

Beyond Conflict and Ukrainian Welcome Centre Music Therapy

IMPACT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Autumn 2023



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FOREWORDS

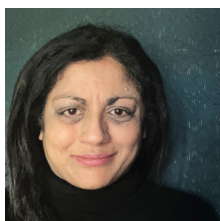


Andriy Marchenko,
Director, Ukrainian Welcome Centre

The Ukrainian Welcome Centre is a London-based Ukrainian community effort to help Ukrainian nationals arriving in Great Britain after being displaced by Russia's war against their country. We are a point of contact for all essential information for their stay in the UK as well as a social hub helping Ukrainians stay connected to their culture and heritage. We help Ukrainians learn English or hone their existing language skills so they can thrive here, and also aim to provide a safe space to switch from the hardships of their situation. This is achieved mostly through their involvement in arts, such as painting and clay sculpting.

To build up on this experience, our long-term partner Edna Fernandes of Beyond Conflict made an original new suggestion: run music therapy classes for Ukrainian refugees. The classes would rather pursue the goal of providing unique mental support. The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, with its expertise in providing music therapy, would oversee the delivery of this unique service from our Centre. Supakarn Nakavisut, a talented student from SRH Hochschule Heidelberg in Germany, was selected to test-run this promising new initiative within a two-month pilot project.

Supakarn showed himself to be perfect for the job from day one. In addition to excellent musical and therapeutic skills, his exceptional enthusiasm, energy and welcoming, open-minded attitude made him very popular with Ukrainian children, teens and adults. We also conducted several classes for the Ukrainian Welcome Centre's staff and volunteers, some of whom are displaced Ukrainians too, and I can personally attest that this type of activity has a powerful impact.



Edna Fernandes,
Executive Director/Co-Founder, Beyond Conflict

Beyond Conflict is the UK mental health charity for victims of war, terrorism and displacement. Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, we have worked with the Ukrainian Welcome Centre to support its incredible work with refugees in London. This project was born out of a discussion after Beyond Conflict staged a charity concert called The Cry, composed by our Ambassador Adrian Snell, in aid of Ukrainian refugees. As a follow up, I spoke to Andriy Marchenko about a music therapy project for some of the Centre's visitors.

Through music, this project aimed to address the refugees' trauma and anxiety and reignite the flame of hopefulness. Thanks to the wonderful Supakarn coming on board as our music therapist for the project, thanks to our music therapist supervisors and mentors Ann Sloboda and Adrian, this project succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. The feedback from participants was so positive and joyful, it clearly demonstrated music therapy can heal minds and restore hope. Thank you to everyone who made this project possible.

FOREWORDS



**Ann Sloboda, Head of Music Therapy,
Guildhall School of Music and Drama; Independent supervisor of the project**

The initial contact came from the director of Beyond Conflict, inquiring about the possibility of setting up some therapeutic music sessions for Ukrainian children attending the Welcome Centre, as some funds had been raised for this purpose. Two possibilities were suggested: First, that a newly qualified music therapist could be paid to undertake a period of pilot sessions.

And the second was that staff from the Guildhall Music Therapy department could apply for an in-house small research grant to undertake and evaluate a pilot of this provision themselves. I had experience of a research trial using group music therapy with adults suffering from PTSD (Carr; Sloboda et al) and envisaged undertaking something similar at UWC.

Investigating this further, it became evident that whilst there was a sense of a general need for this kind of support amongst the community, there was not yet an identified group of people needing this input and no clear routes of referral, so it was difficult to provide the necessary information for a research grant at this stage.

A scoping exercise was required and the director of Beyond Conflict had a contact from a European music therapy training programme who was prepared to do this. It should be acknowledged that the scope of this internship was very wide and ambitious. This was undertaken over August to October, with a very enthusiastic response. The process of referral to music therapy was very loose, in that sessions were advertised and any interested members could attend, so it was not always clear who might attend, or what their needs were. An added challenge was the need for careful use of language, as the participants were likely to be suspicious of the idea of therapy and anxious about the expectations placed on them in sessions.

Supakarn managed this programme with initiative and flexibility, recognising the need to facilitate musical interaction, and to respond to the verbal feedback of the attendees. In the event, the people most interested in using the music sessions were adults, and almost all women as most Ukrainian men over 18 are fighting in the war.



