving music therapy service, supporting those with high levels of need in the South West. With the ripples of the current economic crisis being felt across the country, and its myriad impact on mental health, our service is ever more in demand. As the current year presents us with financial challenges we will work towards creating a robust financial basis to deliver our full range of services and respond to new priority groups, creatively.

We are passionate believers in building on the strengths of community to support mental health recovery, harnessing the resources of (mental health, music and cultural) communities. Consultation regarding service and access is at the heart of our planning.

**“We are delighted to present this report which outlines and illustrates the transformation, hope and recovery possible through music therapy at Soundwell.”**

Dr Catherine Warner, Chair of Trustees

**We'd like to acknowledge all participants who make huge efforts to attend their music therapy, especially for the first time, often despite significant challenges. We're grateful for their feedback, which we are proud to share throughout this report.**



# The landscape in which we work

Mental health need is growing across the UK and people experiencing poverty are most at risk. Our work in Bristol and Bath focuses on areas experiencing greater problems with financial hardship, substance and alcohol misuse, mental health needs such as psychosis and personality disorder, and demand for culturally appropriate emotional support.

A recent report written for Bristol City Council shows that across Bristol, there were 1,466 hospital admissions for self-harm and 42 deaths due to suicide in 2020 (almost one death per week), highlighting the level of distress that some are living with. It identifies mental health as one of the 6 priority areas for action in public health strategy.<sup>1</sup>

In B&NES, the latest report written in 2022 states that locally, measures of wellbeing have declined, and more people report experiencing anxiety. Both measures are now worse than the national average. People in B&NES are more likely to be admitted to hospital for self-harm than the national average, with young females and people in our more deprived communities having the highest rates.<sup>2</sup>

*"Your service is a real lifeline for me... this group has been invaluable for getting me out of the house... It's also a reminder of what life was like before and a potential stepping stone back..."*

Participant feedback

*"The work of Soundwell has proven to be an invaluable resource for individuals facing significant mental health challenges. Their dedication to providing high-quality music therapy has not only offered emotional and psychological support to those in need but has also demonstrated a clear and impactful use of funding. We have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of their services and are proud to support an organisation that continues to make such a meaningful difference in people's lives."*

Debby Mulling - Head of Grants and Impact at Global Make Some Noise

People can access Soundwell Music Therapy through referral by a GP, community mental health worker or similar, or by self-referral. We received 74 referrals during 2023/24:

**40% from community mental health team**

**25% were self-referrals**

**16% from voluntary organisations**

**15% from 'other' - including social prescribing and primary care routes**

**4% from supported housing**

We have begun to collect information on how many referrals have come through social prescribing this year and anticipate this referral route to be significant in the next report.



<sup>1</sup>file (bristol.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Mental Health Needs Assessment - 20220707.pdf (bathnes.gov.uk)

# Our approach

For some, having a non-verbal means to express difficult, confusing and intense feeling is imperative. In music therapy, the focus can be on the instruments and music. Through careful facilitation it becomes easier for people to find more effective ways to express feelings and needs, to build relationships and be part of a group. All of these changes can support recovery and rebuild hope.

In all Soundwell sessions, members are encouraged to take ownership of the music therapy, as part of their recovery. People work towards leading on musical ideas, choosing new instruments and songs, leading on discussion and creating playlists and sometimes recording music. Soundwell's Music Therapists are expert in supporting a developing agency in these community groups.

The underpinning therapeutic approach facilitating this development in empowerment and expression, is attention to unconscious processes and psychodynamic theory. Our last independently written 5 year evaluation stated that Soundwell demonstrates:

".. 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..."<sup>3</sup>

Our music therapists gently work with clients' unconscious material from the past, to support more effective ways of managing feelings around past trauma or experience. The relationship between the therapist and the client is key. Music in the form of improvisation, listening, song writing or singing is used to achieve therapeutic goals; in fact, music is the motivating and inspiring medium that draws people in and drives the process.

<sup>3</sup>Soundwell-2015-2020-Evaluation-2021-Final.pdf.

# Outcome reporting

We rigorously monitor all outcomes, and our last independently written evaluation shows that we have a 92% approval rating and over 70% success across all of our therapeutic measures. There were increases in all aspects of mental health measured and there was a statistically significant improvement in these scores from first visit to final visit for clients returning to Soundwell.

