



Music and Health: A Review of Research and Practice is a research paper commissioned by Voluntary Arts and produced by Nick Ewbank Associates for BBC Music Day 2019. The paper covers dimensions of Music and Health, including the physiological benefits of music, with specific investigation into music and empathy. Key findings also highlight the value of music participation as an important tool for both personal wellbeing and social cohesion.

Investigation into music and the brain links music to many physiological effects, including: effective attachments in infants; the development of empathy in childhood; the regulation of our moods; and strategies for coping with stress. Research also links music to ameliorating specific health issues, such as dementia and lung health.

Key findings from the paper detail how active engagement in music making has been shown to have more of a positive impact on wellbeing than passive consumption. A dose-response relationship between arts engagement and mental wellbeing is highlighted in Australian researcher Dr Christina Davies's study, which finds that people taking part in recreational creative activities, including music, for at least two hours a week reported a significant increase in their wellbeing.

Aligned with these findings, a person-centred and community-focused approach to health and wellbeing is being invested in through UK health policy, in the form of 'social prescribing'. This is creating an increased role for music and wider arts engagement, and puts primary prevention and support for healthy lifestyles at the heart of health planning.

Music participation promotes personal well-being, and it also builds social cohesion. The paper finds that music can act as a medium of exchange to bridge diverse communities. These findings support the thinking behind BBC partnership projects such as Up For Arts and the Get Creative Festival, both of which aim to encourage people to be more creatively engaged in their local community. Barriers to access in taking part in music-making and other creative activities need to be addressed, as it is groups in less privileged socio-economic groups who tend to be exposed to health inequalities.

Thrive LDN is currently grant aiding Voluntary Arts to produce and deliver three media interventions to support an Up for Arts 'themed year' on creative wellbeing and mental health - produced in alliance with BBC Radio London. One particular project is a documentary that will look at the benefits of live music; to be broadcast on BBC Radio London on Saturday, the 28th September from 8pm. This is timed to tie in with BBC Music Day 2019 which is focusing on the power of music to inspire, bring us together and make a positive impact.

Commenting on the report, Dr Jacqui Dyer MBE, Co-lead of Thrive LDN, said:

"Thrive LDN is pleased to support the publication of 'Music and Health: A Short Review of Research and Practice for BBC Music Day 2019'. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the evidence of the positive impact music has on an individual's health and recognises the power of music as a protective factor for health and wellbeing.

"Thrive LDN is working with Voluntary Arts and their *Up For Arts* collaboration with BBC local radio to raise awareness of the benefits of engagement and participation in music on an individual and community level. We are keen to empower and support all Londoners to use the evidence and practice highlighted in this review to come together and improve outcomes for themselves."

Commenting on the report, Robin Simpson, Chief Executive, Voluntary Arts, said:

"The report, 'Music and Health: A Short Review of Research and Practice for BBC Music Day 2019', makes an important and timely contribution to the debate on the health benefits that come from taking part in music. Everyday participation in music develops learning, improves health and contributes to the enrichment of lives. Voluntary Arts works to celebrate, encourage and champion people expressing themselves creatively in their everyday lives and practising their creativity socially with other people. We are proud to be working with Thrive LDN and the BBC to raise awareness of the health benefits of taking part in music and to encourage more people to engage actively in music as part of their everyday lives."

The paper encourages increased participation for everyone in music or other creative activities. Public agencies should promote engagement in at least two hours a week of music and other creative activities, to sit alongside regular exercise and a healthy diet as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Notes to editors:

Voluntary Arts supports, celebrates and promotes creative cultural activity. It works across the UK and Republic of Ireland to help create an environment where participation in everyday creativity can flourish.

Thrive LDN is a citywide movement to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Londoners. It is supported by the Mayor of London and led by the London Health Board partners.

Nick Ewbank Associates is an innovative consultancy firm delivering creative solutions in the fields of culture, learning, regeneration, wellbeing and social cohesion.

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