**Adrian Snell, Senior Music Therapist and Arts Therapy Consultant; composer
and Beyond Conflict Ambassador; supervisor of the project**

Earlier this year, out of the blue, I received an email from Supakarn, a student from Thailand studying Music Therapy in Germany. He wanted to know if I could help him find a music therapy placement, a requirement of his course, and an important part of developing the skills needed to practice professionally. In response to my questions concerning his experience so far, and if there were any particular areas of practice he was most drawn to, he spoke about his work with young refugees in the city where he was based. Needless to say, immediately my focus changed, and the words 'Beyond Conflict' were written large in my mind's eye!

Supa quickly confirmed that not only would he be happy to complete his placement in the UK, but that working with Ukrainian refugees under the umbrella of the Welcome Centre and Beyond Conflict would be, almost, a 'dream placement' come true!

The report you are about to read will tell you the rest of the story. But you will see what a wonderful, timely, inspiring collaboration resulted from that unexpected email enquiry.

INTRODUCTION

On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine, triggering a full-scale war and causing the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. As the war continues to escalate, the humanitarian crisis has grown.

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), as of November 2023, 6.2 million Ukrainians have become refugees, 6.5 million more are internally displaced, and around 17.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance.

Refugees have fled into countries across Europe, with close to 170,000 Ukrainians now taking refuge in the UK alone. These people are mostly vulnerable groups of the elderly, women and children who have lost loved ones, home and country and who have been deeply traumatised by the war.

Missile and rocket attacks, together with land invasion by Russia have caused death and destruction to the people of Ukraine. In July 2023, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) confirmed that more than 9,000 civilians, including over 500 children, have been killed and that the real number could be much higher. The majority of those who fled the war are women and children. Many of those who remain behind in Ukraine must endure disrupted energy, food and water supplies, as well as damaged homes and infrastructure.

The Kyiv School of Economics reported in October 2023 the total value of damage to infrastructure in Ukraine as a result of the war stood at \$151 billion in September 2023. Its report said: "In total, 167,200 housing units have been destroyed or damaged as a result of hostilities, comprising 147,800 private houses, 19.1 thousand apartment buildings, and an additional 0.35 thousand dormitories. The regions most severely affected by the destruction of housing stock include Donetsk, Kyiv, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv, Kherson, and Zaporizhia."

Many of those who fled to other countries have no residence to which they can return. As a consequence, the level of anxiety, depression and trauma experienced in the Ukrainian refugee community is profound.

The concert was evidence of how music can bring communities together and facilitate the process of healing

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The Ukrainian Welcome Centre (UWC) at the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in London has been a vital hub for Ukrainian refugees coming to the UK. From the outbreak of the war, UWC has helped thousands of refugees in the capital. It has fielded calls for help on the phone and acted as the beating heart of the Ukrainian community: providing advice, practical help, free classes, mother and toddler groups, English lessons and much more. It has helped organise concerts, fundraising activities, art therapy and its devoted staff are available every day to provide support and solidarity to those in need. In effect, it is a lifeline for displaced Ukrainians.

Beyond Conflict, the UK mental health charity for victims of war, terrorism and displacement, began working to support the Ukrainian refugees in 2022, soon after the outbreak of war. Months after the war began, the charity donated £9,000 to three frontline NGOs offering mental health support to Ukrainians who fled the war. In November 2022, Beyond Conflict collaborated with the Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral and UWC in London to stage a requiem concert in honour of the children who died in Ukraine. The fundraising concert comprised of Ukrainian music as well as a performance of *The Cry*, by Adrian Snell who is an acclaimed composer and Ambassador for Beyond Conflict. In early 2023, Beyond Conflict donated £5,000 to UWC.

Overcoming trauma and stigma

The concert was evidence of how music can bring communities together and facilitate the process of healing. In December 2022 Beyond Conflict Director, Edna Fernandes and UWCs Director, Andriy Marchenko began discussions with the Cathedral about starting a music therapy class for Ukrainian refugees. They believed that music therapy classes could be a way to draw in vulnerable groups and begin the process of healing their trauma. We are grateful to the Cathedral for its support of this programme.

It emerged during the course of developing this programme that music is indeed an effective medium for offering therapy, particularly given the stigma attached to mental health provision in Ukraine. In addition, many Ukrainians have a negative historic association with mental health and control by the state, dating back to when Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union. Often dissidents would be sent to psychiatric facilities. That has led to a legacy of distrust and fear. The music therapy programme





afforded us the opportunity to address trauma in the refugee community in a more approachable and positive framework that overcame some of these negative associations from the past.

