

My Pockets Music Report



**YOUTH
MUSIC**



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**





MAKE

SOME

NOISE

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

Music can have a powerful effect on how we feel. From putting the radio on in the car to watching a stadium show. The music we listen to helps us make sense of our lives and echoes our emotions.

But playing or writing music ourselves seems out of reach for most of us. Other art forms are immediately accessible, we take pictures with our phones, make videos, we pick up a pen and doodle, write about something that has happened in an email or on social media. We feel music is different. We think that to make music you have to be good at it. You have to spend three years sitting in your bedroom practicing your instrument, and only then can you join a band or play in public.

On our My Pockets Music Project we scrap the three years of practicing. You join the band the minute you walk in the door to the first workshop. You learn 2 chords in the first twenty minutes and we all start playing our first song. The impact of this is amazing, within an hour the atmosphere in the room is changed, people are laughing, singing, having ideas, making mistakes, messing around and playing together.

This report is about making music and how it can transform lives.

A group of young people are dancing in a hallway. The image has a yellow tint and a halftone pattern. The text "TO LISTEN TO THE SONGS" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**TO LISTEN TO
THE SONGS**

-CLICK HERE-


In 2019 My Pockets were awarded funding from Spirit of 2012 and Youth Music to run a three year project using song writing to improve the wellbeing and mental health of young people in Hull and East Yorkshire. My Pockets partnered with Mind, Headstart Hull, East Riding Youth Service, Hull Youth Service and others to deliver the project and reach young people who were suffering mental health issues or were under mental health pressure.



The participants took part in a ten week programme. To start we would just enjoy playing music together, then we would develop a melody, write lyrics, learn to play our song live, record it and make a video.

Every 6 months we would bring all the projects groups together to perform their songs for each other in a lively, chaotic and always brilliant celebration event. There would be cheering, laughing and support for each other as well as lots of pizza eaten.

We have evaluated the project using an external evaluator, base-line and end-line questionnaires, podcasts and blogs. The evidence is overwhelming. This project changes things.

A group of young people are gathered in a room, possibly a music practice room. In the foreground, a young man is playing an acoustic guitar. To his left, a young woman is looking towards him. In the background, another young woman is seated at a table, looking down at something in her hands. A large black speaker is visible on the left side of the room. The overall atmosphere is casual and focused on music.

'The main thing it makes me feel when I come here is safe. Outside, it feels judgemental, you're under pressure.'

Charlie 14 Mind Group

'I've got a guitar and my mam paid for two lessons, but they were £70 a time and she couldn't keep it up, because she had to save up money for a school trip. Then she heard about this.'

Cieron 14 Child Dynamics Group



'I think my generation feels judged. People don't accept us. The older generation think we are wrong. But just because we are different from them doesn't mean we are wrong. No one is wrong at music club.'

