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Impact Report

Musical Beacons - Coastal Connections 2022

**In partnership with East Sussex Young Parents'
Service, Turner House and Salvation Army
Housing Association**



About Soundcastle

Soundcastle believe everyone deserves access to arts activity. Creativity can promote positive mental health and social connection, especially for the most vulnerable members of our society. We help children, families and communities to find their creative spark through transformational music projects that increase confidence, enhance wellbeing and bring people together. With our dedicated team of professional musicians, we create safe, fun and inspiring spaces where people can connect, play and find their voice.

About Musical Beacons

In a Musical Beacons session children, parents, carers and music facilitators work together to explore, create and have fun making music. Following the Covid pandemic where all sessions were delivered online, we have spent the last year returning to live music making and supporting young parents and their children to feel confident socialising and interacting with each other in person.

Working in partnership with East Sussex Young Parents Service (ESYPS), Turner House and Salvation Army Housing Association within their supported accommodation settings in Hastings and Eastbourne, the 2022 programme involved:

- 21 young parents with lived experience of mental health challenges and trauma
- 22 children aged 0 - 5
- 2 Soundcastle music facilitators

- 4 Assistant Project Workers (ESYPS and Turner House)
- 54 interactive Musical Beacons sessions
- 20 1:1 Arts Award sessions
- 1 pop-up Musical Beacons event in the Hastings community
- Distributing 21 packs of Musical Beacons Activity Cards

The Musical Beacons sessions are designed to support young parents with lived experience of mental ill health and trauma to develop confidence, communication skills and playfulness with their children through making music at home. Together, we sing familiar songs, explore musical instruments, play sensory games with fabrics and bubbles and co-create our own mini songs.



Our aims are to:

- Increase Confidence
- Reduce social isolation
- Encourage Playfulness and Positive Attachments
- Enhance Wellbeing

Throughout the year Soundcastle, ESYPS and Turner House staff observed an increase in parent/child interaction during the sessions. Examples of this included:

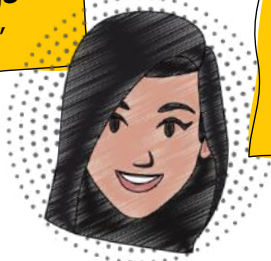
- Parents increasing their use of praise and verbal encouragement when talking directly to their child
- Direct interaction through eye contact, singing and dancing together
- Parents starting to sing in front of each other and directly to their children
- Parents reporting using singing to support other parts of their daily life

Turner House staff: *"Everybody really enjoys it. They [the young parents] started off on the sofas with their phones and now they're on the floor interacting with their kids! It's absolutely brilliant. None of them mind singing in front of each other and they just wouldn't do anything like that before. It's really important they sing to their kids and get involved and play with them. They don't feel silly doing that in front of each other or the staff any more - that's real progress!"*

We are delighted to report that parent feedback from surveys completed throughout the year indicated an overall increase in confidence, connectedness, playfulness and wellbeing.

100% of parents felt that taking part in Musical Beacons has increased their confidence:

Chloe: "When you know it's for your child, you **gain the confidence to do new things** - it makes you try harder."



Natalie: "Musical Beacons helps me to not worry about whatever other people think and to just focus on having fun with my children. It's **made me more confident** to interact with my kids in front of other people."



100% of parents noticed a feeling of connectedness and a reduction in isolation:

Caitlin: "It brings **everyone together.**"



"Sophie: "Some people don't normally come out the rooms but they come to Musical Beacons"

100% of parents felt Musical Beacons was supporting them to develop more positive attachments with their children:

Emily: "Now I know that my son is creative and imaginative and he loves music and I love seeing his face light up. It's fun **and bonding**"



Jasmine: "When I see the expression on her face and see she's enjoying it, I enjoy it too. When we're doing the same thing, singing, dancing - it **makes me feel closer to her.** I like to sing twinkle little star to her when she's falling asleep."

