

VOCAL BEATS

Year 2 Report 2018-19
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Singing and beatboxing workshops for children and young people with complex heart and lung conditions, aiming to increase personal resilience, confidence and self-expression

Cover photograph courtesy of Elam Forrester

Background

Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust

Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust is the UK's largest specialist centre for the treatment of heart and lung diseases. Working from two sites, Royal Brompton Hospital in Chelsea, London, and Harefield Hospital, near Uxbridge, the Trust has an international reputation for the expertise of its staff, high standard of care and research successes. Experts at the Trust treat patients from all age groups, providing some of the most complex surgery and sophisticated treatments available anywhere in the world.

Rose Ward & Paediatric Intensive Care Unit

The paediatric department is a national referral centre for children, offering a full range of diagnostic and treatments, including surgical interventions from prenatal stage to 16-year olds. Hospitalised children face a myriad of complex challenges, which can be further affected by prolonged and/or recurrent stays in hospital. The Trust's Play Service ensures that every young person and their families have the best possible hospital experience during their stay, offering a range of fun and social activities in the Play Room/by the bedside. In addition, the Chelsea Community Hospital School provides the National Curriculum for all young people at the Trust.

rb&hArts

rb&hArts is delivered through Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospitals Charity with 3.6 (FTE) staff members. It is charitably funded to bring the benefits of the arts to support in and outpatients and the local communities surrounding each hospital. The arts programme aims to increase levels of wellbeing, enhance the patient experience and improve the healthcare estate through the arts. It first began in 2002 and now, in a typical year, runs over 500 interventions across arts, music, and participatory arts working with 30 artists recording over 6,500 participants. The core creative programme includes 3 weekly Singing for Breathing workshops for older people living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD); 2 musicians in residence playing for adults providing 6 hours of live music per week, temporary exhibitions, and Crafternoons which offer participatory arts and crafts workshops 10 hours per month.

Vocal Beats

Vocal Beats is a weekly music project for hospitalised young people aged 0-25-years old with cardiothoracic diseases at Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust. The project currently delivers over 900 hours of participatory music per year facilitated by sing/song-writers Heather McClelland and Stac Dowdeswell, and champion beatboxers Bellatrix and MC Zani. It aims to facilitate access to high-quality music-making opportunities to young people (and their families) to increase levels of mental wellbeing, whilst developing music skills and enhancing the patient experience.



Photograph courtesy of Elam Forrester

Video: Heather and Bellatrix perform with Harvey and Dr Rigby:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aiUaBbo_bA&t=1s

Vocal Beats Achievements June 2018-May 2019

- Working with 330 young people aged 0-25-years, with 52% of 0-16-year olds receiving music sessions multiple times through multiple/long-term hospital admissions, enabling them able to develop their music-making as a result;
- Working with 173 participants under the age of 5, with evidence indicating developments in musical understanding and increases in confidence, happiness levels and moments for family bonding;
- Feedback from clinical paediatric staff showing 93% would recommend Vocal Beats to patients and their families, with 83% strongly agreeing Vocal Beats has a positive overall impact on the ward. Vocal Beats was also credited in Rose Ward receiving a score of 'Outstanding' from the Care Quality Commission;
- Expansion of Vocal Beats to include 17-25-year olds on adult wards, offering 1-2-1 vocal coaching sessions. Feedback from participants indicates increase in happiness, wellbeing and musical skills with a fascinating insight into this cohort's experience through musician's reflecting practice;
- Launch of the Vocal Beats Youth Ambassador programme to co-produce an online music-making network for young people living with chronic and/or life-limiting conditions. Four ambassadors are currently in post with more being recruited alongside the development of a youth forum at the Trust;
- Collaboration with clinical physiotherapists and music in healthcare staff across the UK providing key training for Vocal Beats musicians in respiratory diseases such as cystic fibrosis and difficult asthma, bridging the gap between medical and music to support participant's recovery;
- Launch of rb&hArts musicians mentorship programme in partnership with Sound Connections, inducting 5 early career musicians looking to gain experience working

in clinical settings, providing them with 40 hours of shadowing time, clinical governance and 1-2-1 mentoring.

