



# B SHARP'S IMPACT: MUSIC FOR ALL PROGRAMME EVALUATION 2021-2023

## West Dorset Umbrella Music Centre

Our aim was to establish an inclusive 'Virtual Music Centre' across West Dorset, in partnership with Dorset Music Hub. We wanted to increase musical engagement for young people facing barriers to participation in music.

B Sharp led a partnership programme with Dorset Music Hub, piloting and developing an inclusive, 'Virtual Music Centre' in a rurally isolated area, and developing a model of how Hub and partner organisations can integrate programmes, to reach children and young people facing barriers and support their progression.



## Programme overview

The 'Virtual Music Centre' programme involved:

- Weekly inclusive creative music sessions for children and young people aged 8 – 18. Young people are facilitated to work together to create their own tracks and songs. Groups are open - access, mixed age, and open to all musical abilities including beginners. Groups include young people who are rurally isolated and economically disadvantaged, as well as those who are disabled or have additional needs or vulnerabilities (SEMH, SEN/D, ASD).
- One- to-one music sessions for young people who are unable to attend group sessions, and support to progress into ongoing music making. Young people attending these sessions were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), mostly due to ASD, SEMH or Social Anxiety.
- Music-making sessions with children aged 2 -5 in local rural preschools and schools, to encourage children's inherent musicality, and supported leadership training for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Staff
- Workforce development and training programme for music leaders and young trainees (age 16 -25), to increase B Sharp's capacity to support young people experiencing challenging circumstances to access high quality, developmental music making
- Training and mentoring programme for young trainees (age 15 -25) with mentoring and practical work experience opportunities to further personal development and leadership skills
- Joint programme planning, strategic development and workforce development with Dorset Music education Hub.

# PARTICIPATION

- 797 individual children and young people took part
- 552 took part in more than 3 sessions
- 564 music sessions delivered
- 14 music leaders employed
- 9 young leaders took part in training, mentoring and paid work experience
- 53% of participants face at least one barrier to participation

The barriers to participation that they face include:

- Economic disadvantage
- Rural Isolation
- Disabled (particularly with ASC/ADHD, Processing and Learning Difficulties)
- NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training)
- Experiencing SEMH (Social, Emotional or Mental Health) issues



In addition our early years and families programme (MusicTogether) has worked with children aged 0-3, and their families who are at risk of social isolation, loneliness and poor mental health.

Rural isolation presents challenges to West Dorset children and young people – geographical isolation, poor transport systems, limited access to services/opportunities, training, work experience and employment, negatively impacting personal development and aspiration. Rural isolation exacerbates the negative effects of other barriers.





# MUSICAL PROGRESSION

## Intended Outcome

CYP improve their musical skills and musical confidence (including instrumental skills/technical skills, songwriting and composition skills, singing, performance skills, ability to play as part of a group, creative and musical ideas, confidence in co-creation and musical judgements)

## Progress:

Young people's self-evaluation tells us 96% feel they have improved their musical skills and confidence. This is true across all session formats - regular inclusive ensemble groups, 1-to-1 sessions & outreach sessions with partners.

Particular skills young people mention are:  
instrumental skills, singing, being confident, performing, listening, working with others, patience, writing songs.

Music Leaders observations and parents' feedback corroborate this.

Music Leader observations show 20% have made profound progress in musical skills and confidence, 47% significant, 20% some and 0% none.

100% of partners (Early Years settings, ASCape, Mountjoy School, Activate, Dorset Council HAF) say participants' musical skills and confidence have improved through the project.

"It has built confidence & inspired her to continue with song-writing as has given her skills to write music"  
(Parent, of young person aged 14)

In Early Years, children's musical progress that was noted by EYFS staff:

Joining in  
Singing more  
Noticing and talking about music at home  
Moving rhythmically  
Moving to the beat  
Dancing  
Making up their own songs

Watch some of our participants talk about their musical progression and confidence here:



"Everybody developed musically though C, L, S, H & M stood out as getting more musically confident with singing and rhythm. It was amazing to see M engaging for so long with such intent"

Support Worker,  
Mountjoy Special School



"It's been great developing the piano. I'm actually really surprised how easy it was with the key signature. Being able to play music that I listen to — this feels rewarding"  
B, 1-to-1 participant, NEET with ASC

# INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

## Intended Outcome

Young people will expand and improve their interpersonal relationships, through improved confidence and communication, in order to take the next step in their lives.

