



# Musical Hospitals Evaluation

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With support from the Sound Connections team

**Sound Connections**

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## Executive Summary

**“Music makes life better, whatever life throws at you. Simple as that.”**

### **NHS Staff response to Musical Hospitals**

Musical Hospitals 2024/25 was created by Swansea Bay University Health Board and ran from **March 2024 – March 2025**. During this time, it is believed that there were **174** musical offerings, reaching an estimated **3029 beneficiaries** in total; 1461 patients, 1181 members of staff, and 219 visitors / members of family in ward settings in Neath Port Talbot & Tonna hospitals.

Music providers were BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Live Music Now, Music in Hospitals and Care and Welsh National Opera; providing high calibre live music performers, with significant experience in evidence-based practice, across a range of healthcare settings in Wales.

In addition, the Neath Port Talbot Atrium Concert series provided eight concerts reaching an audience in the region of 500 in total with music provided voluntarily by local groups.

The evaluation, carried out by Sound Connections, was commissioned to determine the contribution of the Musical Hospitals programme on:

- Patient health outcomes
- Patient wellbeing & general hospital experience
- Staff wellbeing
- Staff stress levels
- SBUHB strategic priorities
- Benefits for the wider hospital community



### **Evaluation Methodology** included:

- Observations of each music provider in each clinical setting
- Interviews with key NHS staff
- Group musician reflection discussions
- Musicians’ written reflections following each session
- Surveys available online to patients, staff, family members / visitors in English and Welsh
- Ad hoc conversations with beneficiaries including patients, staff and visitors.

### **Evaluation Summary**

The Musical Hospitals Programme succeeded in embedding live music provision in a range of settings, wards and communal areas, creating and connecting hospital communities, with measurable impact in all key areas within the scope of the evaluation.

### **Patient health outcomes**

Musical Hospitals activity demonstrably improved health outcomes in the following patient groups:

- Neuro-rehabilitation
- Stroke recovery
- Dementia Care

- Adult Mental Health
- New Mothers' Mental Health care

Across patient groups Occupational Therapists endorse Musical Hospitals as a naturally occurring opportunity for patients to improve **physically, cognitively, verbally and socially**, through their engagement with the programme.

It has unlocked **lost communication** and provided new ways for patients to **process mental health challenges, accept their condition** and **develop autonomy in recovery**.



### Patient wellbeing and hospital experience

Musical Hospitals unequivocally contributes to the **improvement of patient wellbeing** during their time in hospital. This manifested in a multitude of ways, **connecting people** in social spaces, **sharing memories** alongside music, providing **deep relaxation, calm, a range of physical and emotional responses** and **deep-felt cultural pride**.

The established partnership of musicians and NHS staff effectively demonstrates **improvements in patient and family engagement** and quality person-centred care. It enhances hospital treatment through accessible activity, **encouraging motivation and independence**.

It gives families **glimpses of hope** within recovery, deeper connection through unlocked memories and **creates new positive memories** at the most challenging of times for them and their loved ones.

### Staff wellbeing and reduction in stress levels

**SBUHB Staff are resounding advocates** for the programme and recognise the significant benefits for patient and staff wellbeing, vital as the health board strives towards demonstrating its values, putting **patients and service users at the heart of health care delivery**.

Ward staff acknowledge the importance of Musical Hospitals as an opportunity to get to know, not just their patients, but their co-workers better. The visits provide a **pleasant distraction**, often improving the atmosphere and giving **a moment to pause and enjoy time together, boosting morale** and contributing to **increased job satisfaction**.

## Organisational: SBUHB Priorities

Continuous, quality live music provision has the ability to **change the atmosphere** of wards, **calm and reduce patient agitation** and therefore **acuity of nursing care**. There are significant cost savings in terms of medication, 1:1 staffing levels and staff absence / cover staff requirement as a result.

Musical Hospital visits make **staff feel valued** and **invested in as teams** within their ward settings. They frequently acknowledge that the activity enables them to provide a **higher quality of individual care** to their patients.

## Organisational: Wider hospital benefits

The impact on **patient and staff wellbeing** is well evidenced and observed throughout and **permeates the wider hospital community**. The programme provides opportunities to **socialise and enjoy music together** in ward and communal spaces alike.

Musicians acknowledge their work in hospitals to be the most rewarding, achieving high levels of job satisfaction, **enabling and witnessing human connection** through shared musical cultural experiences.

## Musical Hospitals: Aspirations and Opportunities

Ward Managers identified the impact of musical activity on quality of person-centred care, concluding that the creation of an **activity co-ordinator** role, for each ward, could be vital in securing long term activity provision, innovation and sustained impact.

Activity co-ordinators enable wards to have greater control of **key success enablers**, such as timing of musicians' visits, ensuring patients are most active and receptive, and ensuring a regularly occurring opportunity.

Personalised approaches / care plans for patients could include **1:1 music engagement** opportunities with potential for further health and wellbeing outcomes across specific patient groups.

**Cost savings** in the neuro rehabilitation ward, demonstrate a significant reduction in medication required for patient agitation, 1:1 care, staff absence and cover needs. The model has the potential to be replicated with other patient groups to ease wards' financial pressures

Further **collaboration** and **shared learning opportunities**, between clinical staff and musicians, will enable deeper exploration and body of evidence around the impact of music within healthcare.



# 1. Introduction

**Musical Hospitals 2024/25** was created by **Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB)** to build on the success of the 2022 programme which provided in person and online music events for over 2,250 patients, staff and family members / carers.

The delivery model was created in response to feedback requesting longer term, accessible, in person music events within Neath Port Talbot Hospital, maximising impact for patient beneficiaries and the wider hospital community.

Musical Hospitals provided a diverse range of musical offerings through established relationships with some of Wales' most experienced and high profile music providers including **Welsh National Opera (WNO)**, **Music in Hospitals & Care (MIHC)**, **BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW)** and **Live Music Now (LMN)**, with professional musicians visiting ward and communal room settings in **Neath Port Talbot** and **Tonna Hospitals** on a regular basis.

In addition, a **Concert Series** was established for **Neath Port Talbot Hospital Atrium** inviting high calibre musical groups to come and perform. Run on a fortnightly basis, these concerts provided cultural and musical diversity for the enjoyment of patients (ward based, outpatients and support groups) and staff (clinical, clerical and hospitality) alongside families and visitors.

Musical Hospitals 2024/25 ran from March 2024 – March 2025. During this time, it is believed that

- there were 174 musical offerings
- reaching an estimated **3029 beneficiaries in total**; 1461 patients, 1181 members of staff, and 219 visitors / members of family in ward settings in NPT & Tonna hospitals.<sup>1</sup>
- in addition, the Neath Port Talbot Concert series provided **eight concerts** reaching an audience in the region of **500** in total.



This evaluation carried out by **Sound Connections** was commissioned to determine the contribution of the Musical Hospitals programme on:

- Patient health outcomes
- Patient wellbeing
- Staff wellbeing
- Staff stress levels
- SBUHB strategic priorities
- Benefits for the wider hospital community

<sup>1</sup> We recorded that a total of **174 musical sessions** took place as part of the Swansea Musical Hospitals Project. As not all beneficiary numbers were logged for every session that took place, we were able to estimate averages for the numbers of patients, staff, and visitors / family members in attendance per session based on a sample size of **66 sessions**; 8 patients; 7 members of staff; and 1 visitor/family member. By extrapolating these averages, **we have estimated there were a total number of 3029 beneficiaries across the project; 1461 patients; 1181 staff members; and 219 visitors and family.**

### Evaluation Methodology for this report included:

- Observations of each music provider in each clinical setting
- Ad hoc conversations with beneficiaries including patients, staff and visitors.
- Interviews with key NHS staff (x6)
- Group musician reflection discussions (x3)
- Musicians’ session reflections (via music provider)
- Surveys available online to patients, staff, family members / visitors in English and Welsh



The evaluation was commissioned at a time of significant focus on the monetisation of the impact of arts and cultural activity in health settings, including:

### Culture and Heritage Capital: Monetising The Impact of Culture and Heritage on Health and Wellbeing

- A report prepared for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport by Frontier Economics and published in November 2024

***“..... arts engagement has diverse and tangible effects on health, from supporting cognitive development and protecting against cognitive decline, to reducing symptoms of mental illness and enhancing wellbeing, reducing pain and stress, via the same neurological and physiological pathways activated by medication, reducing loneliness, and maintaining physical functioning, thereby reducing frailty and age-related physical decline.***

***“Arts engagement can help to reduce unnecessary pressure on health services, through helping individuals to manage their own health more proactively, such as staying physically active and socially engaged, and reducing the need for inpatient hospital and nursing home stays.”***

*Prof Daisy Fancourt, the director of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Arts & Health and a co-author of Cultural and Heritage Capital: Monetising the impact of Culture and Heritage on Health and Wellbeing*

### About Sound Connections

Sound Connections is a creative and values-driven charity that is ambitious about creating change and social impact at a national and international level. We have over 20 years’ experience of supporting organisations, practitioners, and young people and are sector-leaders in research and evaluation, strategy and participation across the cultural sector.

Drawing on our experience of developing participatory programmes across London since 2002, we launched our sector support service in 2012 and now work with more than 25 partners every year ranging from supporting small grassroots community music organisations to working with large regional, national, and international organisations from local authorities to Arts Council England, British Council, BBC Children in Need and English Heritage.

