

# Impact Report

## People's Music 2022

**In partnership with Sussex Recovery College**



### 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 communities to find their creative spark through transformational music projects that increase confidence, enhance wellbeing, bring people together and promote mental health recovery. With our dedicated team of professional musicians, we create safe, fun and inspiring spaces where people can connect, play and find their voice.

### About People's Music

People's Music is a Soundcastle programme which celebrates the creativity, resilience and voice of people who live with a mental health diagnosis. We use collaborative music-making to strengthen mental health recovery, reduce social isolation and bring our community together through inspiring creative experiences in Worthing and Adur.



Throughout 2022, we worked in partnership with Sussex Recovery College to produce three courses:

- Singing for Wellbeing
- Ukulele Crew
- New Rhythms (an introductory course in collaborative music making)

Community members are referred by the Sussex Recovery College (SRC) and we work together to co-produce the courses with peer trainers who have lived experience of mental health. Creative playfulness is connected to the 5 Steps to Wellbeing (as recommended by the NHS) and this enables us to welcome anyone to join the groups from experienced musicians to those discovering music-making for the first time.

For community members who enjoy taking part in these groups, they can progress on to the People's Music Collective (PMC) – our flagship band that write, record and perform their own brand new music. Founded in 2019, PMC members work together with Soundcastle facilitators to build trust, playfulness and creativity, leading to the creation of thought-provoking and inspiring original music. Through recordings and public performances, we tackle the stigma of mental illness and celebrate the diversity, strength and creativity of our community.

People's Music members participate in regular, informal reflection circles and complete feedback forms and optional 1:1 interviews at the end of each term. In addition, artist facilitators and peer trainers hold debriefs after every session as well as



several team evaluation meetings throughout the year. PMC members have attended a series of interviews with Alessandro Mazzola for the Guildhall School of Music and Drama's AHRC 'Music for Social Impact' research project. They gave an independent insight into their personal experiences of ownership, connection and empowerment and the People's Music programme is now being highlighted as an example within the sector of how to achieve social impact through community music. The results of this case study were presented at the 7th annual SIMMposium (Social Impact of Music Making) hosted at Guildhall on 12th-14th December 2022. The above accumulated responses provide the data in this impact report which shows our progress in meeting our aims and which evidences both the need and demand for an ongoing, sustainable People's Music programme in Sussex.

The 2022 programme involved:

- 39 community members with lived experience of mental illness and trauma
- 5 Soundcastle music facilitators
- 2 Sussex Recovery College Peer Trainers
- 11 Singing for Wellbeing sessions
- 10 Ukulele Crew sessions
- 12 New Rhythms sessions
- 30 People's Music Collective sessions
- 2 performances/ sharing events to a combined audience of 97 people
- 1 short film
- 3 original pieces of music

### Our aims are to:

- Increase Confidence
- Reduce social isolation
- Enhance Wellbeing

We are delighted to report that feedback from surveys and interviews completed throughout the year as well as facilitation team observations indicated an overall **increase in confidence, connectedness and wellbeing.**

### Aim 1: Increase Confidence

Throughout the year Soundcastle and Sussex Recovery College peer trainers observed an increase in confidence. Examples of this included community members:

- Committing to and regularly attending sessions
- Offering their creative ideas to the group
- Singing for the first time
- Performing in front of an audience for the first time
- Singing a solo in front of an audience for the first time

Soundcastle Facilitator: *"Amy had a great rehearsal with us but when she saw the audience arriving, her social anxiety became overwhelming and she felt unable to do the performance. We had a **chat and a cup of tea** and then we decided to **buddy her up** with Maddy (another member of the Singing for Wellbeing group) - this gave Amy the confidence to see through her first ever singing performance. She made a point of saying **how proud of herself she was for overcoming her fears and how much she loved being a part of the performance.**"*

## 100% of community members reported an increase in their confidence following their involvement in the courses:

Ted: "I can now talk with people I don't know without the fear and anxiety I used to have and feel able to make mistakes and to try again and if necessary again... and there are always others **you can ask to help you without judging you.**"

Rodrigo: "It reminded me of the skills I already had and **built my confidence** playing around others"

Lily: "Prior to joining the PMC, singing in front of anyone was something I had never considered, even for a moment. Fast forward to now, and I have sung a solo in front of an audience, twice. This has had a knock on effect, in my life in general. **My confidence is growing.** I still have a way to go, to get where I would like to be, in that respect, but I am heading in the right direction."