The outcomes we measure are:

## 1. Positive personal change, e.g.

- a) Reduced stress/increased relaxation
- b) Improved mood
- c) Increased insight/self-awareness
- d) Increased confidence and self-esteem
- e) Maintenance of mental health

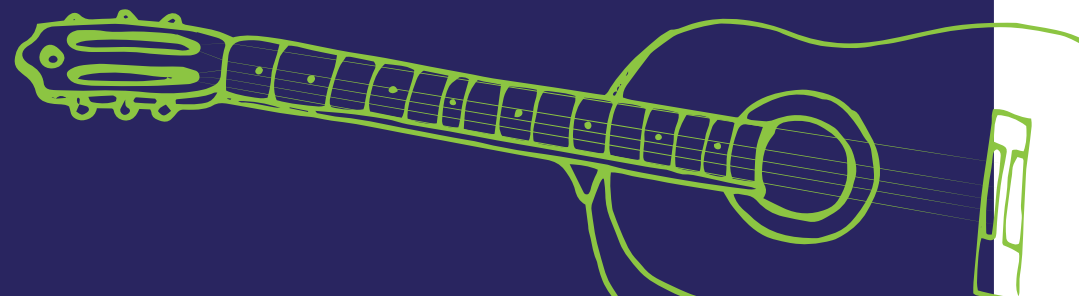
## 2. Improved social connections, e.g.

- a) More effective non-verbal and verbal communication
- b) Better quality of relationships
- c) Empowerment and increased social independence

## 3. Improved resource and resilience, e.g.

- a) Increased levels of attendance
- b) Talking about/planning for the future
- c) Managing transitions more easily
- d) Increased engagement in other activities, volunteering or work

## 4. Client's own goal-measured with people attending regular sessions.





# 20-week music therapy recovery groups

**These music psychotherapy groups are 20 weeks long and offer 6 spaces each. We use a range of high quality, accessible instruments from around the world (percussion, drums, keyboards, iPads/some music tech, guitars, xylophones, gongs).**

At their own pace, people might talk about what's going on in their lives now or in the past, and the music and support of the therapists can help process this. We might also notice ways people respond to each other and it can be an opportunity to explore relating patterns. Music therapy, like other therapies, can be a way to build a sense of identity. For some people, having the instruments might make it feel possible to be in a group, without pressure to find words. The therapy process in a 20-week group has the potential to go deeper allowing for more significant change and exploration of feelings to happen.

## Key Statistics

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Number of 20-week series delivered | 4  |
| Number of individuals who attended | 20 |

## Participants outcome reported

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Positive personal change         | 95% |
| Improved social connections      | 90% |
| Improved resource and resilience | 80% |
| Own personal goal                | 85% |



*"I did feel a shift in happiness and encouragement. Speaking to the group about how I was feeling was hugely beneficial. I would cast my mind back on the previous session and also looked forward to the next session. Its helped me to feel excited and joyful again. I felt an encouragement to try new things and speak in front of people."*

Client feedback

# Long term monthly open groups

## Monthly open groups in Bristol and Bath

The Open groups are primarily improvisation based instrumental sessions. Music Therapists guide the group through active music making, for relaxation, lifting mood and building connections with others in a group (non-verbal and verbal). People often left feeling more energised, motivated and relaxed.

*"I always feel much better after a session, it's great to be able to communicate with other people through my music. You can share any problems you have with the group if you wish to"*

Participant feedback

### Key Statistics

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Numbers of monthly groups          | 2  |
| Number of sessions delivered       | 22 |
| Number of individuals who attended | 27 |

### Participants outcome reported

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Positive personal change         | 93% |
| Improved social connections      | 78% |
| Improved resource and resilience | 70% |

## Monthly online listening group

This group meets for an hour a month via online video conferencing programme Zoom. We use the music streaming platform Spotify to share and listen to favourite or meaningful pieces of music together, using themes suggested by group members, discuss music and lyrics and think about how music can support wellbeing at home. Playlists are created for the group, using songs that have been suggested in sessions, by the group, to be used in-between groups for lifting mood, increasing motivation and for relaxation purposes.

Established during lock down this online group continues to be an important option for some people would not feel able to regularly attend an in-person group due to mental/physical health needs.

*"...with experiencing anxiety disorder amongst other issues, I was pleasantly surprised to be able to listen to the music and hear other folks thoughts and at times be able to speak as well."*

Participant feedback

### Key Statistics

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Number of sessions delivered       | 11 |
| Number of individuals who attended | 9  |

### Participants outcome reported

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Positive personal change         | 78% |
| Improved social connections      | 44% |
| Improved resource and resilience | 89% |

# Singing for Wellbeing

There has been much written generally about the physiological and psychological benefits of singing, especially in a group or choir. It is recognised that singing in choirs can specifically improve mood and reduce levels of stress, and adults with more complex mental health issues can gain important health and social benefits from singing in a group.

Our fortnightly singing group is designed to be a hybrid between a community choir and therapy group using singing. These sessions include relaxation and vocal warm-ups, which not only provide a warm up to singing, but also offer relaxation techniques which can be carried out at home. Songs are chosen by the group, and there is space for discussion about the lyrics and meaning of the songs and any emotions they may bring up. These sessions have proven to be a quick way of building unity and confidence, both individually and as part of a group.