- Broad outreach in promoting the programme including presenting at leading national conferences and being featured on television.
- Shortlisted for a Royal Society of Public Health Award in the Arts and Health category, as of June 2019.
- rb&hArts lead Karen Taylor was awarded a Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospitals Staff Champion Award for innovative ideas for service to customers, in recognition for her work on Vocal Beats.

Expanding Vocal Beats' offer has provided insight into the experience of young people living with chronic conditions, particularly cystic fibrosis, and the challenges they face undergoing transition from paediatric to adult services. Supported by clinical staff delivering training in both respiratory conditions and the experience of young hospitalised people, our work with 17-25-year olds has been exploring ways to improve both wellbeing and physical health. A new focus on co-production has seen our approach shift to prioritise youth voice more effectively, actively involving and consulting young people at the outset of project development and delivery. The recruitment of the Vocal Beats Ambassador programme, alongside the development of a new youth forum at RBHT, is advocating the opinions of young people both within our programme and across the Trust at large.

The project is generously funded by BBC Children in Need, Youth Music, BUPA, Co-op Foundation Building Connections Youth Strand, and The Brompton Fountain.

Sharing Practice

This year we have shared our work via:

- The National Association for Musicians in Healthcare hosted by Alder Hey Hospital, Liverpool to share practice with other professionals working in the sector;
- Arts Council England's Arts & Health Meeting for staff in collaboration with GOSH Arts;
- Box Con Festival, part of the UK Beatbox Championships at Battersea Arts Centre to promote Vocal Beats to beatbox musicians as a potential career opportunity and place the project within the context of professional contemporary music;
- A shared practice meeting for practitioners working with respiratory patients including physiotherapists, musicians, singing for lung health practitioners and music therapists, hosted by rb&hArts;
- Children in Need special episode of BBC Celebrity Bargain Hunt, which featured Vocal Beats as a (part-funded) Children in Need project.
- Members of our team have written and published blogs from their personal perspectives on the Youth Music Network.



*Heather McClelland and Project Co-ordinator Conni Rosewarne present Vocal Beats at the UK Beatbox Championships in November 2018
Photograph courtesy of the UK Beatbox Championships.*

Evaluation

Participant Engagement

Vocal Beats engaged with 330 young people aged 0-25-years during the period June 2018-May 2019, providing 13 hours of music interventions per week. This took place across two children's wards (Rose Ward and PICU) and two adult wards (Foulis Ward and Rowan Ward), as well as online workshops.

Age Range	Female	Male
0-5	83	90
6-11	35	20
12-15	26	25
16-18	11	0
19-25	23	12
Unknown Age	2	3
Total	180	150

Methodology

Through music, Vocal Beats aims to support young people with the following objectives:

1. Improve levels of wellbeing
2. Increase levels of music skills
3. Increase levels of confidence
4. Enhance the patient experience/community spirit on Rose Ward

r&hArts used a variety of evaluation methods to capture outcomes including Arts Observation Scales (ArtsObs – devised by Dr Daisy Fancourt), amended Youth Music scales across all age-groups, hand-written feedback forms from young people, guardians and clinicians, and case studies, as well as photography & film. Musicians and Project Co-

ordinator captured data at the end of every session throughout the delivery period. Data was collated and analysed throughout the year.

Outcomes and Impact

The following outcomes were outlined and measured in agreement with Youth Music.



Photograph courtesy of Elam Forrester
Video: Ben jams with Bellatrix <https://youtu.be/QcaErQZeBA0>

Outcome 1: increasing musical understanding in young musicians age 0-5

“I see how our patients engage with them, it is fascinating. They have so much talent and bring harmony to the unit. I find it the best non-pharmacological therapy for our patients, even for nurses too!”