Ann Sloboda, Head of Music Therapy at the prestigious Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, was invited to join the programme by Beyond Conflict. She became a valued participant of this project in her spare time as a volunteer. Ms Sloboda has been a guiding light in the programme from the start and the supervisory lead. We are grateful for her input and advice.

Adrian Snell provided additional supervisory support to the programme and was the person who introduced us to its therapist, Supakarn Nakavisut, a Masters music therapy student from Germany, who had already worked with vulnerable populations across the globe. Mr Nakavisut agreed to lead a 10-week pilot study at the UWC, from August through to October 2023.

The aim of all collaborators in this project was to deliver music therapy classes to refugees at the centre, across all age groups. If successful, Beyond Conflict and UWC agreed the Cathedral's refugee centre would aim to take the project forward on an on-going basis, under the supervision of Ms Sloboda.

The pilot was completed in mid October and ended with a celebratory buffet dinner and party at the Ukrainian Welcome Centre. The programme helped around 50

refugees and frontline staff across all age groups. The therapy ranged from group sessions to one-on-one help.

A real impact in the community

The pilot has demonstrated a clear need for such therapy within the refugee community. It has been hugely beneficial to UWC frontline workers who were under pressure from their role supporting refugees. The pilot demonstrated real impact within this community, and as a result, UWC has agreed to take this forward, possibly with the support of Ms Sloboda. Beyond Conflict is delighted that the project and its outcomes will now continue under their leadership and has the scope to be shared with other refugee centres in the future, including those from other countries.

UWC and Beyond Conflict extend our thanks to everyone involved. We thank the Cathedral, Ukrainian Welcome Centre staff, Ms Sloboda, Mr Snell and in particular Mr Nakavisut, who has led this programme with passion, joy and commitment. His leadership of this pilot has been outstanding. We believe this programme provides a valuable roadmap for extending this project into the future.

Mr Nakavisut's report, below, is followed by recommendations and case studies.

OVERVIEW

This project at the Ukrainian Welcome Centre in London was delivered by Mr Supakarn Nakavisut. A music therapy student, Supakarn is an advocate for using music and the creative arts to strengthen communities and empower the individual. From Myanmar to Australia, Thailand, the UK, Nepal, Panama and now in Germany, Supakarn has lived in a multitude of cultures with vastly different beliefs and value systems.

As the founder of the Myanmar Jazz Club, an NGO dedicated to orchestrating concerts, workshops, and events for aspiring musicians in Myanmar, he collaborates with local musicians and other sectors of the industry to create programmes that reflect the values of the community.

From crafting training initiatives for corporations to nurturing grassroots projects, Supakarn's work shares a common theme of using music to unlock the best in individuals and communities.



OBJECTIVES

It is important for local Non-Governmental Organisations in a climate where uncertainty abounds, the deployment of music as an informal tool for information gathering and mental health support emerges as a pragmatic yet underappreciated strategy.

By affording participants the latitude to navigate their own mental health journeys at their own pace, music therapy reframes the process. Here, individuals are welcomed into an evolving community where the act of sharing serves as a catalyst for collective growth. This approach proves especially vital in a cultural context like Ukraine, where the stigma associated with therapy runs deep. It is particularly appropriate for vulnerable groups including children and young people.

The main objectives of the programme were:

- To discern methodically and address the multifaceted needs of the Ukrainian community.
- To identify and leverage the inherent strengths and resources within the community.
- To assess rigorously the feasibility of the Ukrainian Welcome Centre's adoption of music therapy as a long-term solution.
- To construct a database that would serve as a foundation for the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, propelling further initiatives.

METHODS

From the outset in January 2023, UWC, Beyond Conflict and Ms Sloboda discussed the best way to launch the programme in order to be mindful of sensitivities and the stigma attached to mental health support. This discussion continued as the pilot went live in the summer. There were concerns that the inclusion of the term "therapy" might dissuade individuals from joining due to prevalent stigmas around therapy in the community. The title "Music Group" was eventually decided.

The initial step aimed to identify potential participants for the programme. The Ukrainian Welcome Centre launched a promotional campaign over the summer within their network of displaced Ukrainians residing in London. This outreach effort was predominantly executed through social media channels, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. Additionally, posters were strategically placed within the Centre to capture the attention of the local community.