## Aim 2: Reduce Social Isolation

Soundcastle and SRC peer trainers observed a reduction in social isolation. Examples of this included community members:

- Using the sessions as a reason to leave the house (for 6 members, it was their first social activity since the Covid lockdowns)
- More experienced PMC members reaching out to new SRC students and encouraging them to attend sessions
- Peer support between band members, especially with instrumental skills
- Helping each other out with lifts to and from the sessions
- Meeting before sessions to have lunch together
- Arranging gup excursions to music shops in Brighton
- Attending gigs together
- Meeting up for the first time outside of sessions to have a jam together

## 100% of community members noticed a feeling of connectedness and a reduction in isolation:

Ted: "When I started the People's Music groups I had only one proper friend but **now I have many good friends in the groups** and that has given me the confidence to make new friends outside the groups too."

Jack: "I've been quite isolated for a while and having the PMC has allowed me to have a **regular connection** to others during the sessions, while also allowing connections with some of the group outside of regular Soundcastle sessions with small jamming and social meets."

Emily: "...it's about feeling the music, feeling the vibrations in the room, coming together as one, to create a single piece of music, of which we are all a part. Many times now, when we have just finished playing a piece together, the comments around the room are so positive. For me, the feeling **is powerful and exhilarating**, and that couldn't happen without connection to the others in the room."

### Aim 3: Enhance Wellbeing

Soundcastle and SRC peer trainers observed an enhancement in wellbeing.

Examples of this included community members:

- Overcoming social anxieties in order to attend sessions regularly
- Leaving the sessions in a far more talkative and relaxed mood than when they arrived
- Expressing pride in their achievements
- Purchasing their own instruments and taking an interest in making music at home
- Reporting an interest in taking part in other creative activities beyond the programme

Peer trainer: "This has been the most **enjoyable experience in my life over the last 7 weeks**. Working with Soundcastle has shown me how **music making directly connects to the 5 Steps to Wellbeing** - it is invaluable to our students and as a peer trainer, **I feel inspired** - it has been a real personal boost."

#### 100% of community members reported a feeling of enhanced wellbeing:

Jonathan: "This group has **helped my wellbeing in all aspects**. It makes me look forward to something and feel part of something. We need people around us to feel supported."

Rosa: "It really helped me to **find myself again**."

Rodrigo: "I feel supported and **valued** for just being me"

Malcolm: "It has shown me that there is a lot of life "out there", to be **embraced**, rather than introspection concerning life's bitter handouts."

Tim: "**I feel so much better about myself** and have learnt to look at what I have and not what I don't have. Glass was 3/4 empty but now I feel it's 3/4 full in spite of everything that's going on."

We have also gathered feedback to indicate that the wellbeing benefits go beyond the attendees of the People's Music programme to their audiences. In order to experience the benefits first hand, audiences are encouraged to join in and sing as a part of People's Music sharing events. Examples of audience feedback gathered at their latest Winter Warmer performance include:

- "I am utterly uplifted"
- "I feel free"
- "This was joyful, happy, emotional"
- "I am drunk with joy!"
- "I feel so grateful to be here"

## Skills Development

Throughout 2022, Soundcastle and SRC peer trainers noticed particular skills development amongst community members in the following areas:

- Instrumental and singing skills
- Peer to peer support, particularly with instrumental skills but also in terms of supporting their peers to overcome social anxieties
- Communication and teamwork
- Public speaking
- Performance skills

Many community members also reported using their new-found confidence to progress to connected opportunities including:

- Becoming a carer for children with learning disabilities
- Becoming SRC peer trainers
- Hosting a music and mental health radio show on Bognor Radio Respect
- Taking part in other music courses e.g. orchestral composition/music production
- Playing at open mic nights
- Joining a recorder trio
- Taking part in a photography project and trying other artforms

### Case Study - Rosa

When Rosa first attended the Singing for Wellbeing and Ukulele Crew courses, it was her first social activity since the Covid lockdowns. She found it hard to enter the room and particularly hard to speak to other members of the group. However she loved music and was determined to take part. Supported by Soundcastle facilitators and the SRC peer trainer, Rosa successfully attended every session of both courses and started to interact with other members of the group.