We have developed our co-design and participatory practice since our inception in 2002 – what we do is informed by, with and for the young people, practitioners, and organisations we work with. This in turn feeds into our wider organisational culture and collaborative approach, with our values of inclusivity, equity, accessibility, and participation at the centre of all that we do.

### Sound Connections Team

**The following Sound Connections team members have been involved in this research:**

Claire Turner – Associate Evaluator

Philip Flood – CEO (until September 2024)

Liz Coomb - Co-Director

Alison Porter – Programme Manager

Jasmine Padda – Programme Producer

Helen Evans – Programme Co-ordinator

[www.sound-connections.org.uk](http://www.sound-connections.org.uk)



## 2. Context: Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB)

### SBUHB Arts and Heritage team is made up of:

- Johan Skre – Arts In Health Co-ordinator
- Iori Haugen – Musical Hospitals Lead / Music Facilitator
- Melanie Wotton – Project Manager

In addition to the **Musical Hospitals** programme, their extensive and varied programme works to support improvement to patient experience and health outcomes through environmental and activity focused interventions.

Click here to read a news article about Musical Hospitals: [Brightening the wards with music - and helping with rehab - Swansea Bay University Health Board](#)

The team's recent Arts & Minds project, **Sharing Hope**, funded by Arts Council of Wales and the Baring Foundation, focused on using creativity to support the mental health and wellbeing of healthcare workers. In addition to a nomination for the Health Service Journal (HSJ) Patient Safety Awards 2024: Staff Wellbeing Initiative of the Year and a Nursing Times Workforce Summit award in 2024, Sharing Hope has secured additional funding to continue.

Read more about Sharing Hope below:

[Staff express themselves through art to boost mental health and wellbeing - Swansea Bay University Health Board](#)

[Creative project supporting the mental well-being of NHS staff to continue - Swansea Bay University Health Board](#)

SBUHB works across eight hospital sites with Musical Hospitals activity focused within Neath Port Talbot & Tonna Hospitals.

**Neath Port Talbot Hospital (NPT)**, opened in 2003 and has around 200 beds. It provides a range of inpatient, outpatient and day-case services, as well as some specialist services.

*It has been chosen by the Bevan Commission as a Bevan Innovation Hub, leading the way for progressive quality improvement in NHS Wales. Specialist services include regional fertility services and neuro-rehabilitation.*

*Other services at the hospital include a Minor Injury Unit, a midwifery-led birth centre, planned orthopaedic and general surgery, care of the elderly, rheumatology and radiology. It also has a urology suite, endoscopy and day surgery.*

*The hospital also has a children's assessment unit, a children's centre and in-patient mental health services. The Afan Nedd Day Unit at the hospital provides a range of multidisciplinary services for patients who have multiple health problems. There is also a palliative care unit which provides support and therapy for patients diagnosed with cancer.*

### SBUHB Website

## Musical Hospitals provision takes place in the following settings:

**The Atrium** is the main entrance to the hospital. This large area provides several functions and spaces; reception desk, seating area for patients and visitors, day / out-patient appointment waiting area, shop, cafe and coffee outlet. It is a bright, airy space, full of natural light, with great acoustics and a balcony level off the wards. This provides plenty of space for patients and staff to come out of their ward to experience the music on offer.

**The Neuro-rehabilitation Unit** is a 14-bed ward, with patients' length of stay varying from 3 months to a year. A comprehensive activity programme was introduced by Ward manager Nathan Riddle in the summer of 2024 to aid mental and physical recovery for patients. Nathan's evidence gathering around this demonstrates that music provision by Music in Hospitals and Care (MIHC) has contributed to reducing acuity on the ward in a number of ways which will be explored in the **Case Study** example later in this report.

**Ward B2** is the Stroke Rehabilitation Unit.

**Ward D** is a 40-bed ward caring for older adults (generally 75 +yrs) with a wide range of needs because of chronic illness. Because of the extensive range of patient need the ward is well staffed with domestic care staff, nurses and support workers. Musicians visit several sub-wards of six-eight beds where patients can listen from their bed or chair.

**Ward F** is a very busy Adult Mental Health Ward, initially intended for short assessment stays of patients, but more recently several patients have remained longer term. The closed ward requires high levels of staffing for patient medication and support with patient need fluctuating and agitation levels unpredictable. Patients have their own room and several activity / lounge areas. Music takes place generally in the lounge or garden when weather permits. A small family room allows visitors by arrangement but visit restrictions have largely remained in place since Covid-19.

Ward F has an activity co-ordinator who can take individuals / small groups of patients off-site for appointments and meaningful activity, to support recovery and connection to day-to-day activities beyond hospital.

NPT Musical Hospitals provision		
Setting	Music Provider	Frequency
Atrium	Various	Fortnightly
Neuro Rehabilitation Unit	Music in Hospitals & Care	Weekly
Ward B2 Stroke Rehabilitation	Welsh National Opera	Weekly
Ward D	Welsh National Opera	Weekly
Ward F (Mental Health & Learning Disabilities)	Music in Hospitals & Care	Weekly

## Tonna Hospital

*Tonna Hospital is a mental health facility specialising in older person's mental health, perinatal, adult community mental health and the autism service.*

### **SBUHB Website**

**The Day Room** is a large lounge space at the centre of the Tonna Hospital building housing several units. There is plenty of space for socialising, patient or staff activity, vending machines and several offices leading from the main room.

Music is scheduled in this area with dates made available for ward staff, patients, and family visitors. Mini concerts provide a relaxed and informal atmosphere where musicians are close enough to their audience to share introductions / reflections about the music but with large enough space to cope with larger ‘orchestral’ style pieces.

**Suite 2** provides care for dementia patients which, as a palliative condition, can sometimes mean end of life care. Music is considered particularly important for this patient group as cognitive stimulation and to improve quality of life. Music often remains when other memories have become unattainable to patients and so there is particular value in this setting. Family members are encouraged to come in and join for activity such as music for opportunities to reconnect with their loved one. Music takes place in the social / lounge room with all patients being encouraged / enabled to attend.

**The Mother and Baby Unit** at Tonna Hospital is the only perinatal mental health unit of its kind, supporting Mums with significant mental health challenges alongside their babies. One key focus of the unit is parent / infant interaction, bonding and attachment. Patients here were recipients of the Lullaby project with Live Music Now which proved to be a powerful and therapeutic experience, focusing on creating expressions of love for their babies as a means of connection.

Currently Mums, babies and visiting family members have access to music provided by BBC National Orchestra of Wales musicians in the day room at Tonna Hospital and this provides a valuable social space.

Tonna Hospital - Musical Hospitals provision		
Setting	Music Provider	Frequency
Day Room	BBC National Orchestra of Wales	Fortnightly
Suite 2 (Adult mental health / dementia care)	Live Music Now	Fortnightly
Mother & Baby Unit	Live Music Now	(Lullaby Project until Nov 2024)

### 3. Music Partners



The **BBC National Orchestra of Wales (BBC NOW)** is the only professional symphony orchestra in Wales, occupying a distinctive role as both a broadcast and national orchestra, and having served as an integral ambassador of Welsh culture for over 90 years.

Part of BBC Cymru Wales and supported by the Arts Council of Wales, BBC NOW champions Welsh composers, artists, and music, delivering live concerts, radio and television broadcasts, and iconic performances at events like the BBC Proms and the Cardiff Singer of the World competition, whilst working with acclaimed conductors and soloists from across the world, including their Principal Conductor, the award-winning Ryan Bancroft.

Committed to outreach, the orchestra works in partnership with community groups and charities to deliver workshops, education projects, and performances in settings such as schools and hospitals, to enable people to experience and be empowered by music, and to inspire the next generation of performers, composers and arts leaders. Based at BBC Hoddinott Hall in Cardiff Bay, BBC NOW uses its state-of-the-art recording studio to bring music to audiences across Wales and the world through livestreams, recordings, and soundtracks for major productions such as Doctor Who and Planet Earth III.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/3YV0XMLfSTrsrtT8PdfYPNV/about-the-orchestra>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcnow>



**Live Music Now (LMN)** creates inclusive, measurable social impact through music. Its work focuses on enhancing quality of life, health, and well-being while promoting equity of opportunity.

Established in 1977 by Sir Yehudi Menuhin and Sir Ian Stoutzker, LMN works with over 320 professional musicians from all genres, and reaches over 55,000 people annually, delivering tailored participatory performances and residencies in care homes, schools, hospitals, and community settings across the UK.

LMN supports the development of over 250 professional musicians through training and mentoring, equipping them with skills to become flexible facilitators and communicators. By embracing both digital and in-person formats, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, LMN continues to expand its reach, recognising the creative potential of every individual and striving towards its mission to bring the transformative power of live music to those with limited access.

<https://www.livemusicnow.org.uk/>



Yehudi Menuhin during World War II – 27 June 1944

Capt. Maurice Evans – Major 7.B Schultz 147th General Hospital



**Music in Hospitals & Care (MIHC)** is a charity that enhances the health and wellbeing of children and adults through the healing power of live music.

Since 1948, its professional musicians have brought live music to people of all ages across the UK, from the Scottish Highlands to the Channel Islands, from Northern Ireland to the Welsh Valleys, including those in hospitals, care homes, and community settings. Through a range of specialist programmes that foster connection, comfort, and joy, the charity supports individuals living with dementia, mental health challenges, serious illness, and those in palliative or intensive care.