## Key Statistics

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Number of sessions delivered       | 47 |
| Number of individuals who attended | 31 |

## Participants outcome reported

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Positive personal change         | 97% |
| Improved social connections      | 90% |
| Improved resource and resilience | 71% |

**"It's really good for uplifting my spirits. Unity in the community."**

**"Singing is so uplifting and gives me some independence from my support workers."**

Participant feedback

# Individual Music Therapy



We have been able to offer 1-1 music therapy sessions to 7 individuals across Bristol and Bath. These 1-1 spaces are reserved for people who want to work on specific issues, or for people who aren't ready for groups yet.

In our 1-1 sessions we use MYCaW<sup>4</sup>, an individualised questionnaire designed for evaluating holistic and personalised approaches to supporting people. We measured people's feelings about 2 problems they need support with, before and after their course of therapy sessions. This allows a more rigorous approach to capturing the voice of the service users beyond the anecdotal. There was a 100% improvement in feeling about these 2 problems, across clients attending 1-1 sessions who answered the questionnaire.

## Key Statistics

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Number of sessions delivered       | 44 |
| Number of individuals who attended | 7  |

## Participants outcome reported

|                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Positive personal change         | 100% |
| Improved social connections      | 57%  |
| Improved resource and resilience | 86%  |

**"It has allowed me to grow on a whole new dimension"**

Participant feedback

<sup>4</sup>MYCaW® - Meaningful Measures - The home of MYCaW® and MYMOP®

# Carers Group

There are an estimated 5 million unpaid carers across England and Wales<sup>(1)</sup> and unpaid carers in the UK provide social care to an equivalent cost of around 5.7 billion pounds per year<sup>(1)</sup>. The health and wellbeing impacts on carers are well-documented, with carers seven times more likely to report always or often feeling lonely when compared to the general population<sup>(2)</sup> and rates of poor mental health are high<sup>(3)</sup>. As two thirds of us are likely to find ourselves as an unpaid carer at some point in our lives<sup>(4)</sup>, there is an urgent need for increased support. A recent large-scale carers survey found that 62% of respondents needed more support to enable them to look after their health and wellbeing<sup>(3)</sup>.

Soundwell has facilitated a monthly support group for unpaid carers in Bath and North-East Somerset (B&NES) for over ten years. The group offers a unique opportunity to explore sounds and instruments together, whilst providing respite, peer support and wellbeing.

**100%** of carers attending sessions this year reported that they:

- Felt less stress/more relaxed
- Felt their mood improved
- Were able to release or explore feelings
- Felt more connected with others
- Felt more supported
- Felt more able to ask for what they need
- Felt their wellbeing had improved

In the Friends and Family test **100%** of carers in the group said they would be extremely likely to recommend the sessions to others.



## Key Statistics

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Number of sessions delivered       | 11 |
| Number of individuals who attended | 8  |

## Participants outcome reported

|                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Positive personal change         | 100% |
| Improved social connections      | 88%  |
| Improved resource and resilience | 63%  |

1 - Office for National Statistics (2023), ONS website, statistical bulletin [online], Available from Unpaid care, England and Wales: Census 2021 and Unpaid carers provide social care worth £57 billion - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) [accessed online 1 September 2023].

2 - Carers Week (2019) Getting Carers Connected [online], Available from getting-carers-connected.pdf (carersuk.org) [accessed online 1 September 2023].

3 - Carers UK (2022) State of Caring, A snapshot of unpaid care in the UK [online], Available from soc22\_final\_web.pdf (carersuk.org) [accessed online 1 September 2023].

4 - Carers UK (2019) Will I Care? The likelihood of being a carer in adult life [online], Available from carersrightsdaynov19final-2.pdf (carersuk.org) [accessed online 1 September 2023].



# Carers Group

## Respite

The group offers a space for carers away from their caring responsibilities. It's a chance to try something new, be playful and nurture creativity, perhaps exploring a new side of themselves.

- "Soundwell is a real oasis of me-time, which I really value and appreciate"
- "Music is an escape, you feel you are in a different world. I really look forward to the group every month, my life would become more empty without it."

## Peer Support

An important part of the group is the chance to connect with other carers, sharing experiences with people who understand and receiving support from group members and therapists. There's a real sense of community in the group and it can reduce feelings of isolation.

- "Everyone is very supportive. You do go away feeling that you are not the only one having a difficult time - and sharing your own problems seems to make the burden lighter."
- "There is a sense of community and shared purpose which is quite unique."

## Wellbeing

We've found that sessions can improve mood, reduce stress and help carers feel recharged, ready to step back into their caring role. Improvising music together allows carers to express, whatever emotions they are feeling and can help people to feel both relaxed and energised.