– clinical staff

Amended Early Years Musical Assessment Scales completed by musicians showed the following:

Participants aged 0-2:

- 89% moved or affected by music (e.g. soothed and settled by lullabies)
- 83% looked at source of music with visible curiosity (e.g., suddenly smiling, moving to get a closer look, etc.).
- 88% experienced positive shared moment with family that is fun, comforting and/or a distraction from hospital setting

Participants aged 3-5:

- 60% participated in play-songs and/or singing along
- 100% demonstrated creative control (conducting, song-writing, requesting songs)
- 70% showed responses to performed music, from intelligent listening to energetic dancing

50 Arts Observation scales show:

- 70% participants learning new musical skills including singing, beatboxing, ukulele, and creative-control
- 90% participants feeling more relaxed after music intervention
- 90% participants distracted from hospital settings

Surveys undertaken by clinical staff in April 2019 to gather perspectives on the impact of Vocal Beats. 29 completed surveys showed:

- 93% would recommend Vocal Beats to patients and their families
- 83% strongly agreed Vocal Beats has a positive overall impact on the ward
- Comments noted visible improvements in participants' moods, relaxation and distraction, and musical development:

Outcome 2: increasing wellbeing in participants age 17-25

“It’s so nice to see her doing something positive *because* of her cystic fibrosis, not in spite of it. She enjoys the music sessions and looks forward to them. They really make a difference to her day”

– parent of young ambassador

Musicians Heather McClelland and Stac Dowdeswell kept reflective journals of their time on the wards, noting music teaching techniques used, reflecting on what worked well and what could be improved, along with observations of participant’s responses and levels of engagement. The observational reflective diaries have been effective at capturing detailed musical development - “She took her time getting the hand position right but when she got it she strummed the chord with her thumb and everyone, including me was impressed with how clean and warm the sound was”.

Diaries described 1-2-1s and very personal moments between participants, families and the musicians beyond music, suggesting the sessions created a supportive space for emotional expression and release:

“Cate* was talking about a wedding she had coming up. She was trying to find a dress to cover her scars. She didn’t know if she needed a coat because she hadn’t been out for the entirety of 2018 and she started to cry. She enjoyed singing after our usual exercises and said, “that’s really cheered me up!””.

The programme developed social spaces for young people both on and off-line. Participants on Rowan ward have been meeting for group music sessions, and young ambassadors are working collaboratively with artists to curate an online music space for peer support. This is particularly crucial for participants with cystic fibrosis who cannot meet in person due to risk of cross-infection and therefore, more at risk of social isolation. Consultation with groups of young people has informed this work with interactive mind-mapping exercises undertaken at the hospital youth club.

Participants completed amended Youth Music musical development and wellbeing surveys. 19 surveys completed by 17-25-year olds showed:

- 90% of respondents feeling relaxed after a music session;
- 84% feeling optimistic about the future;

- 84% feeling that music-making allows them to feel creative;
- 63% feeling committed to their own music-making;
- 95% 'agreed' they are good at making sense of what other people are expressing through music.

rb&hArts launched the Vocal Beats Young Ambassador programme in January 2019, successfully recruiting four young ambassadors aged 18-25 to promote youth voice and participation in musical activities for other young people living with chronic and/or life-limiting conditions. Ambassadors have spent 30 hours working both independently and with Heather McClelland to devise a programme of online music lessons and resources. This time will be used to work towards achieving an Arts Award. All three have already reported gaining new skills and an increase in confidence.

“I have enjoyed meeting new people and being part of something that could really have a positive impact on other’s lives. I love being able to be creative and the environment is so supportive that I feel like I can express any idea that I come up with” – Ambassador

Outcome 3: Workforce Development

“This enabled me to experience first-hand the challenges of working on the children’s ward particularly on a personal level. It showed me how resilient you need to be but, most importantly, how the rewarding nature of the work can help manage the personal impact. Something I would not have had the chance to experience if it wasn’t for this mentoring programme” – mentee feedback

Five music mentees Aiden Maier, Lila Battacherjee, Nicola Tagoe, Sara Fawcett and Sasha Mattock completed 40 hours of shadowing rb&hArts core musicians across our programme each, with 3 hours of 1-2-1 mentoring with a musician to support professional development.