Team Music in Hospitals & Care is made up of over 350 professional musicians, volunteers, trustees and supporters, and through both in-person and digital performances, the charity continues to make live music accessible to those who might not otherwise experience it.

<https://mihc.org.uk/>



**Welsh National Opera (WNO)** believes in the power of opera to transform lives.

As a national company with international status, WNO sits at the heart of music-making in Wales, bringing the power, drama and raw emotion of opera to diverse audiences through world-class performances and extensive touring, as well as working with partners to discover and nurture young operatic talent, and provide the springboard for international careers.

Founded in 1943 by a group of people from South Wales, including miners, teachers, and doctors, WNO remains deeply connected to its community roots. Alongside its artistic programme, the company delivers impactful youth and community initiatives, aiming to demonstrate to future generations that opera is a rewarding, relevant and universal art form.

<https://wno.org.uk/>

### **Atrium Performers**

The Atrium in Neath Port Talbot Hospital provides regular opportunities for local music groups to play, on a voluntary basis, for hospital patients, staff and visitors.

Debbie Emmet (SBUHB Hospital Operations Assistant Service Manager) co-ordinates a programme to include a range of musical tastes and expertise, often with a thematic or seasonal approach.

During the period October – December 2024, eight concerts took place, on a fortnightly basis, and included the following performers:

- James Rees (Singer)
- Swansea U3A Ukelele Big Band
- Port Talbot Cymric Male Voice Choir
- Glen Manby Jazz Trio
- Choirs for Good
- My Kinda Choir
- Briton Ferry Silver Band
- Swansea Rock Choir

## 4. Musical Hospitals Evaluation Methodology

Description & purpose	Methodology	Timeframe	Documents/ links / notes
<p><b>Stakeholder Questionnaires: Patients</b> To better understand the impact of music for patients in a variety of SBUHB settings</p>	<p>Bi-lingual questionnaires accessed via QR code / links shared across sites and displayed as posters in key areas.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Rating experience of music during hospital stay Impact on physical health / emotional wellbeing Open text responses</p>	January – March 2025	<p><a href="#">Patient Questionnaire</a> (English) <b>6 responses</b></p> <p>The evaluation incurred significant challenges around collection of patient feedback via surveys because of: -Patient situation and capability -Staff capacity -Hospital signage</p> <p>Observations of engagement and commentary held much greater value here.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholder Questionnaires: Family / visitors</b> To better understand the way family members / visitors experience music provided in a variety of SBUHB settings.</p>	<p>Bi-lingual questionnaires accessed via QR code / links shared across sites and displayed as posters in key areas.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Rating experience of music during hospital visit Impact on physical health / emotional wellbeing of family member / patient Open text responses</p>	January – March 2025	<p><a href="#">Family / visitors questionnaire</a> (English) <b>2 responses</b></p> <p>The evaluation incurred challenges around collection of visitor feedback via surveys because of: -Staff capacity -Hospital signage</p> <p>Observations of engagement, verbal feedback and commentary held much greater value here.</p>
<p><b>Stakeholder Questionnaires: NHS Staff</b> To better understand the impact of music for SBUHB staff in a variety of settings.</p>	<p>Bi-lingual questionnaires accessed via QR code / links shared across sites</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Rating experience of music during shifts Impact on patient health / emotional wellbeing Impact on own emotional wellbeing / stress levels / ability to carry out duties Open text responses on effectiveness</p>	January – March 2025	<p><a href="#">Staff questionnaire</a> (English) <b>11 responses</b></p> <p>The evaluation incurred predictable capacity challenges around collection of NHS staff through surveys, but this was mitigated by the extensive verbal feedback during observations and the quality of staff reflection and interview engagement.</p>
<p><b>Additional NHS staff questionnaire used by Live Music Now (LMN)</b> To understand experiences and observations on a session-by-session basis. For provider understanding of</p>	<p>Questionnaires A simple post-activity questionnaire for staff present during LMN sessions.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Staff role</p>	July 2024 – March 2025	Data shared with Sound Connections March 2025 (*See Appendix A*)

what is working or needs adaptation.	Description of music experience Impact on patients: calming, improved mood, expression of enjoyment. Impact on staff: enjoyment / benefits Impact on ward environment / setting		
<b>Artist / practitioner reflection</b> To enable practitioners to reflect on, summarise and share what has taken place during each session.	Collection by music providers via voice note, online form.  Collation and thematic coding centrally.	July 2024 - March 2025	Some providers already consistently using reflection methods such as voice notes / documentation. Others were supported to explore capture methods and content suitable for the purpose of this evaluation. All available reflections across the period included.
<b>Music session observations</b> To better understand each setting, delivery format and impact on stakeholders across the Musical Hospitals Programme.	Associate Evaluator visit to each setting, noting patient / visitor engagement and response, role of staff within sessions, interaction between musicians, staff, patients and any visitors.	October 2024 – January 2025	Associate evaluator was able to visit each setting (hospitals, wards and activity rooms) and see representatives of each provider in action.
<b>Stakeholder Interviews:</b> NHS Staff For deeper insight into the impact of music in specific contexts.	In person / online interviews.  <b>Content:</b> How did you become involved in the Musical Hospitals Programme? What is your role within it? What do you think the impact is on: patients / family members / visitors / hospital staff? Have you any evidence / examples of the programme making an impact in your setting? E.g: patient experience, increased engagement, change in patient or visitor behaviour, atmosphere, staff wellbeing or ability to carry out their duties. In your opinion what is the key benefit / strength of Musical Hospitals for SBUHB? Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your observations / experiences within this project?  Extended interview with Neuro Rehabilitation Ward Manager, Nathan Riddle, around data collection (see Case Study).	November 2024 – February 2025	<b>6 members of NHS staff interviewed. 5 ward managers and 1 activity co-ordinator.</b>  There were some minor challenges around staff availability because of the impact of winter pressures, staff sickness etc.  Staff offered a range of methods of engaging with evaluation, to reflect challenges to capacity. This enabled successful means of capturing the breadth of the Musical Hospitals programme and its impact across beneficiary groups.
<b>Stakeholder Interviews:</b>	In person / online interviews.	February 2025	Musician reflection meetings held with <b>3</b> music providers

<p>Music Providers; co-ordinators and musicians For deeper insight</p>	<p><b>Content:</b> Why do you personally think music in hospitals and healthcare settings is important? Do you have evidence of impact on patients, family members / visitors or healthcare staff, within the SBUHB Musical Hospitals programme, that you are able to share? Why is the work in hospital settings important for your organisation? How has work in health care settings changed your practice?</p>		<p>and attended by <b>9 musicians</b> and <b>2 programme co-ordinators</b>.</p>
<p><b>Collation of NHS data</b></p>	<p>Monetisation of savings because of activity on Neuro-rehabilitation ward.</p>	<p>March 2025</p>	<p>Research carried out by Nathan Riddle as part of leadership training module. (*See Appendix B*)</p>

## 5. Evidence of Impact: Key Themes

The aims of this evaluation were to explore the impact of the Musical Hospitals programme under the following key areas:

- Patient health outcomes
- Patient wellbeing and hospital experience
- Staff wellbeing and reduction in stress levels
- Organisational: SBUHB Priorities
- Organisational: Wider hospital benefits

This has enabled a deeper understanding of what musical experiences can offer patient, staff and the wider SBUHB community.

### Patient Health Outcomes

Evaluation found that there was demonstrable evidence of Musical Hospitals activity contributing to an improvement in health outcomes within each of the targeted patient groups.

#### Neuro-rehabilitation

For neuro-rehabilitation patients, typically exhibiting complex needs, live music activity encouraged **engagement with other treatments** and therapies toward recovery. Music reduced agitation and therefore the need for medication, improved focus and mood and provided naturally occurring physio opportunities giving patients greater autonomy and self-efficacy for their recovery. (See also 6. Case Study)

#### Stroke Recovery

Similarly in the case of stroke patients, a multi-disciplinary healthcare team are instrumental in-patient recovery, guiding **meaningful and relevant rehabilitation**, focused around activity and participation, providing achievable challenge for individual patients. Music activity naturally supports the work of therapeutic approaches: **physio and occupational therapies** through **movement, speech and language therapies** through **use of voice** and singing, and **clinical psychology** through **social activity**, therefore contributing significantly to the treatment and recovery of this patient group.

#### Dementia Care

For dementia patients music was identified for its significant impact on **memory and cognitive function**, engagement and interaction with staff and family members, all of which helps **reduce isolation**, decline and withdrawal. Music often **'unlocked' communication**, keeping patients connected and engaged and improving the quality of end-of-life care.

*“Dementia's a palliative condition, and I strongly believe that we should give them quality of life in the time that they have left. And for some of those patients, they're not able to do the things that they loved now... But actually, music is that 'in', it's that thing that brings them out of their shell and makes that person shine.” Ward Manager*

**Increased mobility** in many older patient groups is also often observed in their physical response to the music, stretching or conducting from their bed or chair or spontaneously moving and dancing.