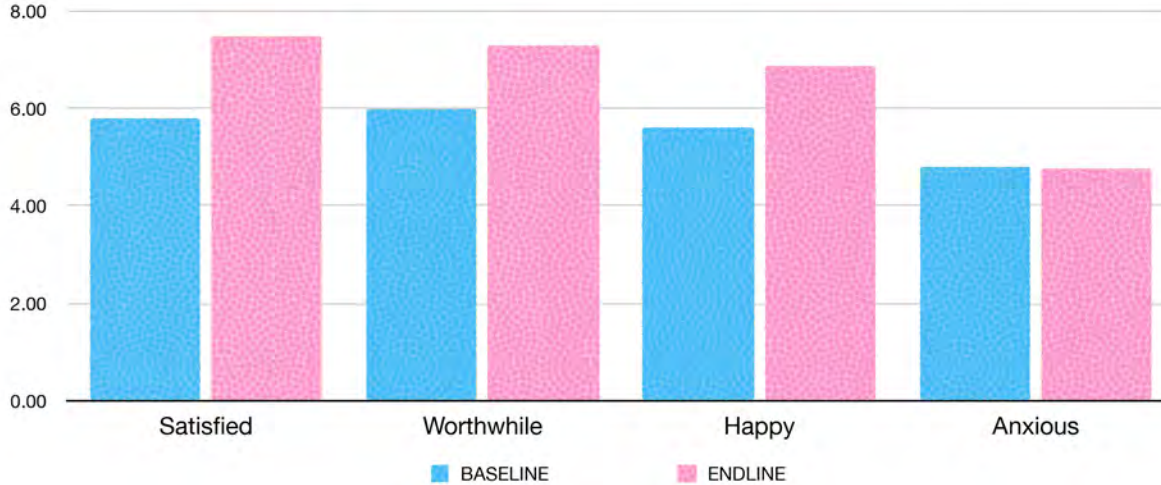
Katie 15 - Mind Group

EXTERNAL EVALUATOR REPORT PART 1

My Pockets passion and tenacity means they don't simply work with organisations, they build strong partnerships with them, based on mutual respect and support. The organisations are My Pockets' route to the young people they are keen to work with, and the youth group leaders and other partners act as a bridge. The My Pockets team members are not made from the same mould, making them unique as an organisation. They are natural, down to earth, spark off one another and are interchangeable depending on the needs of any given group.

They think on their feet - spontaneity and flexibility are always firmly at the core of delivery. The more the organisation sees My Pockets in action, the more they trust and support them. This two-way trust continues to build, right across the board, and feeds off itself, which in turn strengthens connections. By now, a chain has been forged. The My Pockets team, the organisation and the young people are all strongly linked. And, all the while, confidence emerges and grows, along with self esteem.

My Pockets Music Wellbeing Questions Baseline and Endline DATA



Data taken from ONS questionnaires given to 90 participants

	BASELINE	ENDLINE	NATIONAL AVERAGE
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life? 0 - 10	5.78	7.50	7.70
Overall, how much do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile? 0 - 10	5.99	7.30	7.90
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? 0 - 10	5.60	6.86	7.50
Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? (over 16s only) 0 - 10	4.79	4.75	2.90

Participants were given ONS Wellbeing questions at the start and end of the project so that we could measure it's impact on them aganist the population as a whole.



**'It's one of the best bits of work
with young people I've seen and
it's so genuine and done for the
right reasons.'**

Paul – Youth Worker Child Dynamics



'The quirky way My Pockets go about things is just great. I don't think we've got anybody that can think on their feet like they can in terms of being spontaneous and just doing things in an alternate way. They bring things to our team, they bring opportunities to our kids that we don't present.'

Pete Youth Worker - Astra Youth Club

'It's kind of structured in a non-structured way. I think that kind of thing really suits young people, because they've got that creativity and that imagination to be able to kind of explore that, and I think that's what makes it different.'