## Progress:

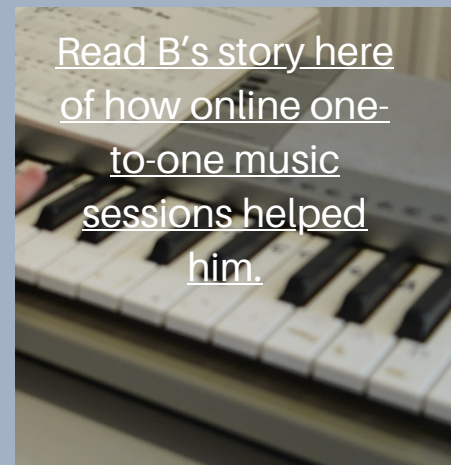
Our project evaluation also tells us that young people have expanded and improved their interpersonal relationships, through improved confidence and communication, in order to take the next step in their lives.

- Young people's self-evaluation tells us 95% enjoyed the groups socially and felt able to make friends. Their qualitative feedback tells us they enjoy meeting new young people, and making friends through working alongside others to make music. They appreciate the positive, supportive relationships they form with the adults in the groups - the music leaders and pastoral care staff - and feel that the 'no-pressure', 'not-judgy' environment, helps them build their social confidence.
- Music Leader observations show 33% have made profound social progression, 33% significant, 33% some and 0% none. Partners and parents agree that participants' social confidence has improved.

*"Thank you and to all that have supported and helped L during his time with you. His confidence grew and feeling part of a wonderful 'band' was very special."  
Mother of L, with ASD*



Young people taking part in the one-to-one sessions appreciate the interactions they have had with music leaders over the course of the sessions, and feel this has helped them feel more connected, and become more socially confident.





Of particular note is new MusicTogether session for age 0 – 3, and parents at risk of social isolation. This was the first post-covid group that many of these babies and toddlers attended, and parents tell us that they have thrived through interacting with others. Parents also tell us they have made new connections with other parents through the music-making, and these connections and new social interactions have improved their wellbeing.

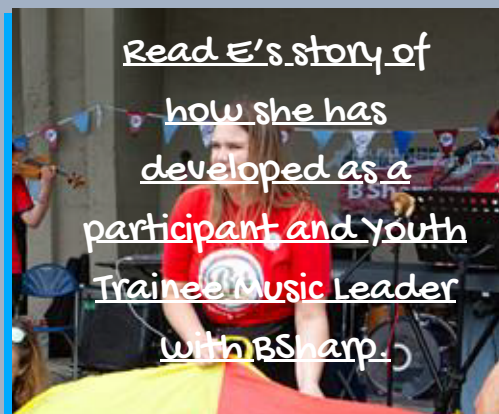


Watch Jacques' story here about how he has progressed as a musician and a music leader with B Sharp



Our Young Trainee Music Leaders feel that their involvement in the programme has helped them develop new communication skills – in leading activities and in working as part of a team with music leaders, and they feel new confidence through this.

Read E's story of how she has developed as a participant and Youth Trainee Music Leader with B Sharp.



"Being a Young Leader with B Sharp has taught me to trust my own skills that I've been developing, and kind of know that you can lead a group of young people, and that you have something to offer."  
E, age 23, Young Trainee Music Leader

"It's something to look forward to each week"  
Parent at Early Years weekly group



# INCREASED DIVERSITY OF PARTICIPATION

## Intended Outcome

More diverse children and young people are able to access more diverse music opportunities because of BSharp's partnership with Dorset Music Hub.