In order to ensure transparency and consent, participants were asked to complete consent forms. These documents not only ensured that participants understood the programme's scope but also sought permission to record audio and video content during the sessions. The consent forms were prepared in both English and Ukrainian to accommodate diverse language preferences.

All people involved in supervising the programme, including the therapist, were DBS checked.

Individuals interested in participating in the programme were able to register online, providing their name and selecting their age group. Later on in the programme, the sessions were opened to frontline workers as well, as they exhibited a real need for support.

MUSIC THERAPY GROUP ANALYTIC AND IMPROVISATION

The method employed in our music therapy program at the Ukrainian Welcome Centre draws inspiration from the Group Analytic approach. This approach was chosen for its suitability in working with a client group we regard as functioning adults who are not diagnostically ill but are confronted with extraordinary emotional, psychological, practical, and economic challenges.

This method, as developed by Foulkes and Bion (Towes, 1997*), places a strong emphasis on empowering the group to develop its unique identity while taking ownership and responsibility for the group's dynamics. At the same time, it establishes essential boundaries to contain the therapeutic process.

In this approach, the therapist assumes the role of an attentive and empathetic listener, responding musically to guide the group in shaping their spontaneous contributions into a cohesive piece of music. This musical interaction serves as a powerful medium for self-expression, developing a sense of unity and collaboration within the group. Furthermore, in the context of an ongoing therapy group, this method provides a safe environment where participants can explore differences and confront challenges. This includes discussions about musical tastes and choices, as well as broader issues relevant to their experiences.

In contrast to the potentially hostile external environment these refugees may face, our therapy sessions encourage open dialogue, where doubts and differing views can be expressed without fear through a supportive and nurturing atmosphere for emotional and psychological healing.

*Towse, E. (1997). *Group Analysis and Improvisation: A Musical Perspective*. *British Journal of Music Therapy*, 11(2), 51-55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135945759701100204>

PROGRAMME LOGISTICS

The availability of the music therapist for the full 10-week duration of his residency in London allowed for a flexible schedule designed by the participants themselves. This approach accommodated the preferences of participants regarding the frequency of the sessions while also considering the participants' availability. Given that the programme coincided with the summer break, adjustments to session times were necessary to account for the return of children to school. This shift had

implications for both child participants and their caregivers. After careful deliberation, it was decided by the Cathedral to conduct the music therapy sessions in the second-floor concert hall at the Ukrainian Welcome Centre. This venue boasted ample space, excellent lighting, favourable acoustics, and a grand piano. The instruments utilized during the sessions were acquired through a combination of second-hand purchases, new acquisitions, and generous donations. Some instruments were also borrowed from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. A detailed list of instruments was provided to the music therapist's supervisors.

To facilitate communication about programme updates, a WhatsApp group was created. Participation in this group was exclusive to those who had signed the consent form.

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Each session was documented by the music therapist. This documentation encompassed written records as well as selective audio and video recordings with the participants' explicit permission. The process also involved debriefing sessions with co-facilitators and the collection of diverse observations to provide a comprehensive record.

Given the sensitive and psychological nature of the work with a vulnerable population, it was imperative to establish supervisory support for the music therapist. Regular supervision meetings with qualified music therapists were incorporated into the programme's framework. Ann Sloboda, Head of Music Therapy at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Adrian Snell, Beyond Conflict Ambassador and Art Therapy Consultant at Three Way School, Bath, generously agreed to alternate online supervision on a weekly basis throughout the programme's duration.

The content and structure of the programme drew from three primary sources:

1. the specific needs of the community
2. the intuition and expertise of the music therapist
3. guidance and suggestions from the supervisors.

This dynamic process allowed the music therapist to adapt activities, session durations, activity leaders, questions and topics in response to the evolving needs and dynamics within the sessions.

PROGRAMME EVALUATION

To gauge the programme's impact on participants, a post-programme survey was administered, ensuring complete anonymity for respondents. This survey incorporated both quantitative data and open-ended qualitative questions, following a validated format. Participants who displayed high levels of engagement and participation were invited to participate in interviews conducted by a Centre staff member.

