



CHILTERN MUSIC THERAPY

STAMMA MUSIC PROJECT REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BRITISH
STAMMERING ASSOCIATION

STAMMA



CHILTERN
MUSIC THERAPY

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REPORT SUMMARY

This report summarises the 10 week online music therapy group with STAMMA and Chiltern Music Therapy. The project was funded by the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund. The group was run by Music Therapist Laura Al-Bandar from Chiltern Music Therapy and supported by George Somers from STAMMA. The 10 sessions took place online via zoom in March 2021 till June 2021 on Friday afternoons.

- 16 members accessed the group over the 10 week period
- 8 service users became regular attendees of the group (60-90% attendance)
- The sessions took place online during a UK lockdown due to the Covid Pandemic
- Group members reported that they valued the social space, being able to connect with others who stammer, overcoming fears of using their voices and engaging in an enjoyable activity
- A group recording project was created and shared.

AIMS

Aims of the group included:

1. To offer a space to connect with others and reduce isolation.
2. To support well-being and lift mood.
3. To develop enjoyment in using their singing and speaking voices.



"Singing helps with my communication skills and is a good way of meeting new people. "

Group member

GROUP STRUCTURE

Sessions usually started with a check-in and warm-up activity. Some singing exercises focussing on oral motor skills were included, but primarily these were turned into games or combined with cognitive exercises so that an element of humour and fun would keep it motivating. Other focussed activities included 'sentence/word of the week' where group members shared a word or phrase that they struggled with that week, and this was put into a silly song which everybody wrote the lyrics together as a way of overcoming this word. Singing and listening to songs was also a regular part of the sessions and enabled members to participate more freely.

Opportunities for socialising and sharing stories, thoughts and feelings were incorporated and were reported to be a very important part of the sessions for many group members as this helped them to feel free of judgement and validate their experiences of having a stammer.

To ensure an inclusive space, group members were encouraged to engage in the activities and discussions in whatever way they felt comfortable, whether this was with their stammer voices, using the chat function on zoom or just listening to others. Some songs were adapted through changes in key and tempo to be more inclusive, and at times the group were directed in strategies such as timing their breathing so that they could join in more easily.

In the last few weeks, one participant suggested that the group could engage in a recording project. The song 'This Is Me' from The Greatest Showman was chosen, and those who felt comfortable to participate recorded themselves singing at home on their phones. These individual recordings were left unedited and were combined to create one group recording. The group were asked to chose words that they would use to describe themselves ("what makes me, me?"), and these words accompanied the song in a video which the group watched together in the final session. Hearing each other as a group for the first time was a powerful experience, and recording themselves helped some members to overcome emotional barriers in accepting their voices.

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"I have been taken
out of my comfort
zone and encouraged
cross an invisible
line."

Group member

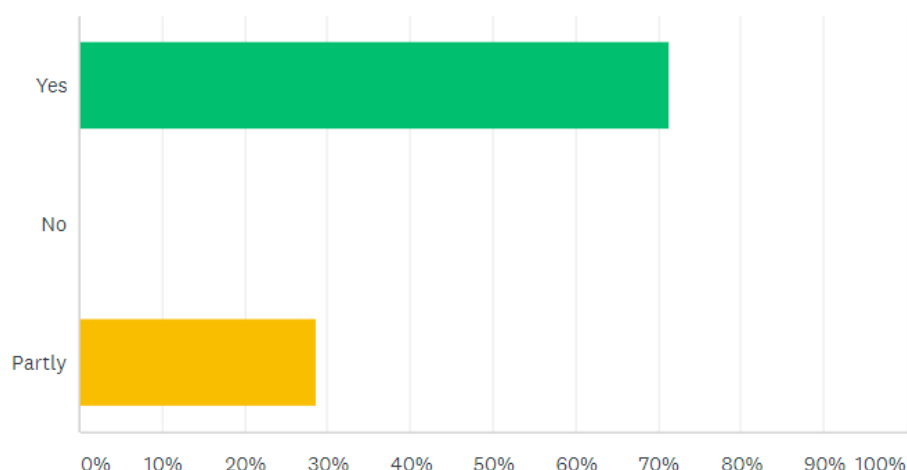
PROJECT DATA

Group members were asked to complete a questionnaire at the start and end of the 10 weeks of music therapy sessions. Findings show:

- 71% members achieved their goals, and 29% partly achieved their goals
- There was a high level of reported enjoyment when using their singing voices (86-84%)
- There was an increase in reported enjoyment of using their speaking voices (52-59%)

Thinking back to what you were hoping to get from these sessions, do you feel you have achieved your goals?

Answered: 7 Skipped: 1



"I have really enjoyed the sessions and getting to know other people who either stammer or who have a relative who has a stammer "

Group member



"Being allowed to join these singing sessions have meant the world to me. To be able to sing without having to care about the quality of my voice was wonderful "

Group member

CONCLUSIONS

STAMMA Music was a popular group with high attendance and positive feedback. Having the sessions on zoom meant that more people were able to access sessions and felt less intimidating for some members as they could keep their microphones off. Although the type of activities that was possible was limited in this format, the group enjoyed engaging in creative ways to participate and valued the social experience of singing together.

A mixture of responses were collected in regard to session frequency, with some people saying they would prefer to have less regular sessions and some people wanting more input, but with a consensus that they would like more sessions again in the future. Members reported that this was a positive, feel-good way to end the week, especially during COVID lockdown restrictions when social isolation and mental health difficulties was heightened.

It is recommended that further music therapy group sessions could be offered again in the future, either online or in person.

AUTHOR



Laura Al-Bandar
Music Therapist

Laura completed her MA in Music Therapy at Roehampton University in 2015 following from studying Music and Sound Recording BMus (Tonmeister) at the University of Surrey. Laura has worked with children and adults with a range of identities and diagnoses including neurodisability, learning disabilities and mental health illnesses. She is also our Inclusion Lead and Children and Young People Services Lead.

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