*"The **music helps to calm me and lifts my spirits**. Each week I feel a bit better and I've started to talk to people a bit more."*

When a performance event was first mentioned, Rosa felt that it would be too overwhelming for her social anxiety. However with gentle encouragement from facilitators and other group members, Rosa decided at the last minute to take part. In December 2022, she gave her first performance, singing in the front row to an audience of 47 people. She expressed pride in her achievements afterwards and a desire to keep attending and building her confidence.

*"I would very much appreciate it if I could watch the film of today's performance so I can look back and say to myself yes that's me singing and playing the ukulele... I'm very grateful for an amazing experience."*

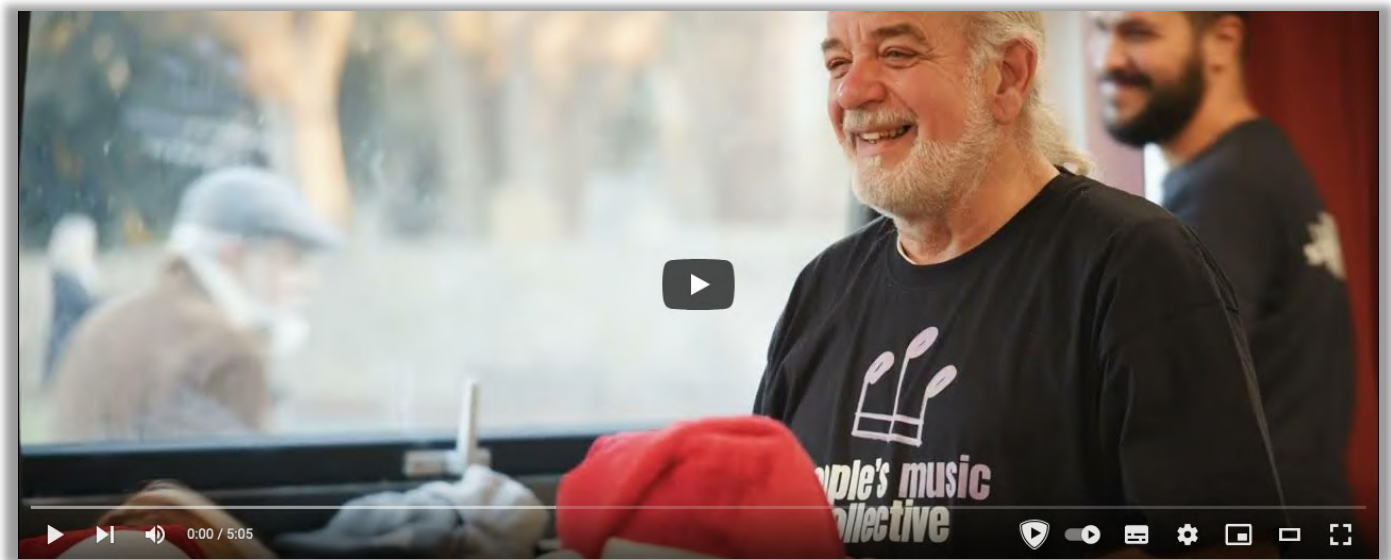
## What's Next for People's Music?

People's Music is growing beyond Sussex! Soundcastle are currently working in partnership with Peabody Housing Association and Waltham Forest social prescribing network in London. We are committed to launching a consultation and pilot programme in 2023.

Now that the People's Music programme is fully established in Sussex, the main aim is to bring financial stability to ensure a long term offer for our community members and to expand recruitment, supporting many more people on their mental health recovery journey. Current funding supports the full People's Music programme to continue until April 2023 and the PMC to continue until March 2024. During a challenging fundraising climate, we are actively seeking new funders to support the work to remain at its full capacity within and beyond this time in order to ensure that local people receive the support they need to start and/or continue their journey to mental recovery and wellbeing.



Soundcastle are actively diversifying our revenue streams by delivering first aid mental health training (in association with NUCO Training) inspired by our learning from People's Music. We will continue to advocate for better mental health awareness across the sector and will reinvest the revenue into our programmes.



Watch 5 minutes of feedback, extracts and seasonal joy from The People's Music Winter Warmer 2022 here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fr6sAnqiVI>

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

*Please note: all names used throughout this impact report have been changed to protect the identities of those taking part.*



**For further information about People's Music or Soundcastle's work more widely, please contact:**

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