100% of parents felt that taking part in Musical Beacons has enhanced their wellbeing:

Karen: "I'm not very good with mornings due to my mental health but I found getting up and having **something to look forward to** helps"



Jenny: "My daughter was only born a month ago. It's a struggle to get to the session sometimes but as soon as you get there, everyone around you makes you **feel better with the music.**"

Turner House staff: *“It gets them all together in the house and **creates a lighter atmosphere**. There’s a lot going on for our young people, they live complex lives and so **to make music and create happy memories with their children is invaluable.**”*

“ESYPS staff: *“Musical Beacons has encouraged a lot of our residents to spend time together and **learn new ways to interact with their children.**”*

Skills Development – Arts Award

Alongside the Musical Beacons sessions Soundcastle has been supporting three young parents in working towards an Arts Award qualification to support their personal and professional development journey. One has already submitted her portfolio and been awarded her certificate. Engagement in the process requires the development of self-reflection, communication, and presentation skills, resulting in a creative portfolio of their work.

Case Study – Annie

Before starting her Arts Award journey, Annie lacked confidence and struggled to take part in group activities.

Attending Musical Beacons and creating her Arts Award portfolio has enabled her to explore her leadership skills and increased her confidence in communicating with others. Supported by staff, she felt able to host a karaoke night in the house with her fellow residents and encourage them all to sing songs together. She was even able to plan and deliver a singing lesson to a member of staff, teaching them a beautiful folk song. Compiling her self-reflections and research, she created a high-quality creative portfolio, passing her Arts Award and gaining a Level 1 qualification.



Annie: *“For Arts Award I made a portfolio and **I feel proud** of it. I wouldn’t have done it otherwise.... I really liked that I taught a singing lesson and I know how to plan that now. **I can’t believe I did that** actually.”*

*Arts Award Moderator Feedback: "An... effective portfolio which presented a powerful statement about the ways in which Arts Award can be used to support and develop young people in challenging circumstances. Annie's account of her journey clearly showed how she developed skills, self-confidence and self-esteem while at the same time developing the parenting skills required for bringing up a young child. **Well done to her and to Soundcastle for developing an extremely appropriate programme for her.**"*

Turner House staff have commented on her increased confidence and self-belief having completed her portfolio:

*"She has quite a few various issues and confidence issues. And the amount of times she said to me, **"I've been really enjoying my arts award"** and she's engaged and she's really interested and seems happier... **She's more confident** to do her own thing."*

Legacy

The programme has created a legacy of ongoing informal artistic activity amongst the parents and their children. Every young parent now has their own pack of Soundcastle Activity Cards to help remind them of different fun and easy musical games they can play with their child. As they have gained confidence and experience working with Soundcastle resources, they have started to make music with their children between sessions, including:

- Spontaneous singing
- Having a house karaoke session
- Jamming together on musical instruments

*Turner House Staff: "They are learning how to play - **this is invaluable**. They're taking time to focus on their children and importantly have fun with them."*

What's Next for Musical Beacons?

Up until now, all sessions have been held in the houses for the convenience of the residents and to encourage them to attend. Delivering Musical Beacons within the houses has ensured that we reach the highest number of people. With time, we hope to move the sessions into community spaces and encourage the young parents to leave the house and to integrate with other local parents in their community. The aim is that as they start to move on from their supported accommodation, they will be able to continue attending sessions at a community venue.

We are in the process of raising funds to ensure the continuation of Musical Beacons and to support many more young parents in developing positive relationships with their children.



<https://musicalbeacons.soundcastle.co.uk>



Listen to the creativity of the young parents and children here: <https://on.soundcloud.com/Jks8x>

Please note: all names used throughout this impact report have been changed to protect the identities of those living/working in the safehouses.



For further information about Musical Beacons Coastal Connections or Soundcastle's work more widely, please contact:

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With thanks to our Musical Beacons funders:

