



# PEOPLE'S MUSIC

## Impact Report

2024-2025

*I joined about 5 years ago and, at that time, I had very severe anxiety and I was finding it very difficult to deal with everyday life. And I had a young daughter to bring up.*

*But I came to these groups and found that when focussed on music making, I'd forget my worries.*

*And I have lots and lots of fun and I'm able to put things into perspective and can deal with the things in my life.*

*It's given me the confidence to be a Peer Trainer and to stand up in front of a group of students, and now I'm also able to stand up and speak to you now.*

*(Audience applause and loud cheers to this)*



In partnership with:



*\*All names used throughout this impact report have been changed to protect the identities of those taking part.*

# SOUNDCASTLE

## ABOUT SOUNDCASTLE

Soundcastle is a joyful, expressive music making charity and exists so that every person is empowered to play, make and sing. We use music as a tool for change, supporting vulnerable communities to thrive, creative practitioners to grow and cultural organisations to make lasting change. Our work increases confidence, reduces social isolation and enhances wellbeing through embedded community music programmes which focus on making ripples of change in micro-communities. The ripple effect grows through our national impact: We deliver presentations, training, commissions and model best practice. We support and inspire the development of inclusive, wellbeing focused spaces inside other organisations. Everything we do is underpinned by our values of:

Action

Care

Joy

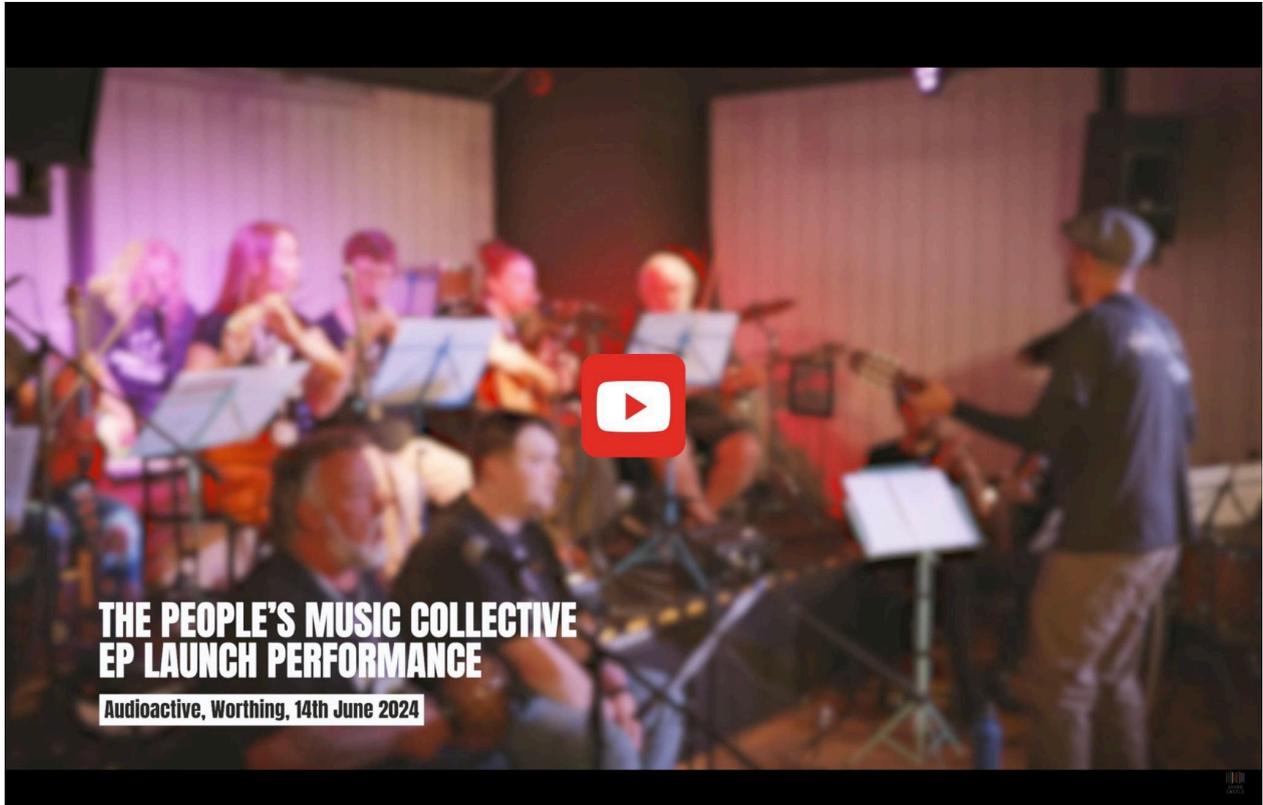
## ABOUT PEOPLE'S MUSIC

- 132 community members with lived experience of mental illness, trauma and/or social isolation
- 12 Soundcastle music facilitators
- 1 volunteer
- 1 researcher
- 4 Sussex Recovery College Peer Trainers
- 37 Singing for Wellbeing sessions, with Sussex Recovery College, Southdown Wellbeing Centre and West Sussex MIND (Sussex)
- 24 New Rhythms sessions, with Sussex Recovery College, Shoreham-by Sea
- 8 Ukulele Crew sessions, with Sussex Recovery College, Shoreham-by Sea
- 35 People's Music Collective sessions, Shoreham-by Sea
- 22 Join the Band sessions with Age UK, Waltham Forest
- 6 Join the Band sessions with Carer's First, Hackney
- 5 Join the Band sessions with Crest Dementia Support, Waltham Forest
- 6 performances/ sharing events to a combined audience of 197 people
- 1 EP launch performance by the People's Music Collective in collaboration with the London Philharmonic Orchestra
- 1 digital launch of new music created by community members with lived experience of mental ill health - combined digital audience of 508 people
- 1 short film celebrating the People's Music Collective's EP launch
- 2 LAB days in partnership with London Philharmonic Orchestra

That's a total of 140 music sessions   
 That's 229 hours of music making!

# SOUNDCASTLE

Take a peek into the world of People's Music, Shoreham-by-Sea here and check out the film of our People's Music Collective EP launch event in partnership with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.



[https://youtu.be/G9\\_i0vLDFq8?si=JYlqjL30KC6gkV30](https://youtu.be/G9_i0vLDFq8?si=JYlqjL30KC6gkV30)

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. 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.

Our social aims are to:

**Increase Confidence**  
**Reduce Isolation**  
**Enhance Wellbeing**

## Aim 1: Increase Confidence

Throughout the year Soundcastle and our partners 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

99% of community members felt that taking part in People's Music had **increased their confidence** and **68%** felt that their **confidence had increased by a large amount.**