- "It helps release emotions, still my mind and give peace in me in the way that only music making can. And I'm not a musician. Anyone can do it."
- "I find the sounds we make together are really special – both calming and stimulating. I went away from the last session feeling more able to cope with what life is demanding of me right now."



# Outreach work

We are grateful to our host organisations and outreach participants, who invited us in to offer outreaches. These included the following:

Bristol- Changes (Barton Hill), Redcatch Community Gardens (Knowle), Wellbeing College (St Pauls), 4 outreaches at Knowle West Health Park (Knowle West).

Bath- Party in the City (city centre), Bath Mind Open Opportunities Group (city centre), Avon and Wiltshire Partnership (AWP) Carers day (Keynsham), AWP World Mental Health day event (Bath City Farm, Twerton), ReMind UK (Royal United Hospital, Bath).



*“Began the session very fraught and anxious. After session I am uplifted and happy! :)”*

*“I enjoyed playing instruments, coming together as a group, listening to the instruments. Feeling energised, empowered”*

Participant feedback

**100% of host organisations thought that the session was useful for their clients.**

## Key Statistics

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Number of sessions delivered       | 13  |
| Number of individuals who attended | 160 |

Outreach participants surveyed following their session reported:

- 92% felt their mood had improved
- 92% felt more confident as a result of attending the outreach session
- 93% felt more connected with others
- 92% felt more hopeful
- 86% felt more positive about attending other groups

*“We are so grateful to Soundwell for delivering an exceptional session. (Therapists).. skilfully facilitated the event with a remarkable sense of ease and tranquillity, creating a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere that encouraged active participation from all attendees.”*

*“Anyone with mental health condition can benefit from playing or listening to music. I think most if not all of the group felt better at the end of the session than they had at the start. Some were able to express that at the time.”*

Host organisation feedback

# Soundwell Financial Activities 2023/24

This year we raised £143,149 in the following ways



Trusts & Foundations  
**£89,825**



Statutory Income  
**£10,000**



Community Fundraising  
**£42,301**



Other Income  
**£1,023**

We received £14,212 in pro bono services, supporting governance and the creation of professional marketing materials to promote our services.



"The work Soundwell do to help those with mental health needs is invaluable and being able to be a small part of that has been very rewarding for us all."

Richard Spruce, Creative Director, Stuff

We spent £183,908 across our charity ensuring a safe, consistent and well managed service for our participants.

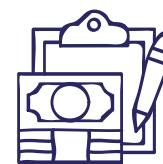


Service Delivery  
**£111,307**

50% 20 week groups  
13% Singing groups  
12% 1-1 sessions  
9% Open groups  
7% Outreach  
5% Carers group  
4% Online group



Fundraising  
**£15,101**



Finance & Admin  
**£42,344**



Governance  
**£15,156**

At year ended 31st March 2024 we held £93,216 in funds.

**£42,034**  
Restricted funds



**£51,182**  
Unrestricted funds

# Thank you

**Thank you to the following organisations and individuals for supporting our work.**

## **Charitable Trust and Foundations**

Asda Foundation  
Barchester  
Bristol City Health  
B&NES Health Inequalities Fund  
Denman Charitable Trust  
Douglas Arter  
Global Make Some Noise  
Henry Smith Charity  
The Lark Trust  
Morrisons Foundation  
People's Health Lottery  
Postcode Local Trust  
Quartet  
Scott Will Charitable Trust  
Schrierier Foundation  
Simon Rivett Carnac Trust  
The Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust  
Society of Merchant Ventures

## **Community Groups and Individuals**

St Michaels Church, Oxford  
Mrs ME Whitmore  
Our Bath Half runners and committed fundraisers  
Our monthly and regular donors  
Participants; for donations and given consent for feedback to be used  
Volunteer Consultants  
Our wonderful board of dedicated and knowledgeable Trustees

All feedback and photographs in this report have consent to be shared. Photographs are used to illustrate the nature of our work and do not include real therapy sessions or service users.

**Our Corporate Partners for providing pro bono expertise and skills**

TLT Solicitors  
Stuff  
GA Agency

## **Organisational Partners**

HCRG Wellbeing Courses  
Sirona Care and Health CIC  
Bath & District Scout HQ  
Bedminster Quaker Meeting House  
Knowle West Health Park  
3SG

Photograph credit to Gareth Hamer @gazhamer – thank you for your patience in helping us to portray the depth of our work in your photographs.

A special thank you to Stuff for their pro bono support in the creation of this report, thank you for your ongoing patience, professionalism and enthusiasm in supporting our work.

**For more information about our work or to enquire about supporting us or accessing our services you can contact us at:**

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