These interviews aimed to elicit insights into what aspects of the programme resonated with participants and the benefits they derived. Furthermore, staff members, including the Centre's director, were consulted to provide observations on the programme's impact on service users and its influence on the overall atmosphere within the Centre. Beyond Conflict's Director also interviewed some of the

frontline staff that took part in the programme to elicit feedback at the end. These collated interviews helped provide a series of useful case studies for the pilot. Some of these are attached in the report. Tsiris, G., Spiro, N., Coggins, O., & Zubala, A. (2020). *The Impact Areas Questionnaire (IAQ): A Music Therapy Service Evaluation Tool*. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v20i2.2816>

RESULTS

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

Over the course of the 10-week program, distinct groups materialised, comprising an adult group, individual sessions for adolescents, and sessions for staff and volunteers. The adult group participated in 14 sessions, each lasting between two to three hours, with an average attendance of six participants per session, ranging from three to 11.

Nine individual sessions were dedicated to adolescents, while staff and volunteers engaged in three sessions, typically attended by three to five participants. Notably, 98% of programme participants were female (as most men remain in Ukraine to fight in the war), encompassing the adult group, staff, and adolescents. The age range of the adult group participants spanned from 18 to 82, with an average duration of eight months since relocation. A common thread among attendees with consistently high participation rates was their strong connection to music.

A total of 75 hours of music therapy were provided in the 10-week period. The scheduling of sessions was attuned to participants' requests. Adults received two to three-hour sessions on both Tuesdays and Thursdays, while adolescent individual sessions were held initially on Wednesday mornings, transitioning to afternoons to accommodate the school schedule. Staff sessions were scheduled as per their availability. After witnessing its positive impact on the adult group, a member of the staff expressed the desire to also benefit from the programme. In response, three sessions were designed with a focus on structured activities aimed at building team cohesion and addressing the challenges encountered in their line of work.

While participant attendance varied, each session provided valuable input for crafting a diverse array of activities, often centred on music, followed by reflective discussions or vice versa. The transformative shift from the first to the last session was evident in the increasing depth of participant engagement, as they gradually opened up and shared more freely.

The programme also unearthed numerous strengths and resources within the group. Early on, individuals with diverse leadership skills emerged, with two piano players leading group singing activities, a participant with a background in psychotherapy and yoga instruction leading relaxation sessions, and a folk singer guiding the group through traditional Ukrainian folk songs and vocal warm-up exercises. Beyond Conflict connected the programme to the Ukrainian national opera singer Maryana Bodnar, who generously conducted online vocal lessons from Kyiv.

REFLECTIONS AND POST-PROGRAMME INTERVIEW

The post-programme assessment identified nine primary needs within the community, gathered from individual reflections during sessions and post-programme interviews. These identified needs served as valuable insights into the programme's impact:

Adults

1. Facilitating Free Expression: Many women in the adult group found solace in the Centre's environment, allowing them to express themselves freely. This need for a safe space to open up and communicate indicates a demand

for platforms that allows for self-expression, particularly for newcomers struggling with social integration.

2. Enhancing Emotional Regulation: Participants shared their struggles with uncertainty in their lives and found music to be a source of empowerment and emotional regulation. This suggests a need for therapeutic interventions or coping mechanisms to help individuals deal with stress and regain a sense of control.

3. Promoting Social Relating: The Centre's sessions successfully dissolved differences among participants and promoted open discussion. This highlights the need for inclusive activities and spaces that encourage dialogue and mutual understanding among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

4. Enhancing Social Functioning: Many participants expressed feelings of helplessness and devaluation due to their inability to contribute meaningfully to their homeland's situation. Addressing this need involves creating opportunities for community involvement and integration, ultimately helping individuals find a sense of purpose.

Youth

1. Supporting Social Bonding: The absence of male role models due to the men's involvement in the war disrupts family dynamics and impacts children's development. There's a need for support systems and activities that help children bond, engage in meaningful interactions, and cope with the absence of their fathers.

2. Supporting Identity Formation: The children, going through a period of critical identity development, face challenges in adjusting to a new culture. They need guidance and support in forming their identities in the context of their new surroundings.

3. Enhancing Emotional Awareness: Children often struggle to articulate their emotions, making it crucial to address this need through therapeutic interventions and activities that encourage emotional expression.

Staff

1. Promoting Community Building and Communication: Internal communication among staff members is sometimes neglected due to the heavy workload, affecting the efficiency and quality of services provided. There's a need for strategies and activities to improve teamwork and foster better communication, ensuring that information is shared effectively among the team.

2. Enhancing Self-awareness and Coping Strategies: Staff and volunteers reports experiences close to burnout, necessitating sessions to help them cope with high-stress situations. These sessions should address burnout issues and provide effective coping strategies to maintain staff well-being and the quality of services offered.

