

REPORT ON THE MUSIC FOR MOTHERS AND BABIES PROJECT

AT THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, TALLAGHT

**DELIVERED BY THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ARTS AND HEALTH, TALLAGHT
HOSPITAL AND MAIREAD O'DONNELL, TRADITIONAL MUSICIAN**

Amount Granted €2000



INTRODUCTION

Music for babies and their parents was a project to explore the role of music to support our youngest patients and their parents during the stressful time of being in hospital. We promised to deliver weekly music sessions with 5 children in hospital and their families x 10 sessions. We also aimed to develop a mother and baby programme in the community to promote bonding, play and parenting skills.

Hospital stays are stressful for babies and parents. Opportunities for play are limited and parents are under pressure. We aimed to introduce music session for parents and their babies at the bedside to ease the stress of hospital, promote bonding and support parents to soothe and stimulate their babies while in hospital.

This pilot project has been a huge success. We delivered music sessions to parents and babies in the hospital. Very few interventions are appropriate with this age group, but music, singing and play were brought to patients with a wide range of benefits reported by parents and staff.

The report sets out the results as follows:

- Report on the project
- Report from Mairead O'Donnell, Musician in Hospital, including feedback from parents and staff which were collected throughout the project as part of the evaluation of the project
- Report from Catherine Garland, Hospital Play Specialist who supervised the musician in hospital
- Recommendations for the future



REPORT ON THE PROJECT

The aims of this project were to:

- Offer parents and their babies support through music when ill in hospital and to explore the benefit of this programme in the community
- To explore the role of music on health and well-being
- To provide arts programme to our youngest patients
- To develop our community arts and health programme

We believe we have successfully delivered the first three aims by providing high quality group and individual music sessions within the hospital for parents and babies (See further in report for details). We were unable to deliver the fourth aim due to barriers during the project, for example the amount of time required to develop community based programmes and the time constraints and limited size of the pilot project.

Evaluation

We evaluated the programme through feedback from participants and staff, to observe whether they perceived a reduction in stress experienced by parents and babies in hospital and improvements in bonding and play. (See further in report for details).

How this project integrates with other agencies and organisations

The National Centre for Arts and Health provides national training for artists working in healthcare settings and regularly present our work at national conferences and seminars (see attached annual report for more details). We aim to present this programme at national event during 2014.

Value for money

All funds went towards paying the musician in residence to provide direct music sessions with patients. The funding was used for no other purpose. All costs of the programme, other than musician fees, were funded by National Centre (i.e. project management, supervision and mentoring, PR, financial management, evaluation process, venue). This project was value for money as all funds went on direct service provision for patients.

Hilary Moss, Director of Arts and Health

National Centre for Arts and Health,

Tallaght Hospital, Dublin 24

REPORT FROM MAIREAD O'DONNELL, MUSICIAN IN HOSPITAL

This innovative project consisted of weekly visits to the paediatric unit for an hour approx. Through music (fiddle/percussion etc) and song the aim was to offer babies and their parents some support and stimulation through a live music experience. By providing this programme the goal was also to explore the role of music on health and well-being.

Evaluation was carried out via written forms given to parents and staff and a medical photographer was engaged to capture some of the interactions which took place.

As the musician involved in this project, I feel the programme was very beneficial for these young children. In the majority of cases, particularly in the individual rooms with babies the reaction was one of wonder and happiness. There were a lots of smiles and surprise from parents and grandparent too in relation to how well the little ones responded to the sounds and songs.

By selecting appropriate music (i.e. soothing/lively/fun) my intention was always to aid in creating a nurturing atmosphere for babies and parents. The social aspect of this programme proved very significant also with people enjoying a bit of chat and trying out various musical instruments. By explaining how to make some percusion instruments and the power of singing vis –a- vis bonding with babies, some parents were definitely given food for thought.

The following is a selection of quotes from parents which best illustrates their response:

“She was getting a bit distressed and grumpy, the music really distracted her and calmed her down. Fantastic to see something like this for children”.

“Really brightened up baby’s mood. Fun & cheerful”.

“J. really enjoyed the session and it cheered him up. It also gave his parents some ideas as to how to engage him....Please come back!”

“My daughter was teething and the music really cheered her up & distracted her. She really enjoyed the xylophone”

“ It provides a welcome distraction and helps to lift everyone’s mood! This type of service is essential to make time in hospital a more positive experience”

Staff feedback

In relation to staff feedback, the reaction was also very positive with the Play specialist and Manager of the unit being very supportive throughout the programme.

On one occasion I was called by a nurse to be with a 3 year old girl who was very distressed whilst having a blood transfusion in a treatment room. The nurse present filled in evaluation form immediately after session commenting on how the music *“made the patient very peaceful and quiet and really appreciated my contribution. I think this service would be of great benefit to patients”*.

The Manager of the unit, Caitriona Fox, comments that this service was of benefit by distracting and also relaxing babies and parents. *“It has made some painful procedures a little more bearable for the children and parents”* and adds that it would be *“useful for phlebotomy procedures and pain management”*.

Detailed below are comments and notes on a number of specific children who benefited:

J – 6 week old baby: This baby was upset and unsettled when I arrived offering some musical intervention. His father said it might not be the best time due to J. being hungry and disgruntled. I explained that oftentimes live music and singing helps to soothe and distract, leaving him to think about it. After couple of minutes he called me back and asked me to proceed. J. was held on his Dad’s lap/arms throughout.

I began by playing a nursery rhyme on the xylophone which after a few rounds began to have a visible affect on J – crying stopped and he proceeded to follow the sound with his eyes and head movements. I sang the lyrics then which he really liked, listening and looking towards me all the time. He became calm and quiet.

His Dad and physiotherapist (who had joined us) were very happy to see J’s reaction to the music, noting his interest and movements. *“Better than silly toys to gain his attention”* the physiotherapist commented.

I also used the rainstick for different sound effects which held J’s attention. I then sang *“Skye boat song”*, a soothing Scottish lullaby- type song on the fiddle. All were listening and enjoying the live music. J’s Dad thanked me a number of times and said it gave him ideas regarding how to interact well with his son.

Isa-1yr: This little girl was in the room next to J. above and on hearing the music, her mother came out to ask me to spend some time with her daughter. This lady was vvery enthusiastic about live music as was I’s grandmother, also present. We played the different instruments together and I’s mother sang a song that they usually sing together. Isa loved the xylophone as most of the babies do, sitting upright and using the beater well. Mother’s interaction was very noteworthy – so encouraging and engaged with her beautiful little girl.

E-3mths: This baby girl loved the xylophone. Her eyes followed the sound and “Twinkle twinkle” was a big hit! Her mother played the xylophone also with second beater. Short visit due to baby E. being called for procedure.

M- 4mths: This baby boy was hungry and unhappy, due a feed when I arrived. The xylophone worked it’s magic however and really occupied him both soothing and distracting him during our time together. His parents were very interested and said “Twinkle twinkle” was a favourite of his. A doctor came into the room whilst I was playing the fiddle, waited for me to finish and then complimented the music. “Very relaxing” she said with a lovely smile.

J-2&half yrs: The mother of this little girl heard me in room above (next door to hers) and invited me in. J, her daughter attends a music group outside of hospital and really loved the music session. She tried the xylophone, hand drum, percussive frog, egg shaker and sang lots. During our time together the nurses were attending to a drip/needles attached to J and so the music & singing was very useful in keeping her distracted and more relaxed.

A-15mths: This little boy was quiet and appeared very wary of me for the initial few minutes. I showed him the different instruments one by one and he handed them back to me looking quite serious. Continuing to chat and sing for him he became more and more involved, smiling and using the eggshaker and hand drum to great effect. We ended up jamming together, I played the metal bars of his cot and he was shaking and drumming. It was great to see the breakthrough and happiness on his lovely face. His mother’s comment “ You’re the only one that hasn’t caused him pain”.

Mairead O’Donnell, Traditional Musician



REPORT FROM CATHERINE GARLAND, HOSPITAL PLAY SPECIALIST

The National Centre for Arts and Health kindly provided Mairead O'Donnell to work in the National Children's Hospital for 10 very productive weeks.

Mairead worked alongside the play specialist and the Clinical Nurse Manager on the Maple Unit. The value of her work was excellent for both child and parent. Mairead worked both individually with family and also group work in the play room. Mairead brought a feeling of fun and music every Thursday morning to maple ward. The service she provided was calming, relaxing and distracting for both child and parent during hospitalisation.

The feedback from both staff and parents has been excellent; to see a child smile and interact with staff in a positive way is brilliant. To distract both child and parent from the trauma they are going through for a short time has great effect, I believe, on recovery rates and the support they feel in hospital. Mairead herself was very professional, motivated and appropriate in all situations. I found her so easy to work with and really enjoyed Thursday morning.

I feel the National Children's Hospital would benefit greatly if Mairead could continue her excellent work at ward level.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

This pilot funding has convinced all at the hospital of the benefit of music for our youngest patients, in terms of reducing the stress of hospital stay, promoting parent and baby play, interaction and bonding and in enhancing the hospital environment for all. We fully intend to continue to provide this service and to build on the pilot funding provided by this project grant.

Thank you

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