

Case studies: How have culture and creativity been supporting people in health, care and other institutions during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Project: Studio Connect

Organisation: Key Changes

Region: London

Designed for: Hospitals, care homes & supported housing

Weekly group online sessions have been particularly successful – prior to the crisis we were delivering weekly centre-based workshop sessions and we initially felt unsure if online sessions would be as engaging. Online sessions have been very well attended and have given people a valuable lifeline for social interaction and peer support throughout the crisis.



Image credit: Key Changes

Introduction

We primarily engage young adults from BAME communities, many of whom have been living in high-risk settings such as care homes and hospitals throughout the crisis. People recently discharged from hospitals also often live in supported or temporary housing (with basic living facilities/limited access to leisure opportunities) and have been highly vulnerable at this time.

Prior to Covid-19, our community beneficiaries attended one-to-one sessions with specially trained music industry mentors, delivered from our studio in East London. In response to the crisis, we worked with service users to create a new online service, 'Studio Connect', developed with emergency funding from Youth Music, Arts Council England and MIND – enabling us to reach those living in care homes, hospitals and other secure treatment settings.

Designed to deliver cultural relevance for young BAME patients, the service has engaged participants in collaborative creative sessions with eminent UK MOBO musicians, including acclaimed rapper/producer Jords, and BRIT Award winning artist NAO. The project also offers regular opportunities for safe, facilitated online interaction and peer support, including weekly online group workshops which feature presentations and Q&A from industry guest speakers as well as online 'open mic' sessions.

Funders

Emergency funding from Youth Music, Arts Council England and MIND

Partners

We welcome referrals from a range of agencies, working closely with psychiatric nurses, occupational therapists, social workers, and care coordinators. We work closely on an ongoing basis with multidisciplinary teams within the following NHS trusts (Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust; East London Foundation Trust; Barnet, Enfield & Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust; Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust; West London Mental Health Trust and South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust)

How many people took/are taking part?

100

Where is it happening?

Primarily London

For how long has it been happening?

April 2020 to end-October 2020

Have you adapted existing work to make this happen? If so, how?

We previously delivered live weekly 'Open Mic' sessions for beneficiaries – enabling them to build their local networks of personal and peer support and meet other like-minded people in mental health recovery. Our weekly online sessions have enabled this valuable social and creative interaction to continue. Sessions also feature a wide range of guest speakers from the music industry offering insights into music creation, production and publishing, plus music training and careers pathways. Recent guests have included representatives from Association of Independent Musicians, Musicians Union, TuneCore, Help Musicians UK, British Underground, No Hats No Hoods, BT Sport Music, Red Bull UK, Mute Records, Eglo records and many more.

Does your work support people who identify with one or more of the protected characteristics¹?

The programme specifically targets musicians facing inequalities and barriers to support as a result of their racial background or mental health disability.

Key Changes Records (our own in-house label) was founded in 2019 to address these inequalities and is the world's first label specifically for musicians with mental health experience. Participants of our programmes are supported to publish and promote their own original music through the label, which has been featured on GRM Daily, The Pit London's Party Playlist, Resonance FM, Riverside Radio and many more.

Evaluation & Feedback

The project is being monitored using participant self-scored wellbeing data, which will be independently evaluated by a team from Dept. of Health and MIND in early 2021.

Please see the following links to Lockdown Diaries made by programme participants

<https://youtu.be/modVGJ9q3No>

<https://youtu.be/KqCnXltpsUs>

¹Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Equalities Act 2010).

<https://youtu.be/2Ujl2QWtcTw>

Please also see recent Sky Breakfast interview with our project mentor, NAO:

<https://twitter.com/SkyNews/status/1314477870945890304>

What is your own impression of how it has worked? What have been the challenges and successes for you?

Weekly group online sessions have been particularly successful – prior to the crisis we were delivering weekly centre-based workshop sessions and we initially felt unsure if online sessions would be as engaging. Online sessions have been very well attended and have given people a valuable lifeline for social interaction and peer support throughout the crisis. An unintended benefit has been that many more professional guest speakers from the music industry have been available to deliver workshop sessions in our online format.

Further information

We provide music focused recovery services for people experiencing a wide range of mental health conditions including depression, anxiety, bipolar and schizophrenia. We support 3,000 people per year, through our services in 15 London hospitals and our professionally equipped music studio.

Over 80% of our beneficiaries are disadvantaged young BAME males, who are over-represented in the mental health system and often have limited networks of support.

Our award-winning programme promotes recovery through developing creative, technical and vocational skills and opens pathways to mainstream opportunities in education and employment. Our innovative approach draws on clinical therapeutic techniques and professional music industry practice.