### Adult Mental Health

In adult mental health settings, staff reported improvements in **communication, reconnecting** with memories and outside world experiences seen as a vital tool for recovery. Music often encourages **physical and emotional** responses here. Through movement, expression and communication patients can **re-establish autonomy**, likes, dislikes and choices, reconnecting them to a time before their hospitalisation.

*“It definitely gets them [the patients] moving to the room where the music is being held and moving to the Music.” Staff survey response*

### New Mothers’ Mental Health Care

In the Mother and Baby Unit music provides an important opportunity to bond with the baby and **improve relational development** which can be stalled as a result of Mums’ mental health challenges. Musical offerings provide time away from the ward environment and a more **sociable way to interact** with others and support each other, recognising the importance of **shared experience and support from peers** for recovery – in addition to clinical support and intervention.

*“I think, there's something about us utilising our whole range of wellbeing and therapeutic activities and, there was a tendency in inpatient services on hospital sites to focus on medications and psychology and our formal therapies. I think whilst music can be a formal therapy, this isn't structured as that, and I think those opportunities for mindfulness is a really big thing at the moment and it's got lots of evidence base.” Ward Manager*

The Mother and Baby Unit Ward Manager also highlighted the therapeutic nature of the **‘Lullabies Music Project’**, providing a unique and transformative opportunity for Mum’s in the unit to **process, heal and communicate** with their little ones through writing their own lullabies with musicians.

Across hospital settings and patient groups **Occupational Therapists** confirm that the opportunity to walk patients to the **Atrium**, coffee or lounge area for the musical offerings, move / dance to the music provides valuable movement opportunities which are beneficial to improved confidence and physical recovery.

*“The Occupational Therapist got a few up on their feet doing well, let's call it a dance, you know. But they were on their feet, moving around to the music.” Musician’s reflection*

**100% of patient responses to the Musical Hospitals survey said they felt music impacted positively on their physical health.**

## Patient Wellbeing and Hospital Experience

### Music calms, distracts and supports patient wellbeing

Across the Musical Hospital settings and beneficiary groups there have been important observations about the capacity of music to distract and calm.

One musician reflected that the music had the same effect on a distressed dementia patient and a small baby, tuning into and calming the parasympathetic system, easing their anxiety and encouraging rest / sleep.

*“Distraction for our patient group, for somebody who’s experiencing psychosis or really intense and really debilitating anxiety, negative intrusive thoughts. The power of distraction.” Ward Manager*

The capacity of music to improve the hospital environment is referenced many times through survey and interview responses across beneficiary groups.

Staff repeatedly endorse the reduction of agitation levels in individual patients and improvement to the general **atmosphere** and **environment** as a result of musicians’ visits. Many reiterate the impact on **patient mental health**, that patients look forward to the activity and are noticeably happier because of experiencing live music.

*“It can be tough on my ward at times. So, a little music from musicians coming to the ward can really help with bringing stress levels down for our patients and also the staff.” Ward staff*

There are numerous examples of musicians arriving into slightly volatile or tense situations as a result of a patient having a challenging time, exhibiting strong emotions and agitation, and witnessing the capacity of music to calm the situation and ease the tension for everyone.

**100% of patient survey respondents rated having music as part of their hospital experience as positive.**

### Communication, connection and identity

*“Yes, you want to be excellent, musically. But you are a human first and actually, **what is the point of music if you’re not connecting?**” Musician’s reflection*

The music sessions are a clear highlight in the patients’ hospital experience and provide opportunities to engage and interact socially. Patient responses include **‘highlight of the week’** and **‘by far the most beneficial experience’** with regard to their hospital stay.

*“Feels like a real treat, wait all week for the music days. Great selection of music and artists. Awesome to have something musical visit us, when we can’t get out at the moment.” Patient survey response*

It is widely acknowledged that the monotony of a hospital day can be difficult for patients, many stakeholders noticing that music has the potential to **‘take them somewhere else’** for a brief time. A number of the Musical Hospitals settings have long stay patients where the music can provide a weekly milestone, welcome interruption and an opportunity for mindfulness.

At times the programme has highlighted the ability of music to engage and communicate with patients who are **withdrawn**, introverted and passive in their treatment. There are numerous examples of usually non-verbal patients, **humming, speaking or singing** in response to the music, a collective activity known to **reduce feelings of isolation**.

Musical Hospitals’ music providers, comprising of co-ordinators, administrators and performers, are highly skilled and experienced, established and adept at understanding a range of health care needs and environments. They have strong **evidence-based practice**, choosing their **repertoire** with care, **noticing** and **responding to physical and emotional response** and release in patients, staff and family members. Musical offerings are often created thematically, providing vital links to the world beyond hospital through **seasonal celebrations** and occasions.

Musicians’ reflections reveal the importance of their involvement for **community building** within wards and the wider hospital. They provide interactions which are non-medical, meeting the people themselves rather than their illness or treatment.

*“...sometimes music is just a different way in... that patient might be able to respond to us in a much gentler or more positive way than they have with staff.” Musician’s reflection*

Musicians described playing in hospital settings often being the most challenging or the **‘toughest audience’** but the most rewarding, giving the **‘greatest job satisfaction’** and genuinely feeling **‘valued as a musician’**. They also reflect that the conversations are as important as the music and appreciate the opportunity to communicate in this way with an ‘audience’.

*“I think there's something about... being given a reason to be still...to interact with somebody about their interests, or a memory that a song evoked, or an emotion. It opens up opportunities and communication channels...” Ward Manager*

Musical Hospitals demonstrably contributes to the building of **community** in hospital wards and social spaces reinforced through music choices to reflect **cultural identity** of the patient population.

Musicians often reflect how **important Welsh music, language and culture** is to the patient beneficiaries in SBUHB settings. Welsh song seems to stir particular emotions and memories, connect people within ward settings and encourage **collective singing**, a strong **Welsh tradition**. The feeling of community is palpable in these moments, removing barriers and isolation.

It is easy to see a vital cultural resonance through these musical interactions – **Hiraeth\*** perhaps.

*(\*Hiraeth – Welsh word with no direct English translation: a mixture of longing, yearning, nostalgia, wistfulness or an earnest desire for the Wales of the past.)*

It provides a valuable opportunity for staff, patients and visitors to pause together, interact and get to know each other better through **shared experiences**.

It is often the means by which patients might **reconnect** with their family member(s) and enjoy quality time together.

*“Some of our families... struggle with their visits a little bit because some of our patients are quite hard to have conversations with, and it's so nice for them to see those patients sort of coming out of their shell a little bit more... and being able to see that is really important for family.” Ward Manager*

Opportunities to request pieces of music / songs enables an ethos of democracy which in turn supports engagement, empowerment and shines a light on **patients as individuals**.

*“When you're in hospital, I imagine for a long period of time, you can I feel like you're losing your identity a bit. ...it's really special when after we've done a song, if people want to chat to us, we'll chat to them because you can see when they need it”. Musician reflection*

## **Independence and autonomy**

The capacity of Musical Hospital activity to promote patient **independence** and **autonomy** has been referenced earlier with particular reference to stroke and neuro rehabilitation patients and the opportunity to ‘join in’ with movement responses and in some cases playing instruments themselves.

In other settings patients are given the choice to join musical activity in a collective space, from their room or bay and some have the opportunity to leave their ward to experience musical offerings in other areas of the hospital.

Musicians often reflected on the importance of music being a **‘gentle offering or invitation to participate’**, rather than an enforced activity. NHS staff frequently comment on musicians’ ability to read the room and respond with music, and musicians recognise the importance of building trust with staff and patients.

Some may choose to listen from afar and musicians are always happy to be invited into a patient's room to share music with them.

The results of this approach have been hugely impactful, staff and musicians often witnessing **unexpected patient responses**, independence and autonomy.

For example, in the neuro rehabilitation ward, a musician playing guitar found himself chatting to a gentleman patient who explained *"I play guitar, but I can't now because my hand won't work"*.

The musician encouraged him to have a go with his guitar and listened while he played along. Despite the patient's protestations that he was **'no good anymore'** the musician encouraged and correctly identified the Elvis Presley song he had chosen to play, reassuring him that it can't have been that bad if he could recognise it without the accompanying words. It encouraged him so much that when the musician returned three weeks later, he learned that the patient had found all the guitars in the Occupational Therapy department, restrung them and got them tuned.

*"I think he realised that maybe there was a lot of fear involved in it, not using his hand. And that he could do better than he thought." Musician's reflection*

During one session in Ward F (Adult Mental Health) musicians noticed that patients, while listening, had begun to independently use some **art supplies** which had been left in the room. They naturally used **mark making, colour and words** to respond to their experiences and the resulting pictures became a shared topic of conversation at the end of the session.

The effects of independence and autonomy on patient wellbeing is recognisable, reaffirming **self-awareness, self-esteem, efficacy** and **resilience**, vital for supporting and improving recovery rates.

*"Musicians were genuinely engaged with patients and adopted a 'get involved' approach. They were talented, caring and brought a sense of warmth and positivity which is essential whilst being an in-patient. Beautiful music beautiful people. Thank you, NHS." Visitor survey response*

## Creating positive memories in hospital

*"I would recommend it for any performer who likes that kind of engagement with the audience... I mean, what a privilege it is to go in and sing to someone. You couldn't be more aware of how powerful music can be, how powerful your performance as a singer can be for an audience member, than you will be singing to someone, you know, at their hospital bed while they're in an incredibly vulnerable position." Musician's reflection*

Being admitted to hospital is something we would all recognise as challenging, sometimes unexpected and distressing for patients and family members alike. The opportunity to create **positive memories** while in hospital is of great importance and something which Musical Hospitals readily provides.