Post-programme interviews were conducted with participants who demonstrated high levels of engagement to gather insights into the programme's effectiveness and the motivations driving their consistent attendance. They described the programme as a source of healing, emotional well-being, and stress relief, allowing them to breathe properly, relax and reconnect with their inner selves. The sessions supported self-reflection, personal growth, and a sense of community.



FEEDBACK AND EMERGING THEMES

Feedback was thematically analysed, with the following emerging:

1. Positive impact and benefits of the programme (20 mentions): Many participants expressed their enjoyment of the classes and the positive impact on their well-being. The programme was considered useful and therapeutic, helping participants manage anxiety and stress. Participants experienced personal growth, feeling calmer, and better connected with themselves.
2. Appreciation for the instructor and the role of music in communication (17 mentions): Participants praised the instructor for creating a positive and supportive atmosphere. Music was seen as a unique form of communication, allowing participants to express themselves and connect non-verbally.
3. Community and connection (10 mentions): Participants emphasised the sense of community and connection that the programme engendered. They valued the interaction and support from others in the group.
4. Encouragement for ongoing classes and recommendations (8 mentions): Participants expressed a desire for the programme to continue, highlighting its positive impact. They recommended the programme to others, including friends and acquaintances.
5. Personal growth and self-reflection (6 mentions): Participants described how the programme allowed them to explore their inner selves, improve self-awareness, and build confidence.
6. Variety of musical expression (5 mentions): Participants enjoyed the freedom to choose and experiment with various musical instruments. They appreciated the balance between freestyle and structured approaches to the sessions.
7. Exploration of emotions through music (5 mentions): The programme was valued for its ability to help participants express their emotions and feelings through music. Participants

found it effective for overcoming stress and worries.

8. The therapeutic role of music (3 mentions): Some participants expressed that music therapy was more effective for them than traditional therapy with a professional psychologist.

9. The desire for structured approaches (2 mentions): A couple of participants mentioned the potential benefit of having a more structured approach in addition to the "going with the flow" effect.

10. Spirituality and inspiration (2 mentions): Some participants mentioned an increase in spirituality and feeling inspired by the programme.

11. New experiences and broadened horizons (1 mention): A participant mentioned that they received a new experience and expanded their vision through the programme.

The survey feedback from the participants was also overwhelmingly positive, scoring full satisfaction for almost all domains of the questionnaire. The domains of the project are sequenced here from most satisfied to least. Top scoring domains were the programme:

1. provided an opportunity to experience music
2. provided a positive/creative experience
3. provided a distraction from everyday life experiences
4. supported my relaxation
5. helped me to develop some communication skills (verbal/nonverbal)
6. provided me with emotional support
7. introduced me to new skills
8. enhanced my quality of life
9. increased my confidence
- 9). enabled me to exercise my social skills and interactions
- 10) increased my motivation.

SUMMARY

In this programme, despite the initial lack of clear-cut therapeutic objectives due to its exploratory nature, there were a number of notable outcomes by the end. These achievements included the identification of community needs, the discovery of community strengths, and the recognition of community leaders. Beyond these core objectives, the programme expanded in scope, giving rise to additional goals, such as the creation of a tailored programme for the Centre's staff and volunteers. However, it is important to note that participation rates fluctuated throughout the 10-week program, which can be attributed, in part, to a misunderstanding among some early attendees who anticipated traditional music lessons. Those who persisted found significant value in the reflective sessions, offering valuable insights for potential improving services. This nuanced journey underscored the need for adaptable and community-responsive goals.

STRENGTHS

Despite its low-cost nature, made possible by the music therapist's generous volunteered time, the programme sustained a 10-week run, supported by funding from the Ukrainian Welcome Centre and Beyond Conflict. The flexibility of time was central to the programme's success, enabling it to adjust its pace and tone to align with the community's evolving mental health journey. Additionally, the programme accommodated individuals with varying levels of fluency in English and created a culture of acceptance and mutual respect through music. Within the sessions, there was no pressure for participants to share their experiences, and they had the freedom to engage with music or simply listen. This unique approach allowed discussions to flow organically, minimizing the risk of re-traumatisation.

Furthermore, the programme effectively nurtured a sense of community, promoting group cohesion and shared expression. In this environment, music played a special role, offering moments of unity and harmony, while also embracing dissonance and individual expressions, creating a safe space for diverse forms of emotional expression. This space was a great equaliser, where participants from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds were all equally valued in the collaborative act of making music.

