

SPIRIT OF 2012
PROJECT LEARNING BRIEFING




Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

THE CARERS' MUSIC FUND JUNE 2021



Happiness increased an average of

13%

among those who took part in the Carers' Music Fund. The project also reduced loneliness and enabled participants to receive information and support that they needed as carers.



925
PARTICIPANTS



MOST PROJECTS WORKED WITH GROUPS OF PARTICIPANTS IN FOUR COHORTS, RUNNING A TWO-HOUR WEEKLY SESSION OVER A 12-WEEK PERIOD FOR EACH COHORT.



ABOUT THE CARERS' MUSIC FUND

There are at least 6.5 million carers in the UK, a diverse group of people who look after children, people with disabilities or illnesses, and older people. Nearly three in five (58%) are female, and women make up 72% of people receiving Carer's Allowance for providing 35 hours or more care each week.

Many carers find care-giving deeply satisfying, knowing that a loved one is receiving the best possible support. But caring can also be stressful and lonely, and contribute to financial insecurity, poor physical and mental health, and these factors can impact on people's ability to provide care. For these reasons, policymakers recognise the importance

of supporting carers' wellbeing and social connection, with civil society and statutory organisations delivering activities to boost carers' wellbeing.

The Carers' Music Fund project used music-making to improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness for female carers. £1.9m in funding was made available to the project, of which £1.5m came from the Tampon Tax Fund administered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), with the stipulation that this funding benefitted female carers. Spirit of 2012 administered the grant and provided £400,000 additional funding to cover travel, respite care and other items that reduced barriers to participation.

Funding was given to ten organisations in different parts of the UK, involving different groups of carers (see Appendix). Each organisation started work in October 2019 and was funded to deliver activities until December 2020, although the pandemic meant that some projects extended to June 2021. Most projects worked with groups of participants in four cohorts, running a two-hour weekly session over a 12-week period for each cohort. Social distancing regulations meant that music-making had to move online in March 2020, although a few of the projects resumed face-to-face activities in Spring 2021.

Projects were committed to testing new ideas and learning from their experiences. Spirit of 2012 partnered with What Works Centre for Wellbeing to understand how music-making can improve wellbeing, and to develop a theory of change. Independent research agency Apteligen was commissioned to evaluate the fund, undertaking interviews and analysing data from 726 of the 925 participants. Learning and evaluation were shared aims between Spirit of 2012 and the organisations who wanted to both pilot this approach and develop skills to run similar projects in future.

WHAT THE FUND ACHIEVED

By June 2021, 925 female carers have taken part in the Carers' Music Fund. The youngest carer was 8-years-old, the oldest in their 80s, and 33% of participants came from a minority ethnic group. 63% of participants were unemployed or economically inactive, 34% provided more than 90 hours care each week, and just over a third of participants (35%) had a long-term illness or disability themselves.

Music-making was a new experience to 50% of participants, giving many of them the confidence to take part in more creative activities at a later date. Few participants dropped out once the programme of activities had started.

The projects set out to increase personal wellbeing among those taking part in music-making activities, and reduce their loneliness and isolation. As part of the evaluation, participants were asked about the psycho-social impacts of attending the music-making sessions. Participants

were asked to score their life satisfaction, feelings that things they do are worthwhile, happiness and anxiety, between 1-10 (ONS wellbeing measures). Table 1 shows that carers who took part had wellbeing measures that were significantly lower than the national average at the start of the project, but by the end of the 12 sessions, their average wellbeing scores had increased. Moreover, this trend was most marked among those who started the sessions with the lowest levels of wellbeing.

	UK AVERAGE SCORES	AVERAGE BASELINE SCORE AT START OF PROJECT	END OF PROJECT AVERAGE	PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN SCORE OVER COURSE OF PROJECT	PERCENTAGE CHANGES AMONG THOSE WHO STARTED WITH LOWEST WELLBEING SCORES
LIFE SATISFACTION	7.3	6.3	7.2	14%	20%
FEELING WORTHWHILE	7.6	6.7	7.4	10%	16%
HAPPINESS	7.2	6.1	6.9	13%	8%
ANXIETY (LOWER SCORE=LOWER LEVELS OF ANXIETY)	3.5	5.4	4.8	-11%	-20%

Table 1: Average changes in ONS wellbeing scores among participants who took part the Carers' Music Fund

IN THE PROJECTS WHERE PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED ABOUT LONELINESS, TAKING PART IN THE CARERS' MUSIC FUND WAS ASSOCIATED WITH LOWER LEVELS OF LONELINESS.