Photograph courtesy of Elam Forrester

Video: Charlie beatboxes with MC Zani <https://youtu.be/xDpRMjR3tBg>

The mentee programme has been an excellent opportunity for core musicians to share and articulate their skills with new early career musicians. Keeping an open, artist-lead brief to

the programme has allowed mentees to tailor their time on their programme to their individual interests and objectives. This in turn has pushed core musicians into leadership roles, giving them opportunity to work with a more diverse array of musicians with different skillsets.

“Acting as a mentor helped me solidify my own knowledge and gain more confidence in my practice. It was a great opportunity for me to critique my own work as well as the mentees’, evaluating how my practice is most beneficial to participants” – musician

4 Vocal Beats core musicians have completed job satisfaction surveys reporting high levels of confidence in their skills and abilities, good working relationships with colleagues at the trust, and feeling supported both emotionally and with CPD needs. All musicians strongly agreed they have been able to learn useful new skills in their jobs.

Training and CPD has been a key aim for 2018/19. Core musicians attended over 12 hours of training with respiratory physiotherapists to improve clinical understanding of conditions such as cystic fibrosis and asthma. This has impacted upon musical practice with young people, designing activities that support breath management through both singing and beatboxing. It has also influenced evaluation, placing emphasis on reflective journaling to critically appraising methods of creatively engaging young people whilst supporting physical health. Gathering respiratory clinicians and music professionals in a group-setting to share practice has proven invaluable in cultivating an inter-disciplinary approach to more effectively support wellbeing and physical health of young people at RBHT. Physiotherapists regularly invite musicians to collaborate during a patient’s exercise-based physiotherapy session (part of treatment regime), using song, instruments, dance and play. Development of an information repository alongside training in understanding of different conditions has boosted musician’s confidence, encouraging them to think critically about workshop techniques, bridging musical and clinical practice. External training that musicians have received has added to this, honing a sophisticated body of work and developing expertise.

“I have learnt how to communicate professionally with patients and their parents in the hospital environment. I have also learnt new medical terminology and about certain lung and heart conditions” – musician

Additional Outcomes

The diversity of Rose Ward inpatients has lead us to think and work reflexively to meet needs of participants from different backgrounds and communities. Alongside cardiothoracic conditions, approximately 7% (although this is estimated to be higher) of participants aged 0-16 have additional needs including Downs syndrome, learning and physical disability. Musicians have found ways to make music interventions inclusive for all abilities, both in 1-2-1 and group settings, using play and pop songs, sensory instruments and effective planning before a music session to meet the participant’s needs. Resources such as the Youth Music quality framework for working with disabled young musicians and the Drake Music website have been influential in the development of this practice.

Song and beat-writing activities used by all Vocal Beats musicians have had very moving and memorable outcomes for participants. This involves brainstorming with young participants about their interests (e.g., favourite topic at school or favourite film), the type of music they like to listen to and that they enjoy making. Outputs have ranged from a 5-year old writing a song about a snowman at Christmas-time, to a 14-year old creating beatbox rhythms based on classical Indian drumming to reflect her heritage, to an 11-year old girl writing a song about confidence for International Women’s Day.

This has empowered young people to think creatively about their own music, and actively supported their literacy and performance skills. We continue to collaborate with the Rose Ward play team to facilitate personalised time and space in the ward playroom for young musicians to perform their work and share with other participants. One example was a 9-year old boy who created his own festival 'BeatsFest', with costumes and a set list, which he performed to staff and fellow-patients with Vocal Beats musicians.



Video: Eve and Stac sing 'Tonight You Belong to Me':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cniUDpieV6g>

Successful Approaches

Vocal Beats' approach takes the musicality of young participants seriously, recognising and encouraging a child's agency through musical decision-making and experimentation. Our musicians have said that their work as professional performers outside of the project has directly fed into their work on the ward and vice versa, viewing young participants as collaborators rather than pupils.