Nicola Youth Worker - Mind

EXTERNAL EVALUATOR REPORT PART 2

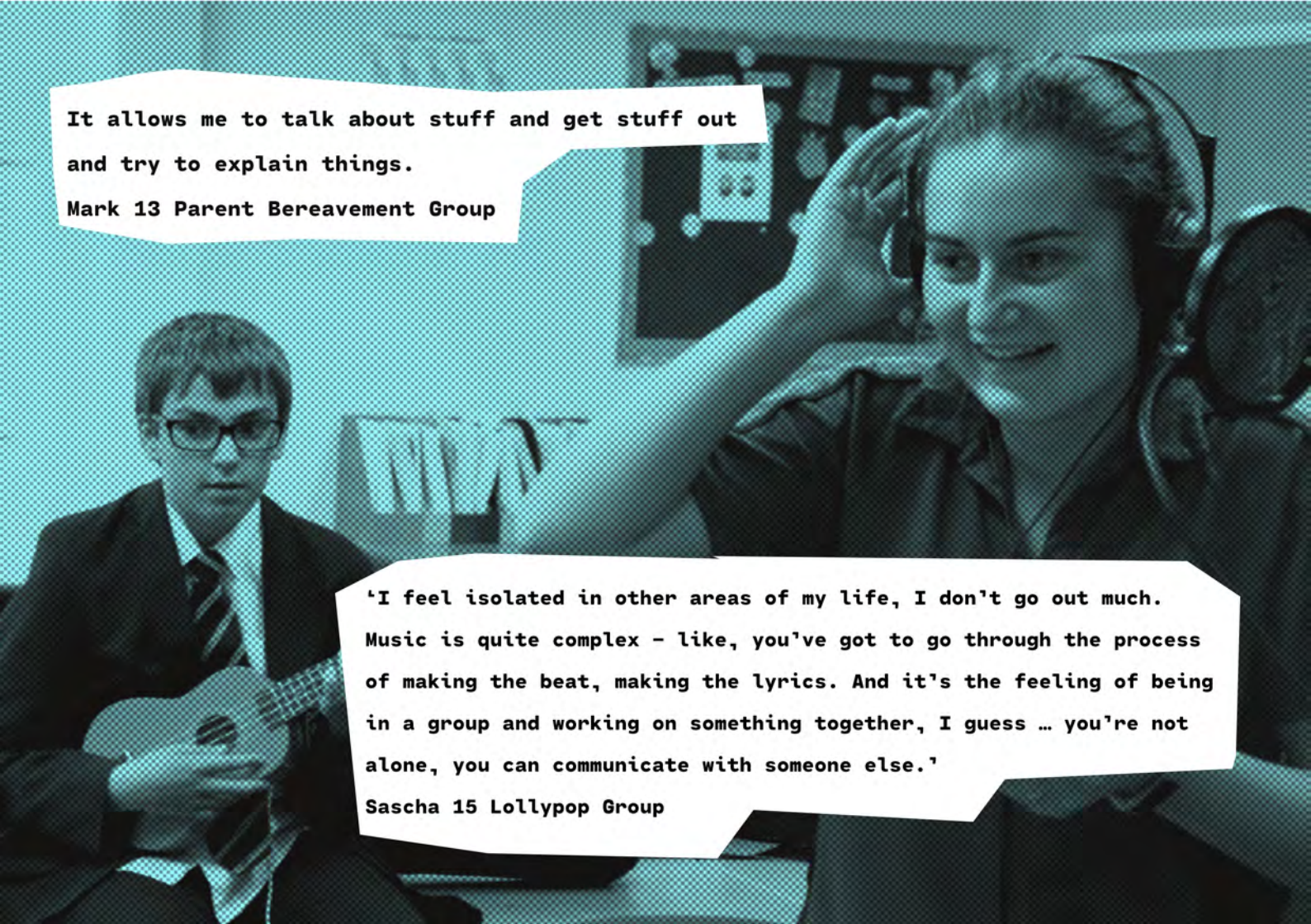
The next step is key to success: mixing everything up to create organised chaos. There are no ground rules here. Participants can play a keyboard, shake a tambourine, have a go on a ukulele, anything goes, and everyone is having fun. They might not be able to define it - but that doesn't matter. They are sharing a feeling of group connectedness.

For me, this organised chaos, with so much going on under the surface, is like invisible magic. Not surprisingly, this fun breaks down all sorts of barriers. Not just between young people and their peers and the musicians and youth workers, but also within the young people themselves. With no right and no wrong, the Katie's and Phoebe's of the world can be 'a weirdo' or 'different' and nobody will judge them, the Skylar's and Alex's are accepted for who they are, and the Poppy's find that fun can return following bereavement. How many of us have had it drummed into us that it's unacceptable to behave like kids? In a My Pockets session, this is nonsense. And when the young people see this - and not a lesson plan in sight - they begin to accept people for who they are, just as they themselves are now accepted, and see that they are not alone. Everyone has a story to tell and their life experiences actually make people interesting, more colourful, and better placed to make something creative.