There were variations in the impact of the projects, with a minority of participants reporting little or no positive impacts on wellbeing at the end of the project. In the context of COVID-19, this is expected as some carers reported financial pressures or the need to provide more hours of care. However, 91% of those who reported the highest levels of anxiety and 79% who reported medium levels of anxiety saw their anxiety levels reduce over the course of the 12 sessions.

Over half (54%) of the participants had little contact with support organisations prior to taking part in the project. Taking part in the Carers' Music Fund enabled this group of carers to receive a range of further information and help.

The large majority, 4 out of 5 (80%) participants agreed that being involved in the Carers' Music Fund had helped them to make new friends. While we do not yet know if these new connections will lead to

support networks among groups of carers, there was a 6% increase in the proportions of people who agreed that if they needed help, there would be people there for them. Bringing people together to make music led to them forming new relationships: between carers themselves; between carers and support organisations; between arts organisations and carers, and between organisations working with carers and sessional musicians.



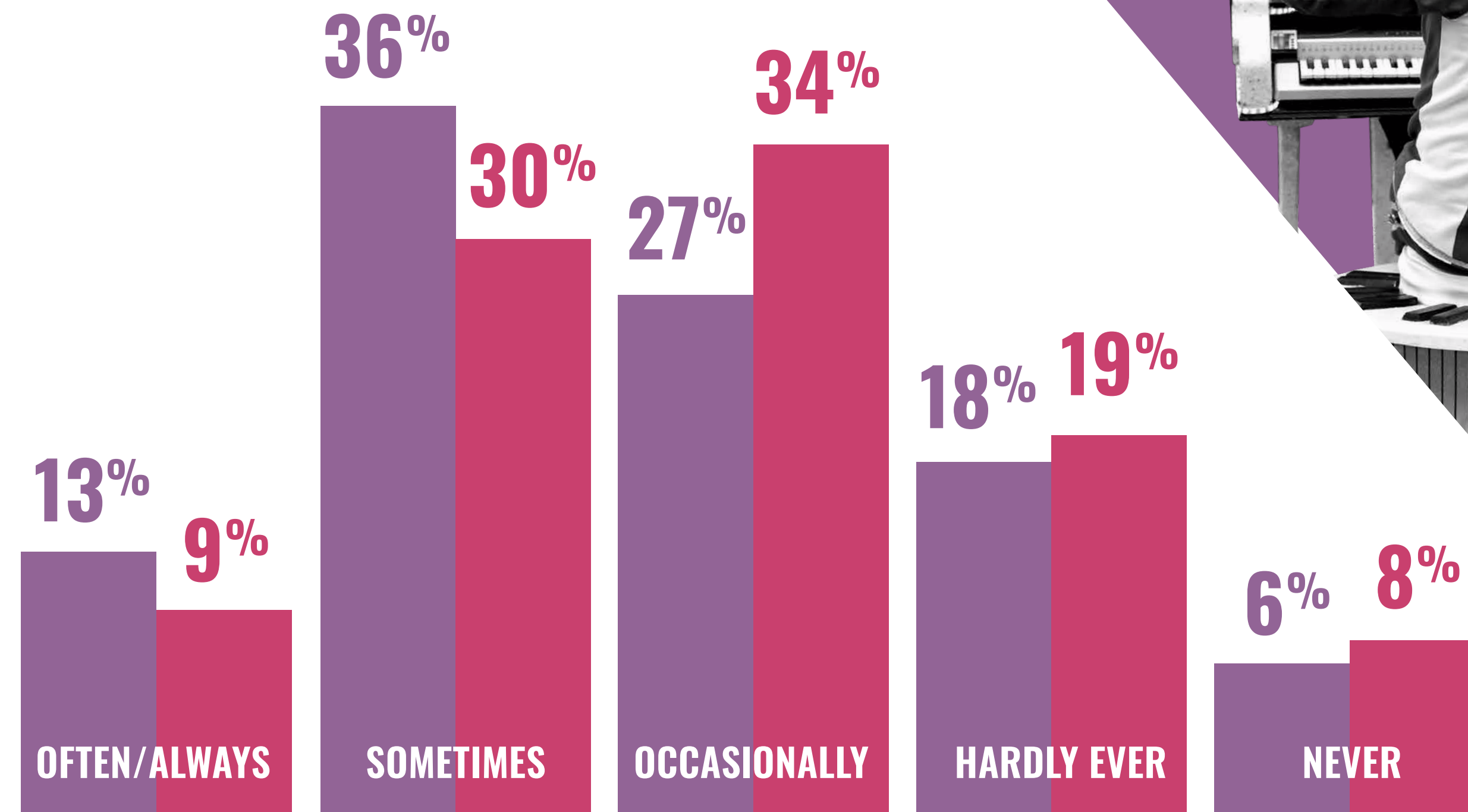
HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL LONELY?