We invested in iPads and percussion instruments, based on resources from Drake Music, to support participation. iPads are used for song lyrics and ukulele-tabs for new songs that participants request and want to learn. This has helped us increase access and further our appeal with young people, tailoring their learning to repertoire that they already really enjoy. As a result, music lesson content has included rap and musical theatre:

"K wanted to learn the rap to "Blinded by your Grace" by Stormzy. We went through it line-by-line, using the 'apple eating' technique to perfect enunciation. K showed good rhythm and was dancing along in time. Although she can become distracted easily she really committed to the song each time we went over it, focussing on ways to find the rhythm and beat (i.e. making a game out of peering over the bed at specific points in the song). K learnt the whole rap with sung chorus and even sang it by herself. At the end of the session, K performed it for her mum and physio" – ArtsObs excerpt.

Young people have frequently asked about ways we can record/film their music which we have had limited resources for. Artists have also observed that music production could be a good way to create and record music from participants of all ages and further engagement. We are considering approaches to diversify the musical offer by expanding equipment available and tapping into musician's networks to bring in diverse skillsets. This will be further supported by additional resources in delivery post June 2019.

Case Study: Mila's* Story

Mila was a 17-year-old girl living on adult transplant wards during the last months of her life. She had 1-2-1 music sessions with Stac Dowdeswell over several weeks. The following is taken from Dowdeswell's reflective journal:

We began with an introduction to ukulele, going through how to hold, strum, and play chords, building up simple strumming patterns and playing the 'A Minor' song. She showed a keen interest and wanted to learn her favourite song, 'Havana' by pop-star Camila Cabello. Mila picked up the lyrics to the song very quickly and appeared to enjoy singing along with me while we both played the ukulele.

A week later, she was keen for a music-session but visibly withdrawn due to procedures. I gave her a ukulele to keep and a chord sheet I had made her. I asked if she remembered the 'A Minor Song' and she sang it for me - I saw she had written the lyrics down in her room. Her eyes were heavy, and she apologised for not being able to keep them open, saying she really wanted to learn. She started to tell me her story of her hospital journey; she and her mum both broke down in tears. I told her that when she was feeling better next week we could have a lovely time working on music together. She said she would really enjoy that and that she was looking forward to perfecting her ukulele skills.

The next week, Mila was sat upright in a chair holding her ukulele, smiling and gesturing for me to sit. She told me she was in pain, but wanted her ukulele lesson as she had been looking forward to it. She immediately showed me she had been practicing 'A Minor'. She was so enthusiastic, and it was clear she was proud of herself. Mila desperately wanted to play 'Havana'. She read the lyric/chord sheet I had written but was rushing the chords. We started from the beginning and went over finger positions before we played in time to her singing. She noticed she was strumming the ukulele quite forcefully. I showed her how to strum using her thumb for a softer sound. By the end of the session Mila was playing the correct chords at the correct time whilst she sang.

She grew tired, but when her parents came back into the room, she excitedly showed them what she had learnt. The next week Mila sadly passed away.

"I have a lovely memory of Mila telling me about her music sessions with Stac and singing 'Havana'. She was so happy when singing. Due to the nature of her illness Mila was often fatigued and understandably frustrated. It is clear how important these music sessions were as they gave her time to engage in an activity she enjoyed and provided distraction. This reflects the importance of music and shows how lucky RBHT is to have such an integral and special service for patients"

– Helen Skiffington, occupational therapist.

* Name has been changed to ensure anonymity

Learning and Aims for 2019-2020

Our aim is to develop our over-arching practice and mission as an organisation through investigating how participatory music can reduce loneliness and social isolation for children and young people of all ages. As part of this a key priority will be furthering our understanding of the needs of young people living with chronic and/or life-limiting conditions and how we can best support them both during hospitalisation and post discharge. We intend to do this through continuing to shift our approach to a co-production model in which young people are actively consulted and included in project management decision-making. Vocal Beats Online and the RBHT Trailblazers Youth Forum will be crucial catalysts to the process.

To achieve this ambitious work effectively we need to be particularly mindful of how to support musicians' mental health and wellbeing. External supervision has been sourced for individuals across the past year which has proved helpful, but we aim to find ways to create a more sustainable model of support through regular group supervision meetings to create a more open dialogue about mental health at work for practitioners and project managers.

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