The **Atrium concert series** provides an opportunity for patients, family and staff to enjoy music together in a non-medicalised setting. It provides a **social** context for **interaction** and there are many **expressions of joy** visible here. Family members sing along, sway, chat and share memories alongside music choices, staff share times of relaxation, **laughter**, a chance to dance along and create **positive memories**.

*"I think patients are happy, staff are happy, performers are happy. It's a really good wellbeing feeling so everybody feels uplifted. And I just think hospitals can be such dour settings, people are there for all kinds of things. And to be sitting, possibly waiting for news, and you grab yourself a coffee and then there's this burst of song. How lovely is that?"*

*You're having this awful day and then all of a sudden there's a group of ladies singing 'Shake Your Tail Feather' and doing the actions." Atrium Operations Manager*

Less publicly, within ward or bay settings, music can enable moments of great **hope** and emotion such as the example shared by musicians about their work on the stroke ward.

There was a gentleman on the stroke ward who had **not spoken or communicated** at all since having a stroke. One day while his wife and daughter were visiting, musicians were playing and singing, when he began to **sing** and **tap his toes**. His wife and daughter were weeping and clearly greatly moved to witness a part of him emerging, stimulated by the music, which they hadn't witnessed for a long while. They requested to film him to share with other family members his response and the **feeling of hope** that had emerged for them that day.

*"Just a thank you to the performers who came today. All involved were extremely friendly and so respectful." Family member survey response*

Within adult mental health, patients who return to independent lives often talk fondly about music as part of their hospital stay. Staff describe patients' enjoyment at opening the doors of the community room and **dancing outside** in the courtyard in the warmer weather, **awakening the senses** and enjoying **freedom** from the ward and their rooms.

## Quality end-of-life care

*"There's still joy to be had at all stages of dementia.... there still is that ability for that person to have quality of life if we just tap into the right things for the right person, at the right level of dementia, and that's really key. ...more opportunities like that for them (dementia patients) are really, really important..." Ward Manager*

This evaluation study has revealed the impact of music across many patient groups and the importance of music experiences within **palliative care** on the dementia ward was particularly powerful.

Here the Ward Manager described that when patients are admitted to hospital, there is generally a **family** who have reached the end of their capacity to care for their loved ones themselves. They are often **depleted**, **exhausted** by their efforts to care for them in the home and **despondent** about their loved one's future in a hospital setting.

It is here that music activity has enabled some **precious time** for patients and families to relax, enjoy music, be reminded of music from within their shared experiences of life and make **new and positive memories** during palliative care.

*"Being able to give them that time where they're just family members together, bonding over something that's happening in front of them is really key." Ward Manager*

Families often talk about being able to glimpse an aspect of their loved one's life which has perhaps been lost or left untold and often feedback that this feels like a precious gift during this most difficult time.

*"The music from The Sound of Music had my Mum talking about visiting Austria as a youngster." Family member*

There are naturally personalised experiences, where patients are able to share memories or requests with musicians and these often give staff insight into their patients' life prior to hospital. It enables **connections to the outside world, happier, less challenging times**.

## Staff wellbeing and reduction in stress levels

### Context

It is impossible to escape the pressures of recent years, on the NHS and staff body. The percentage of NHS staff absent (calculated via the Electronic Staff Record) across Wales suggests that in the quarter that ended June 2024, sickness absence rates increased in nine of the 13 NHS organisations when compared to the same quarter in the previous year.<sup>2</sup>

Wales' NHS Staff Survey results in 2023 demonstrate that **41%** of respondents said they '**often**' or '**always**' find their work **emotionally exhausting**, a further **39%** saying they '**sometimes**' do.

**36%** said that they '**often**' or '**always**' **feel burnt out** because of work and **45%** that they '**often**' or '**always**' **feel worn out** at the end of their working day / shift.

Arts Based-staff wellbeing intervention **Sharing Hope**, developed by the Arts and Heritage team in collaboration with Quality Improvement at SBUHB, was developed in 2022 in response to staff wellbeing concerns following the Covid-19 pandemic.

*“Sharing Hope sessions provide safe spaces and supportive, creative environments for staff to share their stories through art, process feelings and come out stronger together.....offering opportunities for staff to express themselves, connect with each other and access support to be able to reflect and move forward.”*  
SBUHB Website

This evaluation has sought to understand the impact of Musical Hospitals on staff wellbeing per se, while also recognising increased efficacy, a reduction in sickness levels, and cost saving as positive causal outcomes (see also 6. Case Study).

### Calmer wards reduce acuity

*“Patients usually are a lot calmer listening to music making it **easier to carry out certain duties of care.**”*  
NHS Nursing staff

NHS staff frequently commented on the capacity of music to **calm patients** and relax the mood on the ward which reduces the need for 1:1 care. This allows staff to carry out other essential aspects of their role **more effectively**.

Staff observe that there is less agitation and aggression from patients as a result of the music intervention and this too gives valuable respite from patient need.

*“I think, from a health board point of view, the fact that it **increases staff morale**, and it **reduces acuity on the ward** is really key. It's a big help to the nursing team.”* Ward Manager

<sup>2</sup> Source: [Sickness absence in the NHS: April to June 2024 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

## Boosts staff morale & job satisfaction

Staff comment that Musical Hospitals activity **boosts morale** amongst staff on the ward. They feel **valued** as a result of the time and financial investment and recognise the ability of musicians to tailor the project to the specific needs of their setting.

They feel pride when seeing their patients and family members enjoying the activity, recognising the effectiveness of non-clinical approaches to **enhance patient experience**.

They feel **encouraged** that their setting and patient group are recognised and connected with the wider hospital through their engagement in the project.

*“It definitely **brings the team closer together** by having a little song along.” NHS Staff Member*

Staff recognise the contribution that activity such as music plays in providing the **high quality, person-centred care** which they strive for. The impact of establishing a regular programme of activity in the neuro ward (see section 6. Case Study) has demonstrably improved the **quality of care** and increased **job satisfaction** for staff. The impact of this continuous provision on **staff retention** can only be surmised at this point.

## Improves connections

Staff frequently reflect on the ability of the music activity to connect people in **shared experiences** and learning more about each other, enhancing the feeling of **community** within a ward or setting.

It provides a positive social interaction and improved **relationships** by which staff can get to know their patients and families a little better, **working together** to improve patient wellbeing and health outcomes. They learn more about individuals' likes and dislikes, memories, stories and experiences, some of which can play a vital part in a patient's **recovery** journey and quality of life during their hospital stay.

It gives an opportunity for families to get involved with patient care in a gentle but practical way and staff express how gratifying it is to see families **reconnect** and **recover** together through music.

In addition, staff notice that music activity gives them a chance to interact with each other and bond as a **team**.

*“And the opportunity to come and have a **shared experience** aside from health care, it's not feeding somebody or delivering their physical care, or coming here for a meeting about their care or their discharge. An opportunity to **just be together and enjoy something recreational and shared...**” Ward Manager*

A feeling of **'belonging'** and being part of a **'community'** are well known wellbeing indicators and, as witnessed through the pandemic, can be powerful tools for encouraging and strengthening **resolve** and **resilience**.

Ward staff welcome musicians as part of their team during visits and have strengthened **partnership working** as a result of the Musical Hospitals project across the year(s). They recognise the ability of musicians to affect the mood or atmosphere on the ward, to respond to, encourage and notice individual and group engagement through a different perspective.

As a result of longer music programming these partnerships have become well established relationships built on **trust and mutual respect**.

*“Good **teamwork**, patients get to select the music.” NHS Staff Member*

Staff also comment on the resonance of the Welsh language / traditional songs and music for a deeper feeling of connection within the ward community, evoking strong, often emotional responses and civic pride in staff and patients alike.

## A pleasant diversion

In their responses staff frequently comment on live music being a pleasing diversion from day-to-day challenges. A member of administrative staff in Tonna Hospital shared that, as someone who suffers with their mental health, they always make time to visit the day room for the musical concerts as they provide a moment to pause which they describe as a **‘welcome distraction’**.

One staff team plan their breaks and walk across to the Atrium in NPT hospital from another building, to have lunch and socialise when they know concerts are on. They describe it as a **highlight** and a chance to briefly **relax together**.

Another staff member described that while the musicians are performing it takes them **away from their troubles** for a brief time and a third that music is good for **soothing the soul**.

## Joy!

*“I feel **lighter and happier** and feel as if I have a spring in my step.”*

*“It has brought **joy**.”*

*“**Music makes life better, whatever life throws at you. Simple as that.**”*

*NHS Staff responses*

**Within respondents to the Musical Hospitals Staff Survey, 80% of staff felt music had a positive impact on their wellbeing and 70% identified a reduction in stress levels as a result.**

## Organisational: SBUHB Priorities

**SBUHB People Strategy 2024-2029** reinforces and aligns with the ten-year Health Board vision to become a High-Quality Organisation, putting patients and service users at the heart of health care delivery.

It recognises SBUHB staff as pivotal to delivering this vision and commits to collectively focus on what is important to the workforce, *‘creating an environment where staff feel empowered and able to flourish’*.