Another strength of the programme was that it could identify and empower leaders within the community. Even though everyone had a role to play in facilitating the dynamics of the group, certain individuals had the experience, capability and motivation to take on leading the group with their own activities or instructions. This not only helped alleviate the responsibility of the music therapist but also, showed the community that they had inherent value and could take action in towards their own growth. This was evidenced by the fact that one person taking charge of an activity opened the door for multiple participants to muster up the courage to display their own leadership style.

The adaptability of the music programme also meant that it was possible to develop a programme for the staff as soon as requested. The programme could be tailored for the specific needs of the programme staff and coping strategies and self-awareness techniques could be understood and implemented in a open and enjoyable manner.

LIMITATIONS

As the programme neared its conclusion, participants' reflections deepened, shedding light on the need for extended process work. The language barrier between the therapist and participants remained a persistent challenge, often limiting discussions between therapist and participants to surface-level exploration, although a translator was available for some sessions. When full translation support was available, the topics became more in-depth.

Given the unpredictable attendance, planning and preparation for sessions focused on process work became increasingly challenging. The absence of clear pre-programme objectives due to the pilot's exploratory nature also meant that comprehensive data for assessing the program's success was unavailable. Furthermore, addressing resistance to therapy in the Ukrainian cultural context was an on-going challenge. Many participants were initially hesitant due to cultural stigmas, emphasising the importance of flexibility in therapeutic approaches.

While some participants did an exit questionnaire, there was no entry questionnaire to use as a baseline because of the fluid nature of the sessions, with many people dropping in and out, depending on their schedules etc.

SUSTAINABILITY

Ensuring the programme's sustainability hinges on securing funding for a dedicated music therapist. While the initial programme benefitted from the unique availability of the volunteer therapist, future therapists may not have the same level of flexibility, potentially affecting session frequency based on budget constraints. Expanding the programme's reach to a wider audience could be achieved through targeted advertising and outreach to a broader network of Ukrainian refugees in London. Notably, some participants expressed a keen interest in bringing music therapy to Ukraine, where psychological support is desperately needed. This could involve the implementation of training programmes for individuals with strong leadership qualities who are willing to introduce music therapy to address pressing psychological issues in Ukraine, thus bridging the mental health gap and increasing capacity on the ground.

Some participants expressed a keen interest in bringing music therapy to Ukraine, where psychological support is desperately needed

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this project addressed a critical and complex challenge, offering insights into the significant impact of music therapy in a unique context. The programme demonstrated its efficacy in a setting where therapy and mental well-being support were marked by cultural stigma.

By redefining the focus of the programme, it provided a platform for the community and frontline workers to explore their mental health needs at their own pace, fostering a sense of healing and self-discovery within a culture that had its own beliefs about personal growth. The project excelled in identifying community needs, harnessing inherent strengths, and evaluating the feasibility of music therapy within the Centre.

Its adaptability and inclusive approach allowed individuals from diverse backgrounds to find solace, emotional regulation, and a sense of belonging. While facing limitations such as language barriers and variable attendance, the project revealed essential insights into potential directions for improvement.

To ensure its sustainability, securing funding for a dedicated music therapist is paramount, along with expanding the programme's outreach to a broader audience, including the prospect of bringing music therapy to Ukraine to address critical psychological needs. In this endeavour, the journey continues. Hope was a common theme within the sessions and this programme was about how to rebuild hope.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It became clear as the pilot continued that some participants needed further mental health support. The sessions opened up emotions which required follow-up, so it was decided that going forward the most pressing recommendation is to add a referral pathway to the programme to direct those who need it to get additional professional help. Perhaps this can be done with the next therapist and the Ukrainian Welcome Centre team.

2. Similarly, it would be useful to provide an information pack or list of signposting helpline numbers and organisations

to the refugees taking part to allow them to find help privately should they need it. For example, the Royal College of Psychiatrists has the following <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/international/humanitarian-resources/asylum-seeker-and-refugee-mental-health>

3. Regular mental health support sessions for frontline workers at the Welcome Centre would be beneficial, given the stressful nature of their jobs.

4. Exploration of extending this project to other refugee centres in the UK.



This project addressed a critical and complex challenge, offering insights into the significant impact of music therapy in a unique context

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CASE STUDIES

Here is a sample of the feedback via case studies of people who took part in the programme.

