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Summary Report

SINGING FOR HEALTH IN MORECAMBE



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Centre for
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Music

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Summary Report

What were we trying to understand?

The International Centre for Community Music (ICCM) was invited to respond to an existing brief that sought to understand how two new singing groups were developing. This was part of a pilot project established to connect with older people experiencing isolation, and, young people who were connected with the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). These singing groups were set up in partnership with a local GP practice and a local CAHMS team to explore possible arts partnerships as a way to challenge health inequalities relating to mental health experiences in Morecambe.

What did we do?

Two researchers were invited to talk with participants, one with each group, to gain an understanding of the ways which people had engaged with the project. A questionnaire and follow up interview took place with older adults in one singing group, and a focus group session was conducted with young people and the project workforce in the other. Project partners from each singing group were then invited to take part in an action research event with a further researcher. This enabled reflection, sharing and development planning that sought to refine and better understand ways in which the partnership could be strengthened to support future singing for health project development. The research was conducted between November 2019 and February 2020.

What did we learn?

- There is considerable enthusiasm for both these singing groups to continue;
- Participants in the singing group for older people who shared experiences with our researcher suggested that the group had a positive impact on their lives and that there were high levels of enjoyment. This was supported by project workforce reflections, where development of existing or new musical identities and skills, increased connection to others, and opportunities for medical staff to see people not as patients, but as community members, all contributed to a shared sense of the positive impact of the pilot project;
- Participants in the singing group for young people (connected with CAHMS) also shared experiences that suggested there had been positive changes through taking part. Including changes to confidence, connection to others, and the opportunity to take part in a musical activity that was distinct from their school environment. Workforce reflections also alluded to this and identified ways that their professional development had been informed by taking part in the sessions with young people. It has been recognised that young people will be well-placed to help the project develop into something that could be positive and meaningful in the lives of young people who are connected

to CAMHS. However, more research is required to understand these changes in connection and confidence, and how they might support collaborative project planning;

- The approaches developing within both singing groups have been responsive to those taking part and negotiation of musical content and structure of sessions appear to have been important factors in this. The singing group for young people would benefit from further exploration concerning the format and evolving pedagogy, to better understand how young people can be collaborators in project design, particularly those in this context, who have mental health experiences;
- All partners appear committed to continuing and developing this pilot project. However, ways in which these develop, including for example funding structures; ways of sharing; referral routes; service agreements; and, common values for the project, require further exploration and development to support project sustainability;
- Longer-term, embedded research strategies that are developed in collaboration with the project partners, at the development stage of planning, will strengthen the role of project to support local partnerships which aim to challenge health inequalities.

Emerging questions

- How might a singing project for young people with mental health experiences become a site of co-creation between project partners, including young people?
- What are the pedagogical approaches of these singing groups and how do they make space for democratic musical experiences?
- How might democratic musical experiences contribute to challenging health inequalities?
- What is unique about these project partnerships, if anything, and how might they be developed?
- Do project partners have shared values of the role of singing and health promotion, and how might these be further understood?
- What opportunities to engage in skills development and practice sharing could be utilised to support increased understanding of the role of singing projects in arts and health partnerships?

Contact information

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