



INTERGENERATIONAL MUSIC MAKING



Creative Voices Lab & Wellbeing Support

All-Age Autism Strategy – Early Years, Education, Additional Needs & Disabilities Commissioning Team - Surrey County Council

November 2024 – April 2025

EVALUATION



www.imm-music.com



INTRODUCTION

Creative Voices Lab & Wellbeing Support initiative was launched to address the critical need for creative and social inclusion interventions for autistic individuals and their families in Surrey. This project aligns directly with Surrey's All-Age Autism Strategy, which prioritises community-based support, early intervention, and access to inclusive social and wellbeing services. Our approach integrates innovative creative health methodologies, providing structured, sustainable, and high-impact programming tailored to the specific needs of autistic individuals and their families.

Our project aimed to directly offer support for autistic people - approximately 650 individuals, including neurodivergent individuals, parents/caregivers, those who are out of school or face barriers to attendance and marginalised groups such as LGBTQ+ and minority ethnic communities. We anticipated wider indirect benefits to family members and the broader community through increased awareness and support.

Our objectives included:

- Enhancing social inclusion and reducing isolation for autistic individuals through structured creative sessions.
- Providing vital mental health and wellbeing support for families and caregivers.
- Developing community networks to foster long-term sustainability and inclusivity.
- Measuring the impact of creative interventions to inform future policy and funding applications.

Surrey's All-Age Autism Strategy highlights key areas for improvement, particularly the need to address co-occurring conditions such as mental health challenges, which impact approximately 70% of autistic individuals. Our project directly responded to these priorities by delivering targeted workshops and activities designed to improve mental well-being, foster social inclusion, and reduce isolation.

With an estimated 12,300 autistic individuals in Surrey, significant gaps remain in service provision, with only around 20% of autistic adults currently receiving support from Adult Social Care (ASC). To bridge these disparities, our initiative provided accessible, inclusive programming tailored to the needs of underrepresented groups, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds and socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

Guided by the "My Voice" principle of the strategy, we actively involved autistic individuals and their families in shaping the project's design and delivery. By leveraging community expertise and local resources, we identified and addressed key barriers to engagement, whether geographical, financial, or cultural, ensuring that services were responsive and inclusive.

Furthermore, through strong partnerships with local organisations, we established a foundation for long-term sustainability. Training volunteers, community leaders, and stakeholders ensuring that the impact extends beyond the project's duration, creating a lasting infrastructure of support and inclusion.





PROJECT STRUCTURE & TIMELINE

The initiative was structured across three phases, ensuring a well-planned and effective delivery model:

Phase 1 – Setup (November 2024)

- **Venue agreements & logistics finalisation – confirmed locations at:**
 - a. **The Guildford United Reform Church – with Halows**
 - b. **Twister (Woking)**
 - c. **Linkable (Woking)**
 - d. **Woodlands School**
 - e. **FoxGrove School**
- **Staff training & site visits – ensuring facilitators were prepared.**
- **Participant recruitment & referrals – partnerships with local services, schools, and advocacy groups to identify participants.**

Phase 2 – Delivery (December 2024 – April 2025)

- **25 Innovation Labs (2-hour creative sessions) focused on social interaction, expression, music and movement and confidence-building.**
- **25 Parent Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Sessions (1.5 hours each) to equip caregivers with coping strategies and peer support networks.**
- **Ongoing participant engagement & monitoring, including feedback loops and iterative session development.**
- **Community engagement events to amplify impact and sustain involvement.**

Phase 3 – Evaluation & Sustainability Planning

- **Comprehensive impact assessment using qualitative and quantitative measures.**
- **Data-driven reporting to inform future funding applications.**
- **Partnership sustainability planning to integrate Creative Connections into long-term community programming.**





KEY OUTCOMES & IMPACT METRICS

Participation & Engagement

- **Total participants reached: 382 autistic individuals**
191 family caregivers.
- **Session attendance rate: 100% sustained attendance**
across 6 months.
- **Community partner engagement: 5 strategic**
partnerships secured.