■ START OF PROJECT ■ END OF PROJECT



I WAS FEELING VERY ISOLATED BECAUSE OF THE COVID SITUATION. LOTS OF PEOPLE WANT TO HELP YOU, BUT YOU DON'T ALWAYS KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO THEM. IT'S HARD TO ASK FOR THE RIGHT SORT OF HELP. BUT THE MUSIC SESSIONS WERE JUST WHAT I NEEDED."

- CARERS' MUSIC FUND PARTICIPANT



WHAT WE LEARNED

Through the Carers' Music Fund we tested new approaches to recruiting and working with carers. Many of the projects employed freelance musicians to lead the sessions. Training was provided to sessional staff by some of the projects, to raise their awareness of carers' backgrounds and needs. Both project staff and sessional music tutors described how their work had equipped them with new skills that they will use to set up further projects.

Carers can be a group that civil society organisations and councils find hard to engage. People may not see themselves as carers, so may not contact support organisations. Social isolation caused by caring responsibilities and digital exclusion also make it harder to engage carers. The Carers' Music Fund has enabled a better understanding of ways to reach, recruit, and retain participants. Co-ordinators engaged with local community groups, schools, health professionals and care settings to talk to carers and encourage them to sign up to the project. Some projects offered taster sessions, which enabled potential participants to find out more. The activities

were also publicised through social media, newsletters and local radio.

A total of £400,000 of funding was made available to address some of the barriers that might have prevented people from taking part. This funding covered respite care, although some carers were concerned about the suitability of such arrangements and did not use it. Providing crèche facilities for mothers was successful in increasing the participation for this group. Funding also covered transport costs, although this became less of an issue for carers once sessions moved online. Providing help with transport also meant that carers spent less time away from the person they cared for, and a pre-booked taxi had the effect of giving some carers perceived permission to attend and take time out of their caring role.

One of the benefits of moving online was the ability to recruit participants from a much wider area. However, funding was needed to reduce digital barriers, with tablets, wi-fi packages and one-to-one assistance provided for a small number of participants. This also helped reduce digital exclusion, enabling carers to keep in touch

with friends and family more easily during the COVID-19 lockdowns. An estimated 15.4 million people in the UK don't use the internet or only use it occasionally either because they have little or no access to a device and connections, or lack the skills to go online. Future projects may wish to consider online delivery, particularly if they want to involve carers living outside large conurbations, but digital exclusion must be addressed if these projects are to succeed.



THE CARERS' MUSIC FUND AIMED TO INCREASE PARTICIPANTS' WELLBEING. THE EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT HAS ENABLED US TO UNDERSTAND THE PREREQUISITES TO ACHIEVE THIS AIM, NAMELY:

Planning early sessions to build people's confidence and make activities fun

Using a range of musical genres to cater for different taste

Giving participants space to express how they feel as carers

The skills of the session leaders

Making sure that activities were suitable for those who have little previous music-making experience, including in music technology

Bringing recordings into sessions and having the opportunity to listen to music

Including time for people to socialise with each other

Having an end-goal such as a recording or performance

Sign-posting sources of further support.

“

AT 7, MY TEACHER TOLD ME TO GIVE UP PLAYING MUSIC. BUT I DO LOVE LISTENING TO MUSIC AND GOING TO SEE MUSICALS, SO IT WAS GREAT THAT THESE ELEMENTS WERE ABLE TO COME INTO THE SESSIONS.”