**Theme 1: Engaged, Motivated and Healthy.** *We want our people to feel valued, fairly rewarded and supported.*

*We know that a great experience of work and high levels of wellbeing, results in great patient and service user experience. We want our people to feel proud of the care we provide, feel valued, recognised and fairly rewarded for their contribution and to feel connected to the Health Board and the teams they work within.”*

**SBUHB People Strategy 2024 – 29**

Musical Hospitals, has evidenced a multitude of staff wellbeing outcomes (see section 3 above) including the investment making **staff feel valued**, providing **job satisfaction** during challenging times at local, organisational and national levels within the NHS.

*“Something really important about the staff here and the patient groups... **feeling like they're valued**, that they're important enough for people to give their time to come and do this, to the health board who's invested in this site (Tonna Hospital) and these people to provide something that has an evidence base around wellbeing. I think that's really powerful for the staff group in particular.” Ward Manager*

## Organisational: Wider SBUHB benefits

**The Musical Hospitals approach** actively and effectively demonstrates SBUHB **Values** across patient, family and staff stakeholder groups in the following ways:

***Caring for each other in every human contact in all our communities and each of our hospitals.***

**Musical Hospitals** has proven to be a powerful means of **connecting people**, creating democratic cultural spaces within hospitals, enabling deeper levels of **communication** and shared experience. A key outcome of the programme has been **community building** within wards, settings and across generational patient groups in one instance (Tonna Hospital – Older adults and Mums & Babies Unit).

***Working together as patients, families, carers, staff and communities so we always put our patients first.***

Connections across patient, family and staff groups within Musical Hospitals enables better understanding and therefore improved quality of **person-centred care**. Music provides an authentic means of learning more about patients, responding to their individual needs and preferences and encouraging engagement, independence and autonomy.

***Always improving so that we are our best for every patient and for each other.***

Regular musical input improves **staff wellbeing, job satisfaction** and therefore the **quality and efficacy of care**. It enhances pre-existing occupational therapy recovery approaches. A number of settings have identified the potential of ward **'activity co-ordinators'** to ensure optimal impact for individuals and patient groups.

## 6. Case Study: Health, Wellbeing and Financial gains

### Neuro Rehabilitation Ward, Neath Port Talbot Hospital

#### Including research findings from Ward Manager – Nathan Riddle<sup>3</sup>

This case study has been created and included as it provides deeper insight into change occurring because of the introduction of a Neuro-Rehabilitation activity programme which includes Musical Hospitals sessions. By exploring additional raw data being collected by Ward Manager, Nathan Riddle, alongside an in-depth interview, this evaluation gained further insight into evidence of music activity contributing effectively to improved health and wellbeing of staff and patients, ultimately leading to financial savings.

*“Fundamentally it's the benefit of having calmer wards, calm environment, keeping patients occupied... distracting them from what might be causing them stress and the physical, verbal agitation that comes from that. So, although you're spending money on the music, you would be saving money in the long term, with 1:1 staffing hours, the saving on the PRN medication...” Ward Manager*

The neuro rehabilitation ward, in SBUHB Neath Port Talbot Hospital, treats individuals who have suffered a neurological injury, illness or have a diagnosis of a long-term neurological condition.

The [World Health Organisation states](#): *Rehabilitation expands the focus of health beyond preventative and curative care to ensure people with a health condition can remain as independent as possible and participate in education, work and meaningful life roles.*

Due to the complexities of neuro rehabilitation, effective treatment can require a range of health professionals and approaches in order to maximise the potential for improved quality of life and recovery.

Research has demonstrated neuro rehabilitation to be one of the most cost-effective forms of treatment a patient can receive, ultimately reducing long term support and care costs which may result from their injury, illness or long-term condition.

In NPT Hospital the neuro ward is a 14-bed facility with patient stays varying from three months to a year.

In 2024 Ward Manager Nathan Riddle was successful in implementing an activity programme for the ward to support patients in their rehabilitation journey, which included gardening, arts and crafts, karaoke, board games, quizzes, therapy dog visits and group activity games.

Over the course of 20 weeks (March – August 2024) Nathan programmed and monitored closely the impact of activity, including music from provider Music in Hospitals and Care (MIHC), as part of the Musical Hospitals programme, to establish the wider impact.

During this time Nathan measured:

- Patient falls
- Occurrences of verbal / physical abuse against staff
- 1:1 staff support requirements in response to patient behaviour
- Use of medication to calm patients
- Incidents of staff sickness

Evidence gathered over this period demonstrated:

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<sup>3</sup> See also Appendix B

- A **23% reduction** in patient falls
- A significant reduction in the occurrences of verbal or physical abuse against staff. Physical assault **decreased by 98%** and verbal assault **decreased by 99%**.
- A **47% reduction** in the requirement for 1:1 staff support because of patient behaviour
- A significant **reduction of 94%** in the use of medication to calm patients
- Reduced staff sickness – healthcare support worker sickness **reducing by 53%** and registered nurse sickness **reduction of 32%**

## Musical Hospital Activity Observations

**Staff** noticed that patients flourished during this time, for many of them it reignited their musical interests and past experiences and their engagement in activity improved. Music sessions enabled the inclusion of family members, assisting with rebuilding relationships following an injury or illness. Visitors observed changes during these sessions and percussion instruments were donated enabling patients to have agency in their physical rehabilitation by joining in with musicians.

*“Once they [staff] know the musicians have been in, they can feel a really positive mood on the ward, everyone's happy. They're all willing to engage with the therapies. Even the staff are finding that it boosts their sort of morale as well.... across the board, everyone just feels the benefit of the music.” Ward Manager*

**Musicians** acknowledge the importance of meeting musical tastes by accepting requests and this collective karaoke atmosphere has often encouraged the ward to continue or ‘keep the party going’ after musicians have left.

Musicians have shared that even if patients chose not to attend in person, there is engagement along the ward with singing and applause often heard.

The music sessions offer an opportunity to socialise, chat and naturally find common ground in terms of musical preferences.

**The associate evaluator observed** a real sense of relaxation and calm permeated the lounge room, throughout a session, led by a MIHC musician on the Harp.

The four male patients appeared content and engaged, softening in their posture with easy breathing, sighs, eyes closing, and gentle singing at times.

There were several small but significant connections made with staff and patients through their memories and music choices, and everyone shared in singing Happy Birthday for one gentleman’s daughter.

A family visitor joined towards the end of the session and later spent a long time alongside their patient partner in the Atrium of the hospital enjoying the Ukelele band which were playing there that day.

The impact of the music was demonstrable here too. The opportunity for unhurried socialising, beyond the confines of the ward, visiting times and conventional treatment. A naturally occurring rehabilitation opportunity, this time provided by volunteers in the beautiful natural light of the Atrium.

## Impact and cost savings

Calmer wards and environments reduce the stress and agitation levels of patients making valuable savings in medication and additional staffing needs.

1:1 staffing is deployed in general to provide additional support for patients who are struggling and / or demonstrating challenging behaviour during their time on the ward. This places additional pressure and cost on the staffing of the ward, Nathan's data suggesting that the activity programme has contributed to reduction of 1:1 need and therefore further savings.

A reduction in verbal and physical abuse of staff has clearly impacted positively on staff, with less staff sickness being noted during this time and therefore less cost for staff cover.

The more stability there is in staffing personnel the more effective treatment, quality of care and recovery there will be for patients; these are additional unquantifiable cost savings.

*“It is an issue; our patients have complex needs. So, our staff really need to have that rapport with a patient because of their brain injury – a new temporary staff might not pick up on their triggers, or understand what they mean.” Ward Manager*

Music sessions also enable staff to get to know their patients better through their musical tastes and choices and this too can help with rapport and relationship building essential for effective rehabilitation.

Nathan calculated the potential **weekly savings** as a result of implementing the activity programme:

PRN Meds, used for reducing agitation and aggression = £18.90

1:1 hours = £1,605.17

Healthcare support worker average sickness hours = £317.68

Registered nurse average sickness hours = £356.41 per week

This suggests total costings per week = £2,298.16

Estimated savings per month of **£9192.64** and over a year = **£110,311.68**

*Note: Calculations made using conservative salary figures (not including night and weekend enhancements) and bottom salary scale so true savings may be higher.*

*“In terms of change, we notice a huge financial saving. Obviously, regarding the number of 1:1 staff and staff sickness, we've had to use fewer temporary staff. The costs associated with that, is just giving us more freedom to control our budget.” Ward Manager*

## **Developing the Activity Co-ordinator Role**

Currently responsibility for programming activity falls to nursing staff which can be a challenge, particularly at times of high demand on the ward. With the evidence of cost-saving from his research Nathan has submitted a business case for a neuro activity co-ordinator who would have responsibility for designing and monitoring activity programmes. This would allow cost savings to continue and to diversify the programme to explore new therapies and approaches which could benefit neuro rehab patients.

Feedback from staff suggests that the music programme currently offers diverse and positive experiences, responding effectively to patients' needs, engagement levels and preferences, in the moment. They confirm that a consistent day / time for musician visits would further enhance patient and staff experience, providing important stability, routine and familiarity within the weekly programme of activities focused on patient recovery.

