



SPIRIT OF 2012
INVESTING IN HAPPINESS

MUSIC AND WELLBEING

**INSIGHTS FROM
GRANT FUNDING**



This is a summary of Music and Wellbeing, a report bringing together learning from 17 participatory music projects we have funded since 2013 and looking at how they achieved wellbeing outcomes.

Music and Wellbeing

The projects covered in the report all demonstrated the power of music-making to positively impact people’s wellbeing: participants felt greater purpose, confidence and self-belief, as well as a better ability to manage their own wellbeing and a greater feeling of life satisfaction.

The report identified common features amongst the projects:

PREREQUISITES		
• High-quality music leaders • Safe, welcoming, inclusive space • Making music accessible		
ACTIVITIES	RESULTS	OUTCOMES
• Self-expression and creativity • A space to articulate feelings and experiences together • Social interaction • Develop participants’ skills (quickly) • Work towards an output (e.g. recording, performance)	• Fun, enjoyment and laughter • People feel valued and appreciated • Group bonding, feelings of commonality • Making friends and connections • Increase in musical aptitude • Feelings of achievement	• Increased wellbeing • Reduction in loneliness, increase in connectedness • Increase in confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy

Recommendations

Based on the learning from the projects, the report made recommendations for those aiming to use music-making to improve wellbeing.

For **practitioners**, we recommend sessions are **accessible** for those with any level of musical ability and that they are **inclusive and welcoming**.

Sessions should provide opportunities for **creativity** and **self-expressions**, and should build in time for **communal experiences** and **social interaction**.

The end-result of the sessions is important: participants wanted to work towards a definite **musical output**, like a recording or performance, and for the **musical leadership** of the sessions to be **high quality**.

Recommendations

For **funders**, we recommend applying a ‘wellbeing lens’ to music-making projects, adding specific wellbeing measurements, such as ONS4, to project reporting.

A **Theory of Change** can help funded projects align their approach with the outcomes they want for their participants, and to suit specific audiences.

Funding access costs, such as transport and equipment, can help overcome barriers to participation and can make projects more accessible.



What has Spirit of 2012 funded?

From 2013–2023, Spirit of 2012 invested £3.05m in 17 participatory music-making projects to boost wellbeing, reduce loneliness, and build social connection.

Over 1 million people sang or made music as part of these projects, across taster sessions, open days and mass performances, with around 2,500 engaging in regular, sustained music activities - often from groups facing significant barriers to participation.

🎵 **Music Challenge Fund** (£700k, 2018): 4 projects delivering frequent, social music-making opportunities with a focus on increasing wellbeing and reducing loneliness.

🎵 **Carers' Music Fund** (£1.6m, 2019): 10 projects supporting female carers with creative, community-based activities.

🎵 **Our Day Out** (£431k): dementia-inclusive music, dance and visual sessions in rural Norfolk, delivered by Creative Arts East.

🎵 **Rhythm and Respect** (£49k, 2016): intergenerational music-making in Plymouth, bringing socially isolated young people together with a wide range of other vulnerable, disabled and older people.

🎵 **Big Big Sing** (£368k): nearly 1 million joined in citywide singing during Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Many of these projects took a "test and learn" approach, contributing to Spirit's growing evidence base on the power of music-making to achieve wellbeing outcomes.

So... who did we reach?

ONE MILLION+

TOTAL REACH

2,255

REGULAR PARTICIPANTS⁵

AGED OVER 65
(N=1,960)

UNDER 25
(N=1,960)

FROM RACIALLY MINORITISED
COMMUNITIES (N=1,540)

IDENTIFIED AS DISABLED
(N=1,226)