'This is the only place where I feel I've got confidence, because I've been bullied for lots of years. It's made me realise I'm not the only idiot in the world!'

Katie 15 Child Dynamics Group





It allows me to talk about stuff and get stuff out
and try to explain things.

Mark 13 Parent Bereavement Group

'I feel isolated in other areas of my life, I don't go out much.
Music is quite complex - like, you've got to go through the process
of making the beat, making the lyrics. And it's the feeling of being
in a group and working on something together, I guess ... you're not
alone, you can communicate with someone else.'

Sascha 15 Lollypop Group

CASE STUDY - Danny The Drummer by Music Leader Shane McMurray

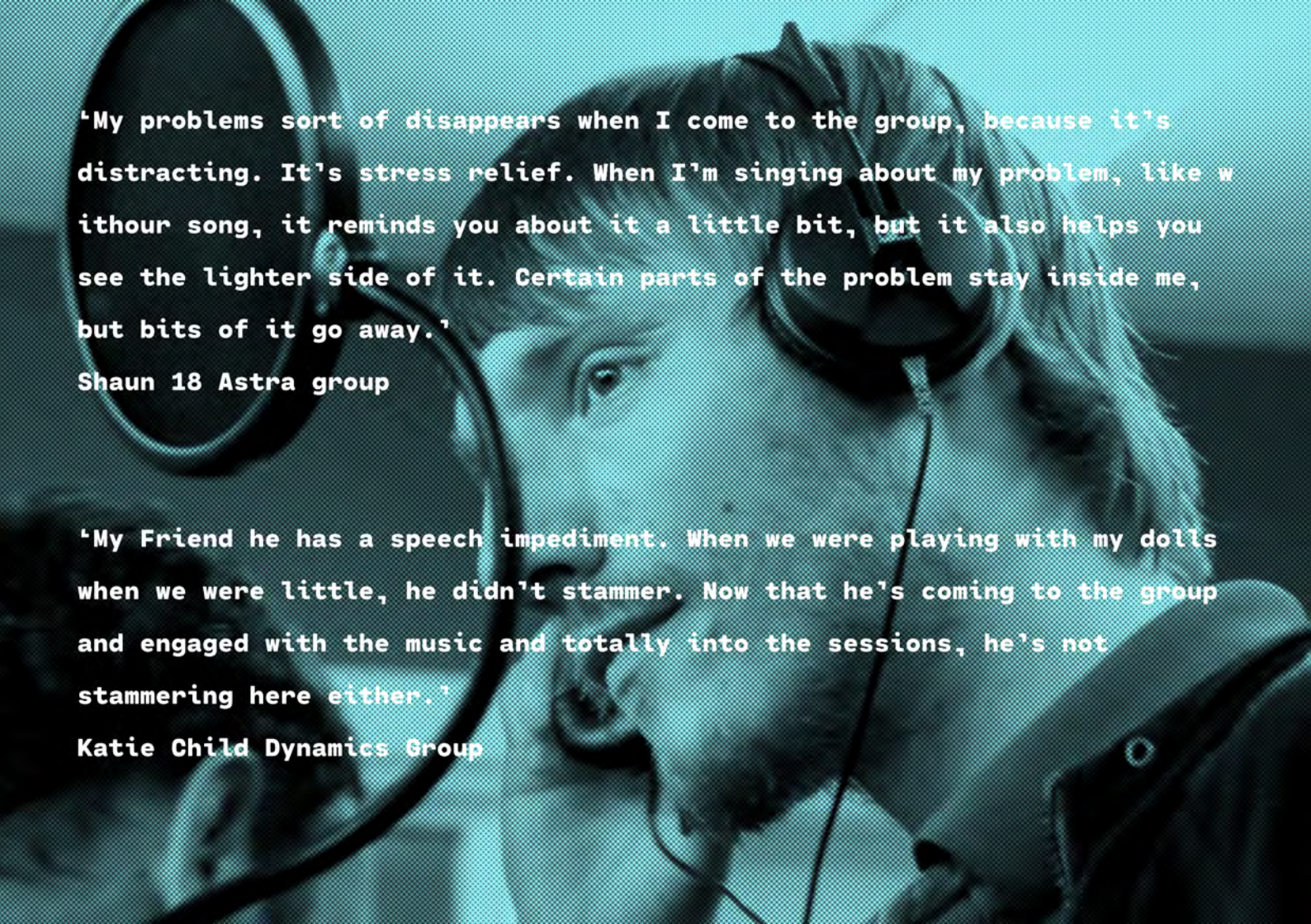
Danny 22 lives on the Bransholme estate in Hull, it originally housed the ex dock worker families of the city. The gap that the industry left can be felt on the estate and as someone who grew up there it's safe to say low ambition and low expectations are common-place. Dan studied motor vehicle level 1 but his education was cut short when his age meant he would have to find money for his course which he didn't have. He had to stay home, care for his Mum and figure out how to move forward in life.