## 7. Evaluation Summary

### Musical Hospitals Future Aspirations

#### Evaluation Summary

The Musical Hospitals Programme has succeeded in **embedding live music provision** in a range of settings, wards and communal areas, creating and **connecting communities** within and across wards with measurable impact in all key areas within the scope of this evaluation.

#### Patient health outcomes

Musical Hospitals activity has demonstrably improved health outcomes in the following patient groups:

- Neuro-rehabilitation
- Stroke recovery
- Dementia Care
- Adult Mental Health
- New Mothers' Mental Health care

Across patient groups Occupational Therapists have endorsed Musical Hospitals as a naturally occurring opportunity for patients to improve **physically, cognitively, verbally** and **socially**, through their engagement with the programme.

It has unlocked lost **communication** and provided new ways for patients to **process mental health challenges, accept their condition** and **develop autonomy** in their recovery.

#### Patient wellbeing and hospital experience

Musical Hospitals has unequivocally contributed to the improvement of patient wellbeing during their time in hospital. This manifests in a multitude of ways, **connecting people** in social spaces, sharing **memories** alongside music, providing deep **relaxation** and **calm**, a range of **physical and emotional response** and deep-felt **cultural pride**.

The established **partnership** of musicians and NHS staff effectively demonstrates improvements in patient and family **engagement** and **quality person-centred care**. It enhances hospital treatment through accessible activity, encouraging **motivation** and **independence**.

It gives families glimpses of **hope** within recovery, deeper **connection** through unlocked memories and creates new positive **memories** at the most challenging of times for them and their loved ones.

#### Staff wellbeing and reduction in stress levels

SBUHB Staff are resounding advocates for the programme and recognise the significant benefits for patient and **staff wellbeing**, vital as the health board strives towards demonstrating its values, putting patients and service users at the heart of health care delivery and becoming a High-Quality Organisation.

Ward staff acknowledge the importance of musical hospitals as an opportunity to get to know, not just their patients, but their co-workers better. Musical Hospitals visits provide a **pleasing distraction**, often improving the **atmosphere** and giving a moment to **pause** and **enjoy time together**.

## Organisational: SBUHB Priorities

This continuous quality live music provision has the ability to change the **atmosphere** of wards, **calm** and reduce patient agitation and therefore **acuity of nursing care**. This has resulted in demonstrable **cost savings** in terms of medication, 1:1 staffing levels and staff absence / cover staff requirement.

Musical Hospital visits make **staff feel valued** and invested in as teams within their ward settings. They frequently acknowledge that the activity enables them to provide a **higher quality of individual care** to their patients.

## Organisational: Wider hospital benefits

The impact on **patient and staff wellbeing** is well evidenced and observed throughout the programme and this cannot fail to permeate the wider hospital community.

**Atrium concerts** provide a space for ward patients, in-patients, clinic visitors, family members and staff to **socialise and enjoy music together**.

Musicians acknowledge their work in hospitals to be the most **rewarding**, achieving high levels of job satisfaction, enabling and witnessing **human connection** through music. It keeps their practice vibrant, relevant and intrinsically connected with their audiences.

## Musical Hospitals Challenges

Providing a consistent programme of music activity has allowed settings to better understand it's value, recognise challenges and aspire to improve the offer in the future.

### Time of day

In a couple of wards staff acknowledged that music activity was **compromised** if taking place too early in the morning as this caused additional pressures around breakfast and medicine administration. Musicians also reflected that this sometimes meant that they felt they were '**in the way**' or providing background sound rather than the benefits of sociable **group activity**.

Some settings expressed that they would like to encourage **family participation** in the sessions during their visits, but this too was impacted by conflicts of scheduling.

### Appropriateness of spaces

While people loved the **Atrium** as a beautiful concert space, staff commented that it was sometimes **cold** for patients coming off wards, due to the proximity to the front doors. They suggested that if **more blankets** were available in winter months this would help resolve this.

In **Tonna Hospital** the day / lounge room, where concerts take place, immediately leads onto a number of office and maintenance workshop areas and this can be problematic for **sound seepage** in both directions. The social aspect of the sessions being held here was considered to outweigh the inconvenience at present, and

there was discussion about better ‘programming’ of the space, enhancing musical offerings with **refreshments** to encourage staff in adjoining offices to **pause** and **family members** to join when possible.

### Staffing levels

Staff expressed frustration that sometimes, limited **staffing levels** prevented them from bringing patients into music activity which they knew would directly benefit them. This sometimes resulted in very **small attendance** for concerts and this impacted musicians in their reflections also.

It should be noted however that in the **adult mental health ward**, where there was an **activity co-ordinator** in place, the musician’s visit allowed the co-ordinator to **support patients offsite** as they attended important appointments or sessions as part of their recovery.

### Communication and collaboration

One ward manager expressed the importance of sharing **key messages** about the music activity with staff, reiterating its importance for patients, families and staff alike. They felt that if managers **endorsed and promoted music activity**, staff may feel more inclined to make time for it within their care plans and access it for their own wellbeing too. Staff sometimes express guilt at taking time out when they know settings are under pressure.

Musicians also felt that they would like to be further **connected with clinical staff** for the purpose of measuring impact, understanding patient need and tailoring activity accordingly. It was sometimes felt that this **reflection opportunity** was missing and could perhaps serve to enhance the work across the Musical Hospitals programme, through **collaborative approaches**.

### Cancellations

Music providers are very familiar with the significant challenges faced by health care settings, particularly during winter months when staffing is further stretched, and **ward restrictions** are applied. They noted that, in addition to a sense disappointment at cancellations, there was also a financial cost to the organisations.

### Musical Hospitals Aspirations and Opportunities

Throughout their engagement with this evaluation staff have not only shared their observations and support for Musical Hospitals but shared **future hopes** and **aspirations**.

Ward Managers have identified the positive outcomes of activity on quality of person-centred care and have established that the creation of an independent role of **activity co-ordinator** for each ward could be vital in securing long term activity provision, **innovation** and **impact**.

This role would enable wards to have greater control of **key success enablers** such as time and day of musicians’ visits, to ensure patients are active and receptive, recognising a regularly occurring opportunity as part of their week.

**Personalised approaches** / care plans for patients in partnership with music providers could include 1:1 music engagement opportunities with potential for greater health and wellbeing outcomes.

If the **economic savings** demonstrated in the neuro rehabilitation ward can be replicated and reduce spend on medication for patient agitation, 1:1 care, staff absence and cover needs, then wards will have greater control of their budgets for improving quality of care.

Music partners and musicians have extensive experience in health care settings and are keen to explore health and wellbeing benefits with patient groups and settings **beyond those explored** within the programme to date.

There is ambition to develop more **shared learning** opportunities and **collaboration** between clinical staff and musicians, to explore more deeply and extend the work, thereby providing a greater **body of evidence** around the **impact of music on healthcare**.

### Reflections from Iori Haugen, Music in Health Facilitator for SBUHB

The *Musical Hospitals Evaluation 2024–25* is a thoughtful, well-rounded reflection of a programme that has clearly delivered meaningful and measurable impact. The evaluators have captured not only the statistical outcomes but also the nuanced human stories behind them – highlighting how live music has transformed the hospital environment for patients, families, and staff alike. The report balances qualitative insight with quantitative rigour, underscoring the programme’s contribution to patient recovery, emotional wellbeing, staff morale, and broader organisational goals. It powerfully validates the role of the arts in healthcare and presents a compelling case for embedding such approaches into future service design.

A particularly fortunate and valuable element of the evaluation was the timing of the Neuro-Rehabilitation Ward case study. Nathan Riddle’s leadership project, running concurrently with Musical Hospitals delivery, provided an exceptional opportunity to capture concrete evidence of the programme’s health, wellbeing, and financial benefits. This alignment was not only serendipitous – it actively accelerated the Musical Hospitals project’s strategic aims. The ward-level data on reduced medication use, staff sickness, and one-to-one staffing needs gave early and robust support to our belief that regular live music sessions can be transformative on a clinical, human, and financial level.

It must be noted, however, that there are distinct differences between the Neuro-Rehab case study and the Musical Hospitals programme. The Neuro-Rehab initiative was largely delivered by ward staff, with input from professional musicians, and featured a broader range of creative activities. In contrast, Musical Hospitals was delivered exclusively by external professional musicians, with a specific focus on music. But rather than seeing these as two separate or opposing models, we believe the Neuro-Rehab example demonstrates how Musical Hospitals can act as a catalyst. It isn’t that Neuro Rehab was different to Musical Hospitals, but rather that it *added to it* – extending the vision further by involving staff and embedding creativity into the daily rhythm of the ward. This offers exciting benefits, showing what is possible when the principle of joyful, artistic engagement is embraced more holistically.

This brings us to a set of future research questions that could shape the programme’s next phase. To what extent are the positive outcomes influenced by *who* delivers the intervention? Would similar benefits be observed if creative activities were led solely by external professionals, or does the trusted presence of NHS staff – nurses, healthcare support workers – add a layer of connection and impact? Is this where the benefit on staff wellbeing takes place? It’s important to remember that these results did not happen without Musical Hospitals; Therefore, perhaps more important question may be: what happens when music and creative expression permeate the entire care environment?

As Degas once said, “Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.” And as Klee put it, “The purpose of art is to make the invisible visible.” Within hospital settings, these ideas resonate deeply. Through music and creativity, patients feel seen, heard, and understood – often in ways clinical care alone cannot provide. This

recognition may well extend to staff too, fostering empathy, mutual understanding, and stronger interpersonal connections.