OF FUNDING WAS DELIVERED
IN RURAL AREAS⁶

35%

35%

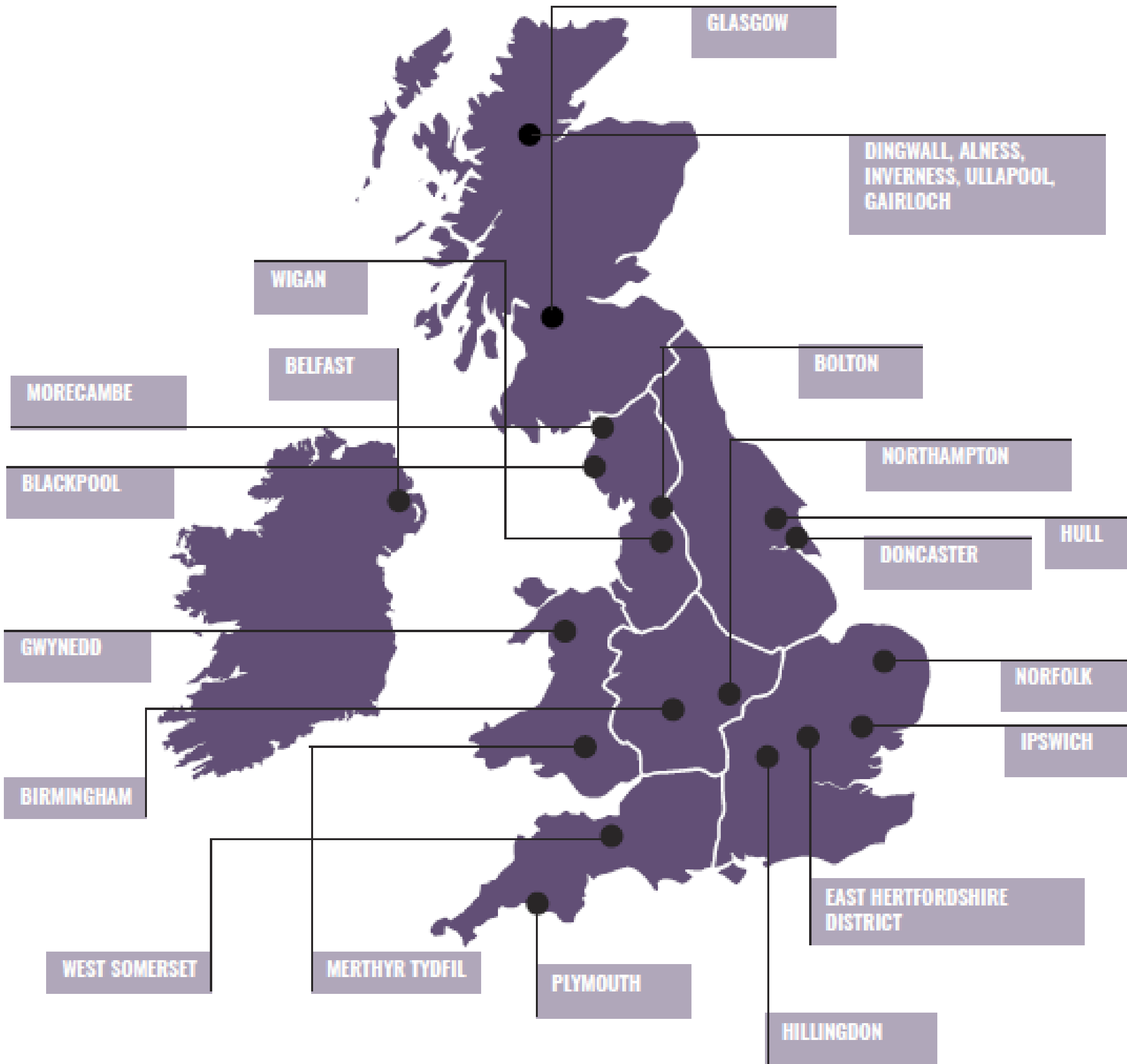
15%

31%

39%



Where did we reach them?



Case study

JANINE*, 15

PROJECT ALAW, BARNARDO'S

When Janine joined the Alaw project she was a carer for her non-verbal brother with ASD, and faced challenges due to her family's lack of access to transport and her own school-related issues, including bullying and health problems. After being introduced to the Alaw music project, Janine's passion for music helped her overcome social anxiety and build supportive relationships with fellow young carers. She excelled in playing

the ukulele, taught herself numerous songs, and became a mentor for other members. This journey significantly boosted her confidence, leading her to join the young carers choir and perform a solo in front of the First Minister of Wales. Janine credited the Alaw project with opening doors, fostering new friendships, providing a safe escape from daily pressures, and ultimately enhancing her overall well-being.



[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REPORT.](#)



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