Alexandra

Alexandra, 18, volunteer and university student

"I did around four or five sessions including one special one for volunteers. The music therapy sessions helped me relax and made me engage with people in a more positive and different way. Silly things like banging those drums really helped me. I love music but I'm not musical. I knew I was stressed and thought this would be like in-depth therapy. But it was prefaced with playing music and allowed me to express myself. Sometimes talking by itself can make you more stressed and make you feel worse. So for me, this was a better way.

"It opened up talk in the group about our shared experiences: stress, life, our work. It made us realise we are not alone in feeling something. It helps and it is important to know what others feel too. It breaks down barriers."

"Music therapy may have helped me to be more confident. The music masks the therapy."

Alexandra's suggestion for next time:

"A referral pathway would be useful. Not everyone has catharsis inside the session. Some like me think about things afterwards. So a follow up system would be helpful."

Korobka

Korobko, visitor to UWC. Attended with daughter Leila

"The music sessions with Supa were useful for me and my daughter."

Of course I enjoyed it. Not only did I, but my daughter Leila as well enjoyed it so much. Leila could touch the world of music while playing, dancing and singing. She developed new skills and trusted the process. Leila did not want to miss a lesson and was always happy to come back to the Centre. As for me, I analysed my life during our sessions. It did help with the stress and worries we go through."

"The sessions were healing to our souls. They distracted us from the reality of our country Ukraine and we managed to listen to our inner needs."

Korobko's recommendations for next time:

"Just do not stop doing what you are doing!"

Ohla

Ohla, 48, frontline worker at the UWC

"I really enjoyed it. I like music and I like trying new things, especially if they can change things for the better and are therapeutic. Music therapy was a chance to relieve my stress. The Centre's staff have been on the acute frontline since the war and we've not had time for ourselves. The classes were really good for getting things off my chest, for releasing a huge amount of stress and burden.

"Before I attended, my chest felt tight and closed. I could not breathe. Our work gave us no opportunity to breathe deeply, to exhale, stop, think and process everything. After the classes, I felt a physical as well as mental change. It was easier to cope with the stress of the job as a result.

"After the war started in Ukraine, I was so tense. This has been a great help to me physically and emotionally. The group was a space to breathe, share our worries but also share fun and laughter. I saw one lady crying with happiness in a session, she was so emotional and happy."

"I am now more aware of my stress. I can now manage my stress. It was 1000% worth it."

Ohla's suggestions for next time:

"We need more information in the first class of the programme. We also need to consider what time is easiest for visitors to allow them to take part. Weekends may be best or in the evening. Lastly, we need to do this in a big room, with light and space and windows. That is very important."

Olena

Olena, visitor to UWC

"I enjoyed classes a lot and tried not to miss any session. The Music Therapy is amazing. I find it very useful. Emotionally, mentally and physically – my mind and body were relaxed during classes."

"I liked Supa most of all! His desire to find a key to everyone. I liked that I could choose and play any instrument, according to how I feel today. The space created was extraordinary! I trusted the universe and followed my instincts during our sessions."

I am inspired that Supa plays any instrument and that in a way brought harmony to our sessions, he is a great leader we all wanted to follow! I joined the sessions while upset a few times and while practicing it helped me to overcome the stress and let it out through music and happy tears."

"I always felt a bouquet of beautiful feelings when leaving the Centre after the sessions! Music therapy sessions are more effective for me than therapy with a professional psychologist."

Olena's recommendations for next time:

"I liked the 'going with the flow' effect, but sometimes I think following the plan could also be interesting." She has recommended this project to others.

Kateryna

Kateryna, visitor to UWC

"Supa created a super positive vibration and I felt his full support and presence through each session. He helped me to express my words through music. The programme is very useful and very important for people who are seeking ways to overcome their fears and problems. It was an eye-opener for me. There is actually a way to go through a therapy through music."

"I loved that we could express our day to day feelings not through words, but the music. I really liked that we could choose any instrument and experiment with it. I also enjoyed that we could show through music each other's character."

"It helped me tremendously and I wish we could continue the sessions. I became calmer and started hearing myself better."

Kateryna's improvements for next time:

"I think that even more people joining the session could make it interesting." She has already recommended it to other people.

IMPACT REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Beyond Conflict and Ukrainian Welcome Centre
Music Therapy Pilot Project

2023

Website for donations and more information

www.beyond-conflict.co.uk

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