*"I can be myself without judgement".*

Singing for Wellbeing, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"It feels really really good the way the group has been playing and developing and I think I'm part of that!"*

Join the Band, Waltham Forest

*"To have the opportunity to engage with something creative each week pushes my joy button. Sharing this with others also optimises the experience."*

People's Music Collective, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"It's great to be able to give the group your ideas and bounce them off other people. It helps confidence when something works well."*

Join the Band, Waltham Forest

*"Learning new things has greatly improved my ability to tackle new things. It has taken some of the fear away."*

People's Music Collective, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"I feel calmer and more present."*

Singing for Wellbeing, Bexhill

*"Meeting new people and appreciating there were commonalities amongst us. We didn't have to be perfect to learn a new skill."*

New Rhythms, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"Within these groups I can contribute, and I am listened to. This is very validating, and in turn I can take that into my life outside of the groups. I feel more able to express myself. "*

People's Music Collective, Shoreham-by-Sea

## Aim 2: Reduce Social Isolation

Soundcastle and our partners observed a reduction in social isolation. Examples of this included:

- The sessions motivating isolated community members to leave their house
- More experienced PMC members reaching out to new Sussex Recovery College 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 group excursions e.g. to see the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Brighton Dome
- 8 of our community members came together to spend Christmas Day together
- Attending gigs together
- Meeting up outside of sessions to have a jam together

99% of community members felt that taking part in People's Music had **reduced their social isolation** and **76%** felt a large **increase in their sense of community connection.**

*"Meeting the same people every week and have them appreciate you whatever state you are in is very precious. It means that I cannot hide away any more and I feel much more able to be around people whatever state I am in."*

People's Music Collective, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"I feel seen, heard and cared for by the people in these groups. The first time in a long time that I truly feel part of a community. Plus I also know that if I didn't turn up one week, I'd not only be missed, but a few people would personally contact me to check I was ok...that feels wonderful."*

New Rhythms, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"In order to create music together, we all need to connect with each other; to be aware of what others are doing. That's when the music comes together, and in the process we come together as one. It creates the most amazing feeling of belonging; of being seen and heard."*

People's Music Collective, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"I wouldn't leave my flat before finding this group. Now I have a reason to go out."*

New Rhythms,  
Shoreham-by-Sea

*"The way we coordinated and sparked off each other's ideas made me feel more connected."*

Join the Band,  
Waltham Forest

*"I have made some powerful, life enhancing friendships in this group."*

People's Music Collective,  
Shoreham-by-Sea

*"I don't have much contact with others on a regular basis and it's great to feel part of a group and getting to know people."*

Join the Band,  
Waltham Forest

## Aim 3: Enhance Wellbeing

Soundcastle and our partners observed an enhancement in wellbeing across the programme.