- CARERS' MUSIC FUND PARTICIPANT



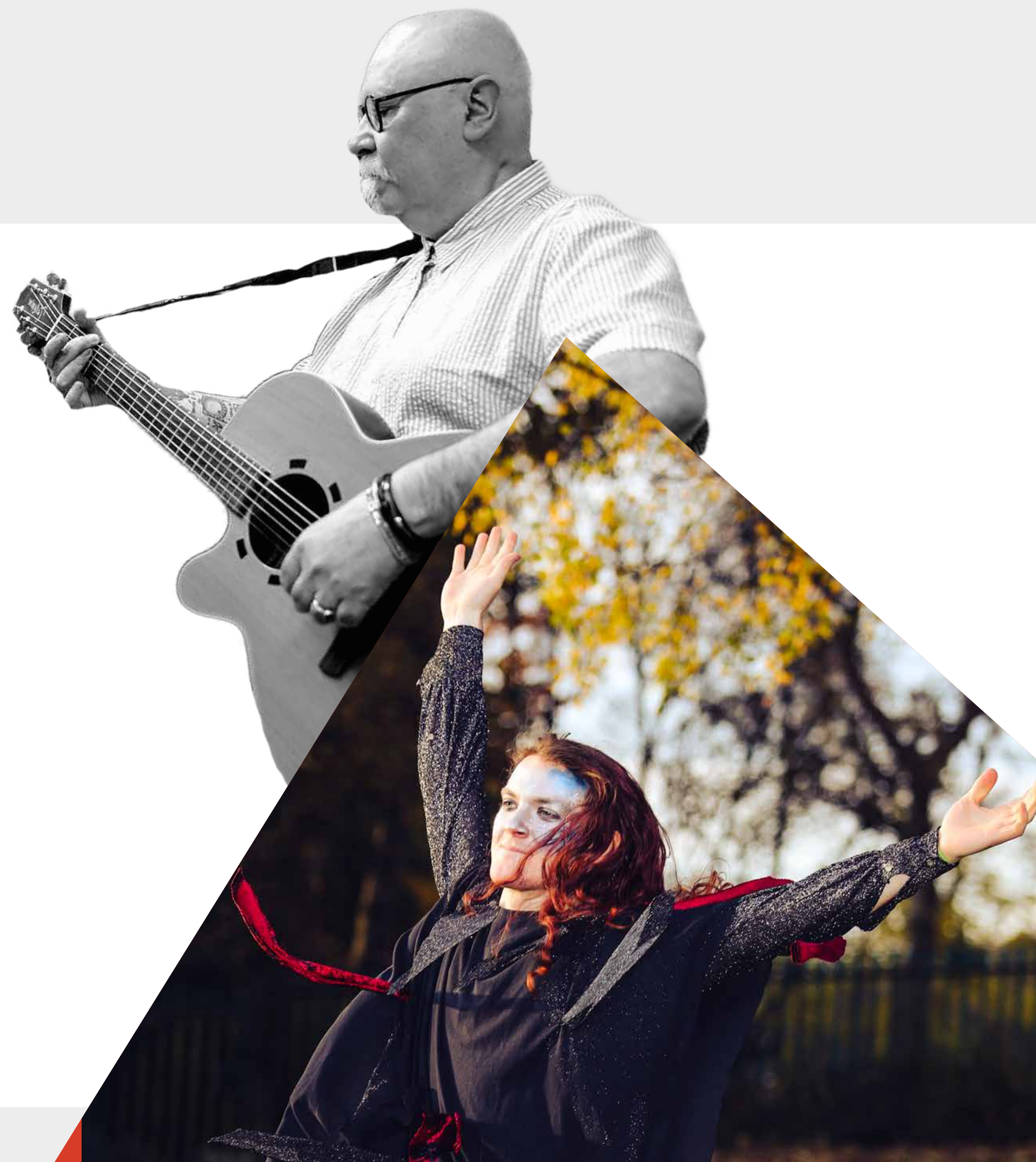
CONCLUSION

When the Carers' Music Fund began in 2019, we could not have anticipated the pandemic. This caused great hardship for many carers. COVID-19 also stopped face-to-face music-making, yet all ten projects moved online – a new way of working for some of the musicians, who had to adapt and learn new skills very quickly. Although the Carers' Music Fund did not reach its target of 1,500 participants, it was a significant achievement that all the projects continued, and delivered positive outcomes for participants.

Our evaluation shows that taking part in the Carers Music Fund improved wellbeing and reduced feelings of loneliness for most participants. Carers were also signposted to other creative activities, and to information and support appropriate to their caring role. The Carers' Music Fund also provided a valuable learning experience for the organisations and sessional tutors who took part.