*"BSharp has been X's safe space over the last year and has been really useful in helping him to rebuild his confidence after two very difficult years at [school]" Parent of X with ADHD/ASC*



## Progress:

We have been successful in supporting an increasing number of children and young people in our region facing barriers to exclusion to access music opportunities.

Across our programme 53% of our participants faced at least one barrier to taking part (including economic disadvantage, poor mental health, disability, rural isolation).

This increase in participation has been due to:

- Clearly signposted trust-based bursary and free places in sessions
- Pastoral Support Workers in sessions to enable young people to take part who need additional support
- Partnerships with organisations who support young people facing barriers including youth services, social prescribing, disability support organisations, schools (ASCape, The SELF Service, Dorset Council HAF, Activate, Headlight, Mountjoy School) - who have referred young people to our services, hosted outreach engagement sessions, and helped support young people into ongoing regular music making when needed.

*"P was able to attend all 3 days without panic attacks and enjoyed socialising with a group for the first time in 3 years"*

*Parent of young person with ASC, and SEMt issues*

*"I want to thank you and the team at B Sharp again I felt it was a really safe and professionally held way for more vulnerable young people to access music."*

*Parent of young person with ASD/Social Anxiety*



We have also diversified the range of music opportunities on offer – we offer online BeatsCollective sessions for young people interested in production and digital music making, and more opportunities for younger children (aged 5 – 8), and families to take part in a range of music activities including samba, African drumming, and family boogies featuring dance/rave and disco.



*"It's been great having professional producers providing online activities for young people as part of the online youth club – the young people really are getting access to a really professional experience, that they are definitely not getting anywhere else"*  
E, Youth Worker, DYS Space



Our partnership with DMEH has strengthened over the programme – we now regularly liaise around programming and workforce development in West Dorset, and jointly plan and deliver activities.

- We have run joint taster days, and co-locate our ensemble activities to form a fledgling music centre based at Colfox School.
- We have attended DMH area school's forums, co-delivered a family music day, co-delivered industry routes sessions, shared practice with and mentored Dorset Music Hub workforce & led sessions at Music Leader Conferences.
- We receive referrals of young people to our one-to-one programmes via Dorset Music Hub.

# PROJECT REFLECTION

## Evaluation Methodology

In order to assess our progress against the outcomes we asked young people regularly (termly) for their feedback and asked them for their own self-assessment of their progress against the outcomes, and compared this with Music Leader's, Partner's and Parent's observations on changes.

We collected this feedback in a variety of ways, through feedback forms and one to one interviews.

We collected feedback from 103 individual young people, 29 partners/parents, 9 music leaders.

We shared learning regular with Dorset Music Hub to ensure collaborative development of the West Dorset Umbrella Music Centre.



## Project Learning

We have learned that this model of delivery is effective in our rural area. Through providing diverse musical activities in varied locations, co-located alongside statutory/school/community partners, in-person and digital, with family involvement, tight oversight of children and young people's individual needs, pastoral care, and progression routes, a wider group of children and young people are able to take part in music making that meets their interests and needs.

B Sharp and Devon Music Hub now have a strong, mutually beneficial formal partnership agreement in place to co-develop activity, create industry routes, and collaborate on workforce and early years strategy development.

We hoped that our activity would 'seed' the formation of other regular music making opportunities into the Virtual Music centre 'umbrella', led by Dorset Music Hub or other organisations. This has happened more slowly than we had hoped.



## Looking to the future

We will continue to work with Dorset Music Hub to develop this impactful model of music provision for the region.

We will build on our initial successes, learning and feedback, to strengthen and develop the model.

We particularly want to look at:

1. Growing the digital production/music offer – we're just beginning to diversify our musical output with regular participation in online production sessions (through DYS Space partnership). We want to develop these sessions to provide relevant progression, through online masterclasses, in-person meets /performance and set opportunities.
2. Developing our joint monitoring and evaluation mechanisms with Dorset Music Hub, to ensure we can support individualised progression for young people across the region.



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**ARTS COUNCIL  
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