Dan met the My Pockets team at the Bransholme Astra Youth Club. It was clear that he had musical talent when within minutes he was playing complicated beats in time. The team realised it wasn't a fluke when he recorded his first song a few weeks later to a click track in 1 take. Dan began to show huge commitment to the project and his own development. He has no set routine and his sleeping pattern is chaotic, however he always managed to be on time for his music sessions. I've seen a massive change in him, he has developed very quickly has give me a tremendous sense of pride in him. Dan now hopes to improve as a drummer and aspires to be in a band. He is currently is volunteering for a charity to help him gain a forklift license.

Danny may end up being a forklift driver, he may be a casual worker for another 20 years - but now Danny will always be a drummer.



...now Danny will always be a drummer.

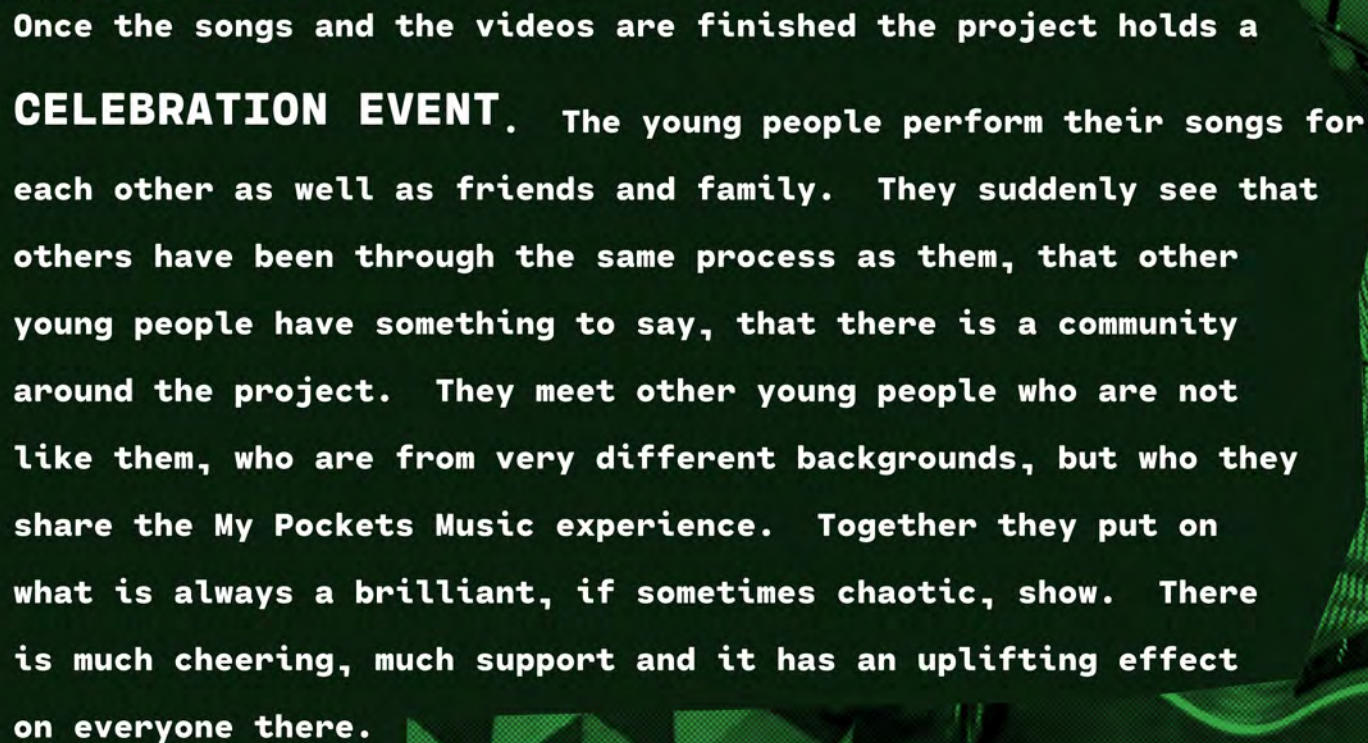


'My problems sort of disappears when I come to the group, because it's distracting. It's stress relief. When I'm singing about my problem, like with our song, it reminds you about it a little bit, but it also helps you see the lighter side of it. Certain parts of the problem stay inside me, but bits of it go away.'

Shaun 18 Astra group

'My Friend he has a speech impediment. When we were playing with my dolls when we were little, he didn't stammer. Now that he's coming to the group and engaged with the music and totally into the sessions, he's not stammering here either.'

Katie Child Dynamics Group



Once the songs and the videos are finished the project holds a **CELEBRATION EVENT**. The young people perform their songs for each other as well as friends and family. They suddenly see that others have been through the same process as them, that other young people have something to say, that there is a community around the project. They meet other young people who are not like them, who are from very different backgrounds, but who they share the My Pockets Music experience. Together they put on what is always a brilliant, if sometimes chaotic, show. There is much cheering, much support and it has an uplifting effect on everyone there.

