



# Power of Music

A plan for harnessing music to improve our  
health, wellbeing and communities

An update on progress  
November 2023

# Overview

The Power of Music report was published in April 2022 as a joint initiative between UK Music and Music for Dementia. The recommendations offered a blueprint to government and industry for using music as a tool to improve the nation's health and wellbeing, strengthen social care and potentially reduce costs and pressures on the NHS.

The project began with a music, health and social care stakeholder roundtable discussion followed by a nationwide survey. Over 200 respondents shared their views and provided real life examples of how music can improve the lives of those dealing with illnesses such as dementia, depression, and other debilitating conditions.

We already know music is a cost-effective way to deal with a number of illnesses in ailments. The data shows:

- Music therapy reduces agitation and the need for medication in 67% of people with dementia, significantly reducing the spend on anti-psychotic medication.<sup>1</sup>
- Music is beneficial for relaxation in people with cardiovascular disease through its simultaneous effects on psychological, neurological, immunological and endocrine processes, leading to reduced stress and pain.<sup>2</sup>
- In a randomised controlled trial, participants who received music therapy, alongside standard care, showed greater improvement in depression and anxiety symptoms and general functioning at their three-month follow-up than those who did not.<sup>3</sup>

There is an urgent need to reimagine health and social care in this country. We need to transform the NHS from a sickness service (focused on treatment) to a national wellness service (also focused on creating good health). Music is finding its place at the forefront of the social prescribing agenda and the Power of Music report outlines a series of ambitious but achievable recommendations which can be quickly implemented to deliver positive change.

## References:

- 1 APPG on Arts, Health, and Wellbeing. (2017). Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing. Available online: <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>
- 2 Raglio A. (2015). Music Therapy Interventions in Parkinson's Disease: The State-of-the-Art. *Frontiers in neurology*, 6, 185.
- 3 Cambridge University Press. (2018). Individual music therapy for depression: randomised controlled trial. Available online: [https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/individual-music-therapy-for-depression\[1\]randomised-controlled-trial/A1CD72904929CECCB956F4F3B09605AF](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/individual-music-therapy-for-depression[1]randomised-controlled-trial/A1CD72904929CECCB956F4F3B09605AF)



***“Music is a key tool for many people – including myself – in handling mental health issues such as depression and low self-esteem. Personally, music is my go-to remedy when I need a distraction from my worries or a means to express my emotions which I cannot express in words”***

UK Music 2022 Power of Music survey respondent

# Report Recommendations

## **Leadership: Provide leadership by appointing a Power of Music Commissioner, setting up a cross-government taskforce and establishing a cross-sector consortium**

The Music Commissioner would work across government departments to integrate music into health, education and social care policy. Outside Westminster they would convene a cross-sector consortium to bring together the many players who can make music more central in our lives from health, social care, music, community, third sector, commercial, philanthropy. The Commissioner would weave across a huge span of sectors, organisations and institutions to create new connections, forge new partnerships and deliver real system change.

## **Engagement: Mobilise support for and engagement with the power of music through a national campaign and creation of an online resource centre**

Deliver a public campaign that brings the power of music to life with the aim of mobilising, upskilling and informing the public of music's health and wellbeing benefits. Establish an interactive online resource to help those living with conditions at home to access musical support, and those working in health and social care to integrate music into their existing practice.



## **Training: Integrate music into health, care and education to unlock its full potential to support our national health and wellbeing**

A national training strategy is needed to give music techniques to frontline health and care staff and train musicians to use their skills in health and care settings. A core music module should be made available to every health and social care professional and for those studying music, all courses should include a component on health, social care and wellbeing, to provide musicians with the potential of a career in musical care.

## **Funding: Combine existing funding and seek new focused investment to make music more accessible for all**

We need new, shared investment models to coordinate current funds and leverage new ones. We need to make existing funding - from government, private philanthropy and corporates - work smarter to ensure more people can access musical opportunities to support their health and wellbeing. There is a need for greater and more sustained funding at the grassroots level to ensure the long-term sustainability of local projects and programmes.

# Our Progress So Far

An initial consortium formed in the summer of 2022 after the publication of the Power of Music report to champion delivery of its recommendations.

The consortium members are:

- UK Music (Chair)
- The National Academy of Social Prescribing (NASP)
- Music for Dementia (The Utley Foundation)
- Manchester Camerata
- Universal Music UK

## Leadership

The initial consortium group has made a start, but the coalition of support needs to grow and gain political buy-in if the Power of Music report recommendations are to be delivered in full. The report received cross-party support during the Autumn 2022 party conference season as politicians and delegates spoke about the wider health benefits of music in fringe events hosted by UK Music. UK Music has promoted the recommendations from the Power of Music report through its 2023 Manifesto for Music as well as by taking part in panels and discussions across the UK, including government-led roundtables and follow up conversations. Sandie Shaw also wrote an article in The Times calling for a Power of Music Commissioner as a lasting legacy from Eurovision.

## Engagement

Universal Music UK have developed the new Music Can online resource which will be managed by NASP going forward. Music Can connects people to the music support they want, in the ways they want to experience it, starting first with people living with dementia. On 2 July 2023, national Thank You Day was used to promote the message that music can bring people together and help people living with dementia. Singing legend Tony Christie re-recorded Andrew Gold's 'Thank You For Being A Friend' with dementia carers. Over six million people got involved through the national media and community events including singalongs in care homes. We have also seen the phrase power of music being used more than ever before across the media, health and care section, a range of organisations and from the music industry at large. We believe the report and subsequent promotion has heavily influenced this.

## Training

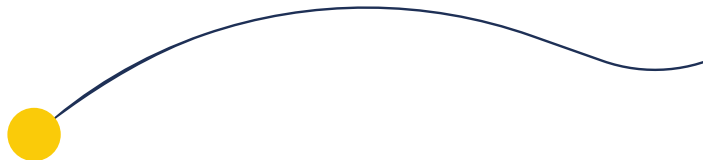
A national training strategy will require government backing. Within the consortium, Manchester Camerata is designing core training to create Music Champions within health and social care. Manchester Camerata is also at the forefront of Greater Manchester's ambition to become the first city region in the world to harness the power of creativity, culture, and heritage in addressing health inequities and inequalities. These emerging models have the potential to become beacons for scaling nationwide.

***“This is the only way to bring out the isolated lost souls to join others, to remember how and what they have contributed to the world”***

Greater Manchester Dementia Music café  
participant living with dementia.

## Funding

NASP is rising to this challenge. Using £1million seed-funding from the Utley Foundation, it is pioneering a shared investment fund model under the banner The Power of Music Fund. Phase One launched in March 2023, delivering 100 x £1000 grants to community choirs. Phase Two launches in November 2023 with additional support from Arts Council England and others. It will make small grants nationwide and create a centre of excellence to test new approaches and gather data on the savings musical prescriptions can make for the NHS.



# Where next?

The original Power of Music report was published in April 2022. It ignited a flame and brought organisations together across the usual policy boundaries to pursue delivery of the recommendations.

Progress has been made but there is much more to do.

Over the next 12 months and in the run up to the General Election, the aim is to grow the Power of Music Consortium and support for the recommendations through a series of policy discussions.

To get more involved please contact [info@ukmusic.org](mailto:info@ukmusic.org)

