

MUSIC AS MEDICINE

EVIDENCING THE BENEFITS OF LIVE MUSIC

Live Music Now was founded by Yehudi Menuhin and Ian Stoutzker CBE in 1977. Every year, LMN musicians deliver over 2,500 music sessions to people in a wide range of challenging situations including older people in care homes living with dementia, children in special schools, isolated rural communities, hospitals and more. In 38 years, more than two million people have benefited from LMN workshops and interactive performances. We believe live music should play a significant role in society, and hope this document demonstrates a compelling evidence base for further investment.



The neurochemical benefits of music can boost the body's immune system, reduce anxiety, and help regulate mood. [McGill University analysis of 400 published papers, 2013.](#)

Loneliness and Social Isolation

There are currently more than 10 million people over 65, and this number is predicted to double by 2050. [A study of loneliness in older Britons published in 2012](#) found that more than a fifth felt lonely all the time, and a quarter became more lonely over five years.

For older people, there is evidence to suggest that the risk of Alzheimer's disease more than doubles for those experiencing loneliness ([Wilson et al, 2007](#)), although more research is needed in this area. Research has also shown that older people who are lonely are more likely to visit their GP and use more medication ([Cohen, 2006](#)), and more likely to enter residential care earlier ([Russell et al, 1997](#)).



Loneliness can be twice as unhealthy as obesity, [according to researchers](#) who found that feelings of isolation can have a devastating impact on older people. Compared with the average person in the study, those who reported being lonely had a 14% greater risk of dying.

Music has more universal appeal than any other artform or group activity, and will therefore be able to draw people together better than other activities. 79% of adults listen to recorded music regularly, and 29.7% of adults attend live music events. It is the most popular artistic activity across all ranges, including 65-75 year olds, and those over 75. [Arts Council England, 'Taking Part' survey 2012.](#)

Participatory arts sessions can reduce reliance on GP and NHS services. The resulting cost savings to the NHS can be greater than the costs of the arts sessions. ['Artlift', NHS Gloucester 2011.](#)



Music participation for older people can significantly improve their quality of life and mental health, and is a cost effective way of doing so. ['Community Singing Programme for Older People', University of Kent and University of Canterbury Christ Church, 2012.](#)

Group musical activities for people living independently can produce a range of benefits including improved social life, greater sense of community and belonging, enhanced mood and widened cultural horizons, all of which contribute to an overall sense of wellbeing. [Live Music Now 'Songs and Scones' 2014.](#)

“ I don't get out very often. At Songs and Scones I see old friends and chat with new people. It's better than any medicine!”

Audience member
Ryedale, North Yorkshire Songs and Scones

“ Music can lift us out of depression or move us to tears. But for many of my neurological patients, music is even more - it can provide access, even when no medication can, to movement, to speech, to life. For them, music is not a luxury, but a necessity.” [Dr. Oliver Sacks](#).

Dementia and Mental Health

There are currently 850,000 people with dementia in the UK and it is estimated that this will increase to 1 million by 2025. The financial cost of dementia to the UK is £26 billion per annum. [Alzheimer's UK](#).



Live music is an intervention with proven effects on the human central nervous system, relative low cost, and ease of administration, and little capacity to do harm. [‘Music and Dementia’ University of Newcastle, 2013](#).

Engaging in both listening to music and participation has been shown to alleviate some of the commonly reported psychosocial symptoms of dementia. These include problems of depression and agitated and aggressive behaviour, impaired social interaction, and sleep disturbance; and it can therefore enhance quality of life. [‘Singing and Dementia’ Canterbury Christchurch University, 2012](#).

A series of arts interventions with people in the early stages of dementia and their carers, found that participation in music activities enhanced cognitive function in people in early stages of dementia for a week or more for 80% of those tested. [‘Reawakening The Mind’ Arts4Dementia 2013](#).

Live music can significantly engage people with dementia, regardless of the severity of the disease. Recorded music does not have the same effect. [‘Keep music live: music and the alleviation of apathy in dementia subjects’ University of Southampton 2006](#).

Music can positively affect the lives of people living with dementia. In particular, it can:

- Support physical, mental, emotional and psychosocial well-being
- Support cognitive function
- Enhance inter-relationships and spiritual connections
- Support the well-being of carers and care staff
- Provide support alongside, or potentially as an alternative to, psychotropic drug therapy.

[‘Sustaining the Note of Hope: Music, dementia and meaningful lives’ Rayne Foundation 2014, with LMN](#).

Participation in music through singing can promote mental wellbeing for all people, and provide a specific range of benefits for mental health service users. [‘Singing and Mental Health’ Canterbury Christchurch University, 2012](#). [Live Music Now ‘On a Good Day’ 2014](#).

“ The difference to the quality of life of some of our residents cannot be measured. We have seen improvements in residents’ wellbeing, shown in increased sociability with staff and other residents, a general increase in ‘happiness’ and a decrease in agitation. This has been sustained in between sessions.”

Manager, Wyatt Residential Care Home

Hospitals

Live music can deliver improvements in wellbeing, pain, cognition functioning, independent functioning and mobility for patients recovering from brain surgery. It is practical to deliver this in a challenging neuro-rehab hospital ward environment without disrupting staff or treatment. [Live Music Now, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Trust and University of Kent, 2014.](#)

“ I felt a patient with minimally conscious state was more engaged; he locked eyes onto me and smiled. Twice. A sense of happiness and togetherness was clearly in the air.”

Dr Mohamed Sakel, LMN project on Neurorehabilitation Unit, Kent and Canterbury Hospital

Music can have a positive role during the pre-operative stage, during surgery and for post-operative recovery. It significantly reduces anxiety and stress and helps normalise vital signs. Of great importance are the findings on the significant reduction of anaesthetics, medication for sedation and analgesics. These results also show that music interventions can contribute to achieve costs-benefits effects. [‘Arts and Music in Health Care; An Overview’ Staricoff and Clift 2011.](#)



Children and young people benefit in terms of enhanced relaxation, providing distraction, and helping them to talk about the hospital experience and develop coping strategies. Familiar music can reduce anxiety associated with the hospital environment and can reduce children's stress during painful procedures. In some cases music making can reduce or remove the need for sedation. [The Power of Music: a research synthesis of the impact of actively making music on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people \(2015\).](#)

Please note: This document refers to only a small extract of the available evidence. Full citations are hyperlinked in the online version of this document, and available on request from info@livemusicnow.org or by calling us on 020 7014 2829.



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