'Being heard. I think, because a lot of these young people probably don't get heard and probably have a tough time because of that, both outside of school and in school. So yeah, I think that's probably why it's making them happy.' Pete, Youth Worker



What's next?

A year and a half into the project the Covid Pandemic hit. My Pockets developed a whole new way of working with young people online. Young people made sounds in their home with pots, pans, bottles, hairbrushes, rulers and more. The sounds were sampled over Teams and then used to make beats and sometimes whole tracks. Young people would direct our musicians to write melodies and there were group lyric writing sessions. Vocals were recorded on phones and emailed over.

We are proud of this work. It showed a resilience in our organisation and a determination to still be there for young people in the most difficult of times.

Coming out of the pandemic we can now see how the fabric of support for young people has been damaged. We want to be a part of repairing this, running more creative workshops and helping to bring young people back together in a spirit of optimism and fun.

What next?

It is very clear to us that making music has a dramatic positive effect on people's wellbeing. This coupled with the fun, self expression and energy of the My Pockets workshops makes this project one of the most impactful we run.

Our plan is to seek funding from various sources, big and small, and to also look at social prescribing. Sometimes we might run just one group, other times we might run a large scale project like this one. Please get in touch if you would like to partner with us.

We feel strongly that the case needs to be made for using creativity and music to address issues of mental health, anxiety, social isolation and wellbeing. We want to be part of making that case, of backing the mental health of our young people and embedding ourselves in the support that is offered to them.

**We know
that fun alone
can't change the world.
But it's got to be
worth a try.**





Credits

External Evaluator - Glynis Charlton

My Pockets Team - Peter Snelling, Sally Snelling, James Price, Shane McMurray, Adam Parish, Katie Hariman, Simon Higley.