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
- Attending social events provided by our partners

99% of community members felt that taking part in People's Music had **enhanced their wellbeing** and 76% considered that to be a **large enhancement in their wellbeing**.

*"Because I enjoy going to the group I make a special effort to attend, even when I feel anxious."*

Singing for Wellbeing, Bexhill

*"Music brings such joy and to have a regular source of joy is very special. It helps both my physical and mental health."*

People's Music Collective, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"I have something in my life, that is very important to me. It makes me feel good, even when I'm not actually there, but just knowing the groups are there."*

Singing for Wellbeing, Shoreham-by-Sea

*"I feel more enthusiastic in general when I come to the class and thinking how to experiment with new instruments."*

Join the Band, Hackney

*"I was so anxious beforehand and now I feel like a new woman and I'm going to sing those words at home. It's a lovely experience."*

Singing for Wellbeing, Bexhill

*"Playing an instrument frees the mind no matter what sound it makes."*

Join the Band, Waltham Forest

*"It has encouraged me to get out, even when I didn't feel up to it."*

Join the Band, Waltham Forest

*"Everyone in the group is friendly and understanding and you can be yourself and that really helps with my mental health."*

Ukulele Crew, Shoreham-by-Sea

## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Throughout 2024-2025, Soundcastle and our partners reported 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 Sussex Recovery College peer trainer, rejoining paid employment and co-producing a People's Music programme with Soundcastle
- Taking part in other creative opportunities e.g. a community pantomime and a local choir
- Accepting free tickets from our partner and attending performances by the London Philharmonic Orchestra
- Becoming a lunchtime supervisor at a special needs school
- Attending open-mic nights

## CASE STUDY

Sarah\* first joined our People's Music programme in partnership with Sussex Recovery College back in 2019. Living with a diagnosis of depression and anxiety, she was finding herself increasingly isolated and struggling to achieve everyday tasks. She joined the programme as a keen recorder player and despite feeling nervous, she was quickly able to engage in creative activities and immerse herself in the music making process.

*"I joined about 5 years ago and, at that time, I had very severe anxiety and I was finding it very difficult to deal with everyday life. And I had a young daughter to bring up. But I came to these groups and found that when I focussed on music making, I'd forget my worries. And I have lots and lots of fun and I'm able to put things into perspective and can deal with the things in my life."*

Sarah was very committed to attending and it was rare for her to miss a session. As the years passed and she became more confident of her role in the group, it was noticeable how she supported new members to take part, making reassuring comments, supporting them to learn new instrumental skills and always offering a positive word of encouragement. It felt like a very natural progression when Sarah found the courage to apply for the employed position of being a peer trainer for Sussex Recovery College and asked the Soundcastle team for a reference. With her application being successful, she now co-produces the New Rhythms course in Shoreham-by-Sea with Soundcastle facilitators.



# SOUNDCASTLE

*“We have so much fun together so it’s given me the confidence to be a Peer Trainer and to stand up in front of a group of students.”*

Sarah recently made a speech to an audience of more than 50 people at our Winter Warmer event, talking about her experience, something she admitted she wouldn’t have been able to do several years ago. This new found confidence has rippled out to other areas of her life and she now talks and runs events at her local church too.

*“It’s just given me the confidence to move forward with my life - I love it.”*

## WHAT’S NEXT FOR PEOPLE’S MUSIC?

Now that People’s Music has grown beyond West Sussex into East Sussex and London, we are focussed on embedding and securing the new programmes long term in order to maximise their social impact and support many more people on their mental health recovery journey.

We have exciting plans to continue working with our cultural partner, the London Philharmonic Orchestra which include future LAB days and collaborative performances. This includes the People’s Music Collective playing a warm-up concert for the LPO at Eastbourne’s Congress Theatre in November 2025. We also look forward to collaborating with a new cultural partner, Barefoot Opera and working on stage performance skills.

Current funding supports the full People’s Music programme to continue until July 2025. 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.

For further information about People’s Music please contact:

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## WITH THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS

