

Meaningful moments

A very moving afternoon that has had a long lasting effect on the residents.

Carleton Court, Skipton



LMN's work with older people has recently been evaluated externally, by Platform 3. The Meaningful Moments evaluation report bears out a very positive assessment of the impact of LMN's activity and provides key recommendations for developing the work in the future. It supports, in particular, LMN's emphasis on appropriate training for musicians working with older people, and our priority to deepen and prolong the benefits experienced by older people involved in music, by developing long term projects.

The report supports LMN's approach and its success in improving well-being through music activity on distinct levels:

- Emotional – accessing feelings and memories to connect to the past and to others;
- Physical – from singing and simple lung exercise to more complex demands of following rhythms and dancing;
- Social – stimulating contact between older people, and between older people and carers, creating common experience and improving mood and atmosphere;
- Intellectual – the stimulation of programmes which carefully combine the familiar with the new, eliciting increased attention spans, active engagement and enhanced memory.

Case Study 1

Active lives



Over the past two years, LMN has been working with support from the Bank of America Foundation to deliver the Active Music, Active Minds programme. This sets out to increase our capacity to enhance the lives of older people through live music, and has met with support from the Department of Health's Dignity in Care Campaign as well as the National Dementia Strategy.

With the third year of the programme yet to run, we have already seen significant achievements. Our reach has increased, with over 600 interactive music sessions delivered to more than 15,500 older people in care/nursing homes, day centres and hospices around the UK. As well as working with older

people in settings which have never hosted a performance before, we have also been able to increase the number of repeat visits to settings, building towards long term, cumulative benefits.

This has also given us, and the staff in care settings, the opportunity to create self-contained projects which are specifically designed to meet the needs of elderly participants. This has been of particular benefit to our work with older people living with dementia, for whom almost 40% of our work with older people is delivered.



Case Study 2

Music & memory

Over the year, in partnership with Nightingale House Care Home, London, LMN has been carrying out a sustained programme of interactive music workshops in a special dementia unit, under continuing professional observation.

In ten monthly sessions, working with the same two specially-trained LMN musicians, patients engaged with the music and communicated with others. To their delight, staff, family and carers regained glimpses of the person behind the dementia as they began to respond to the musicians and those around them.

Ann Stuart, experienced evaluator in the field of dementia, who observed the work said:

“There is no doubt that the medium of music and the musicians themselves became therapeutic tools, activating communication and interaction that would otherwise never have taken place.”

Nightingale House is a pioneer in providing arts therapies to assist in the wellbeing of those in its care. Alastair Addison, Head of Activities, Nightingale House, said:

“Music is a memory function that remains towards the end of people’s lives. We knew of LMN’s success with working with older people and that they appointed highly qualified musicians with classical and popular repertoire.”

Everyone involved in the project agreed that its success depended on the musicians’ ability to call on a wide range of repertoire and use appropriate music in immediate response to participants, demonstrating the clear need for live music and highly competent musicians. Performed by specially-trained musicians, music’s communicative and healing properties had a direct impact on patient care, enhancing their wellbeing and benefiting their staff, carers and families.



Case Study 3

Crossing cultures

In another long term (three year) project, LMN is providing a sustained programme of inspirational interactive live music performances for up to 1200 people a year (90% of whom are over 75), in 31 selected day and residential care settings across ten London Boroughs.

The project sets out to:

- create an enjoyable atmosphere of communication, interaction and involvement
- improve physical/mental health/well being through dance, movement and singing
- offer exposure to new musical, cultural and visual experiences of the highest quality
- provide experiences that are valued by older people and their carers/families
- enhance memory and provide an outlet for emotion – both happy and sad
- provide unique opportunities for intergenerational interaction

Five performances were organised specifically to take place on October 1st 2008 to celebrate UK Older People’s Day and the contribution older people make to society. This project was particularly appropriate as it met the Older People’s Day aim and theme of bringing generations together to share knowledge and experience.

A notable feature of the project has been its emphasis on diversity and success in bringing together musicians and participants from different cultures. Poonam Chandra, who works

at the Asha Day Centre for Asian elders and those with disabilities in Hillingdon, wrote to us after Amadio (flute and harp duo) performed at their Vaisakhi Celebrations.

“Our service users, carers and guests truly appreciated this concert and gave very positive feedback saying the harp and flute playing totally transported them to experience such a delightful feeling. The Hindi tunes that were played were of such a great interest to them. They were completely mesmerized with the melodic music.”

LMN Ambassador, actor, writer and director Simon Callow, who has attended a number of LMN projects for older people, said:

“Musicians who work for LMN must be not only hugely talented but also have powerful gifts of direct communication. Performing for the smart audiences at the Royal Opera House or the Festival Hall is one thing, but making their way to people who can no longer get out and about and who may be failing in their focus is quite another.”

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