While the costs of running the Carers' Music Fund were provided by the Tampon Tax Fund, there are other opportunities to fund similar projects, for example, through the Arts Council, the Education and Skills Funding Agency's community learning budget and their equivalents in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. While the project cost just over £2,000 per head to deliver, full recruitment would deliver economies of scale.

Based on the impact of the project, we believe that music-making and other creative activities should be seen as part of the offer to support carers. There is now much greater awareness of the benefits of social prescribing, where health professionals connect people to community-based activities, providing much needed practical and psycho-social support. As we live longer, more of us will need care in our last years, and more of us will provide informal care to loved ones. It is not only essential that carers' needs are met through social prescribing, but also considered in debates about the future of social care.



APPENDIX:

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE CARERS' MUSIC FUND

Organisation

BARNARDO'S PROJECT ALAW Place of residence of project participants	BLACKPOOL CARERS CENTRE	FEIS ROIS	JACK DRUM ARTS	MIDLANDS ARTS CENTRE
Merthyr Tydfil	Blackpool	Highland (Aness, Dingwall, Gairloch, Inverness)	Four locations in County Durham	Birmingham
About the project Barnardo's worked with Community Music Wales to run a range of music-making sessions with nearly 60 young carers aged 8-21 years. The project also used music to develop participants' basic skills, with song-writing supporting literacy, for example.	The Bang the Drum project offered singing and percussion sessions, alongside relaxation techniques and a programme of support for groups of young carers, sandwich carers and older female carers. Over 100 people took part in taster events and 46 people attended all 12 sessions.	The project worked with young mothers who live in small towns and rural areas in the Scottish Highlands. The groups included some Syrian refugees. Working with freelance musicians, participants created traditional folk lullabies for their children.	The project worked with a range of carers, including those with caring responsibilities in the local refugee community. Over 200 participants experienced a range of genres which included choral music, folk, rock, gamelan and West African percussion.	The Hidden Voices project worked with nearly 100 carers, including those looking after children, older people and those with disabilities or poor mental health. Quench Arts and Midland Mencap were partner organisations. Some participants were from the Chinese and South Asian communities and new migrants. Participants shared and made different types of music together.

APPENDIX:

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE CARERS' MUSIC FUND

Organisation

MY POCKETS Place of residence of project participants	NOISE SOLUTION	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CARERS	OH YEAH MUSIC CENTRE	UK YOUTH
Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire About the project	Suffolk (Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Lowestoft)	Northamptonshire	Belfast	Six locations in London and the North West, South East, South West, and West Midlands
<p>The Monster Extraction project identified the 'monsters' that are created when there is conflict in our lives. Over 50 carers wrote, performed music and took part in craft activities that expressed the stories of the monsters in their lives.</p>	<p>Noise Solution worked with Suffolk Family Carers to support over 60 isolated young carers through the Beat Syndicate digital music-making project. As well as working in groups there were opportunities for one-to-one activities to build participants' confidence prior to joining a group.</p>	<p>The My Music project worked with carers who were already in a choir, young carers, an intergenerational group and those caring for a loved one with dementia. Over 75 carers took part in a variety of music-making sessions including percussion, music technology and song-writing.</p>	<p>The Women's Work project ran music-making sessions for those caring for people with dementia and disabled people, worked with parents who were Syrian refugees, and mothers who had left the music industry because of their caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>The Sound Creators project was co-ordinated by UK Youth with a music curriculum created by My Pockets. Working with six different young carers' organisations it offered nearly 150 young carers opportunities for music making, including DJing and singing.</p>

- ⁱ Census 2011 data. Projections of 2011 figures undertaken by the ONS now put this figure higher.
- ⁱⁱ Carers UK (2019) Facts and Figures 2019, London: Carers UK
- ⁱⁱⁱ 0-4 scores for life satisfaction, worthwhile and happiness, or reporting high levels of anxiety.
- ^{iv} ONS Wellbeing data
- ^v Baseline data showed 79% of people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'If I need help there are people who would be there for me', with 84% agreeing or strongly agreeing at the end of the sessions (n=140).
- ^{vi} Data from the Good Things Foundation and Ofcom (2020) Adults' media use and attitudes report 2020, London: Ofcom