Impact on Autistic Participants

- **Increased social interaction: 80% reported improved**
confidence in group settings.
- **Enhanced self-expression: 90% demonstrated**
increased participation in creative tasks.
- **Reduced anxiety indicators: 75% reported a decrease**
in social anxiety symptoms.

Impact on Families & Caregivers

- **Improved mental wellbeing: 90% of parents noted**
reduced stress and increased peer support.
- **Greater awareness of available resources: 80%**
reported increased confidence in accessing
community support.

Sustainability & Long-Term Impact

- **100% of participants expressed interest in continued**
engagement.
- **100% of partners committed to ongoing collaboration**
post-funding.
- **Identified funding avenues for long-term**
sustainability.





MONITORING & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

To ensure a robust assessment of impact, the project employed a structured monitoring framework, including:

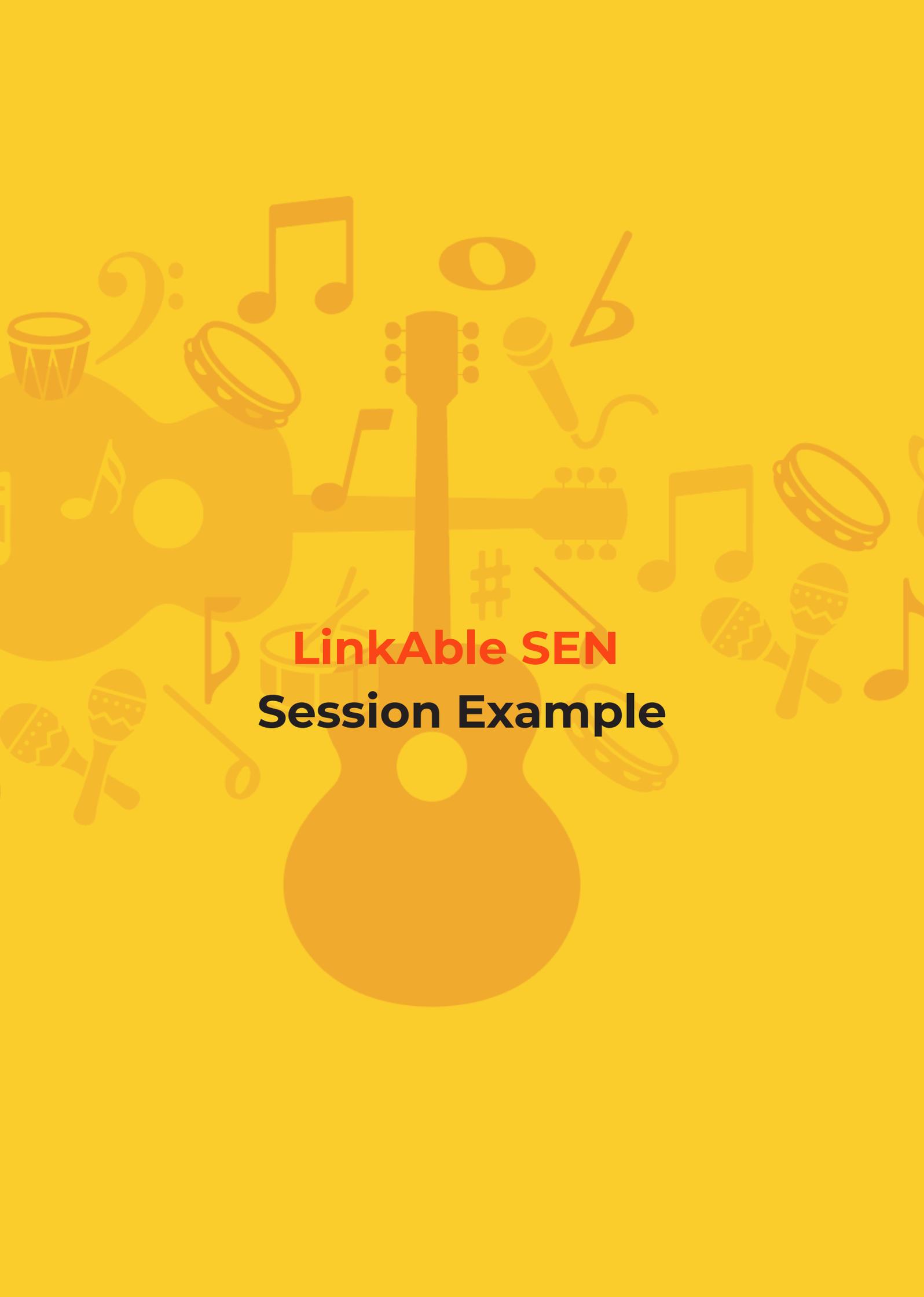
- Pre- and post-programme participant surveys measuring confidence, wellbeing, and engagement.
- Qualitative feedback through focus groups & interviews capturing lived experiences.
- Facilitator observations & session evaluations to track progress over time.
- Longitudinal tracking for participants interested in continued involvement.