Looking ahead, the Swansea Bay Arts & Heritage team – and particularly myself as the Music in Health Facilitator – are carefully considering whether to evolve the ‘Musical Hospitals’ programme into *Creative Hospitals*, expanding beyond music to include a wider spectrum of art forms. This development could represent a powerful shift, amplifying the programme’s reach and embedding creativity as a core element of compassionate, person-centred care.

## **With grateful thanks to:**

**Funding Partners:** Arts Council of Wales

**Arts and Heritage Team SBUHB**

**Music Partners:**

BBC NOW

Live Music Now

Music in Hospitals and Care

Welsh National Opera

All Atrium Concert Performers

**At Neath Port Talbot Hospital:**

Ward Managers and NHS Staff on Neuro Rehabilitation, Stroke and F Wards

Visitors, families and carers

**At Tonna Hospital**

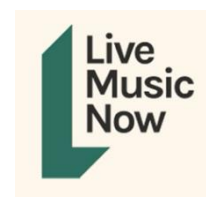
Ward Managers and NHS Staff on Suite 2 and Mother and Baby Wards

Visitors, families and carers

**Everyone who played, sang, shared, smiled, danced, swayed and connected  
through the Musical Hospitals Programme.**

## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A: Live Music Now: NHS Staff Surveys Collected during visits for Musical Hospitals



- Staff descriptions of activity:

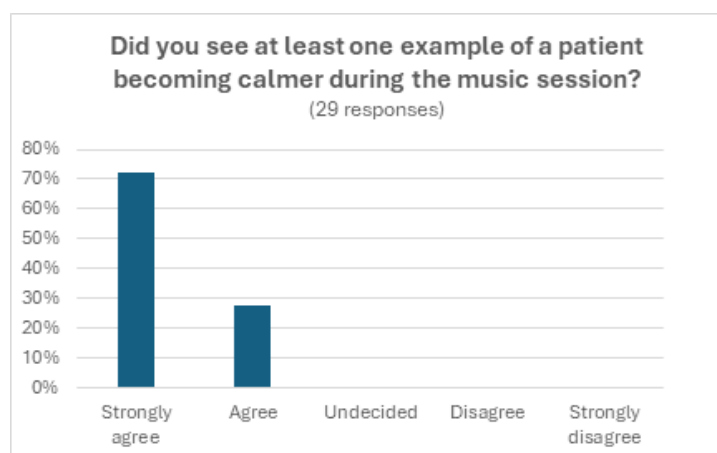


Note: Size of text indicates frequency of use in staff responses.

- Survey responses:

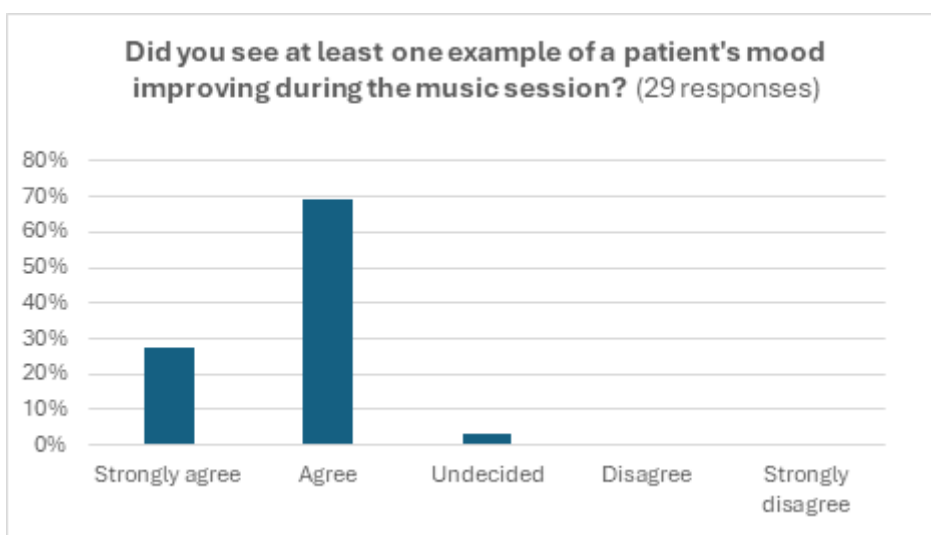
Q: Did you see at least one example of a patient becoming calmer during the music session? (29 responses)

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Strongly agree	21	72%
Agree	8	28%
Undecided	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%



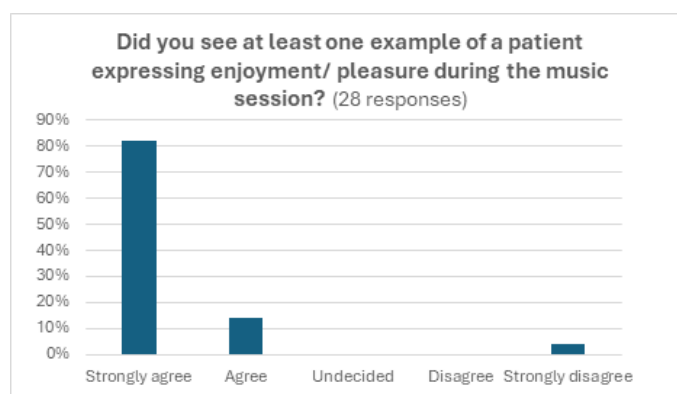
**Q: Did you see at least one example of a patient's mood improving during the music session? (29 responses)**

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Strongly agree	20	28%
Agree	8	69%
Undecided	1	3%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%





**Q: Did you see at least one example of a patient expressing enjoyment/ pleasure during the music session? (28 responses)**

	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Strongly agree	23	82%
Agree	4	14%
Undecided	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	1	4%




## Appendix B: The use of a ward based daily activity programme to reduce violence and aggression towards nursing staff

### The use of a ward based daily activity programme to reduce violence and aggression towards nursing staff

#### Purpose


The purpose of this project was to introduce a daily activity project to lead to a reduction in violence being reported by nursing staff on the Neuro Rehabilitation Unit (NRU). The NRU is a 14 bedded specialist service In Neath Port Talbot Hospital. The unit takes patients with both traumatic and acquired brain injuries. Because of this, unit staff are at risk of physical and verbal assault due to patients having little to no insight into their behaviour. As per **RCN workforce standard 13<sup>1</sup>**, "The nursing workforce is entitled to work in healthy and safe environments". This project was designed to ensure the unit complied with this standard.



#### Method

Data was collected for a 6-week period prior to implementation of the activities. A further 13 weeks post implementation data was collected and the average number of incidents was calculated. During this period, our patient caseload remained the same with very little change in patients ensuring consistency in our results. The following data was collected;

- The number of recorded instances of verbal, physical abuse and wandering recorded on enhanced monitoring booklets
- The number of datixes related to falls, and verbal and physical abuse towards staff.
- The number of additional shifts allocated to HCSWs (bank or substantive) for 1:1 support
- The number of staff on short term, and long-term sick leave.
- The number of PRN medications administered.




Activities were chosen based on patient feedback in the form of a questionnaire, as per the NMC code "Listen to people and respond to their preferences and concerns"<sup>2</sup>. Activities include quizzes, arts and crafts, live musicians, therapy dogs and karaoke. This project required me to develop skills in compassionate leadership to listen and act on feedback from staff, patients and their relatives, as well the motivational leadership for staff to accept a change and to give up an hour a day to the running of these activities. An activity budget was raised through fundraising by patients, relatives and staff.

#### Results

- A 98% decrease in the number of physical assaults, a 99% decrease in the number of verbal assaults reported and a 23% reduction in the number of falls reported through datix.
- A 99% decrease in the number of PRN sedatives administered.
- A 47% decrease in the number of 1:1 shifts required.
- A 54% decrease in the number of HCSWs on sick leave, and a 32% decrease in the number of RNs on sick leave.
- A 129% reduction in the number of verbal assaults, 103% reduction in wandering behaviour and a 149% reduction in the number of physical assaults reported in enhanced observation booklets.

Staff and patients reported an improvement in their wellbeing and patients reported an improvement in their motivation to participate in their rehabilitation. Patient reported outcome measures<sup>3</sup> identified that the activities helped to alleviate boredom, encourage mobility and build social connections with other patients on the unit.



#### Conclusion

The results showed a noticeable improvement in safety on the unit as well as reduction in spending on the unit, with a weekly saving of £2,298.16 on staffing and medication. The results also show the environment is safer for nursing staff. From these figures, it is estimated the unit will save **£9,192.64** a month and **£110,311.68** per year by implementing a daily patient activity programme.

Patient's report higher levels of satisfaction as a result of these activities. Value was measured both in higher patient experiences, and financial savings. Barriers to daily activities are low staffing and ensuring dedicated time on the unit. This could be overcome by using the savings to employ a dedicated activity co-ordinator and a ward activity budget. Further barriers are the loss of the unit's day room due to business continuity incidents, which removes the space used for activities.

<sup>1</sup> RCN Workforce Standards 2021  
<sup>2</sup> NMC The code (2018)  
<sup>3</sup> Value Based Healthcare Delivery, Michael Porter (2012)

Nathan Riddle, Ward Manager Neuro Rehabilitation Unit