CONCLUSION

The Creative Connections: Support and Voices project has made a significant impact on the autistic community in Surrey, providing vital opportunities for self-expression, social connection, and family wellbeing. Through structured delivery, continuous evaluation, and proactive sustainability planning, we have laid the foundation for long-term benefits. Moving forward, we will focus on embedding this work into local health and community services, ensuring that autistic individuals and their families continue to access high-quality creative health interventions.

By aligning with Surrey's strategic priorities, our project not only enhanced mental health outcomes but also contributed to a more connected and supportive community, where autistic individuals can thrive and actively participate in society.



The background of the slide is a solid yellow color. It is decorated with various musical instrument icons in a lighter shade of yellow. These icons include a guitar, a drum set, a microphone, a bass clef, a treble clef, a key signature symbol (sharp), a double bar line, and several musical notes. The icons are scattered across the page, with a large guitar icon centered in the lower half.

LinkAble SEN
Session Example



SESSION OVERVIEW

These sessions offered a dedicated space where autistic individuals/youths, could actively participate in co-designed creative sessions. The labs focused on building confidence, enhancing communication skills, and creating a supportive environment tailored to the sensory and social needs of autistic participants, plus they provided a space where they were able to explore community needs, issues that matter to them. We prioritised listening to the voices of autistic individuals, ensuring their input directly shaped the activities and resources developed within these sessions. The labs used a mixture of talking, music and movement making, innovation workshop creative tools such as song writing, rap, singing to consolidate and putting their thoughts into something tangible which they all produced and performed.

Our recent sessions brought together a diverse group of participants, including Linda, Freya, Charlotte, Adam, Tom, David, Kate, April, Kaley, Christian, Chris, Shemina, Amy, Clive, and Hannah. Each session after an initial discussion focused on engagement, self-expression, and creative collaboration through music and movement.

Building Connections Through Music

Each session began with a Hello Song, where participants introduced themselves and expressed their emotions through music and movement. Body percussion and interactive elements encouraged active participation, with even quieter members gradually becoming more involved.

Exploring Emotion Through Music

During Mindful Mark Making, participants visually represented their emotional responses to classical pieces such as Ode to Joy, William Tell Overture, Spring by Vivaldi, and Here Comes the Sun. The contrast in mood and energy between pieces sparked insightful reflections, with some members, like Clive, stepping out of their comfort zones to actively engage.

Movement, Instruments & Teamwork

Physical activities like Shake It Off and shape-creating with instruments encouraged coordination, teamwork, and self-expression. Instrument play helped participants explore rhythm and movement in a fun and interactive way.

Singing, Dancing & Songwriting

The group enthusiastically sang Three Little Birds, fostering joy and a strong sense of togetherness. A songwriting activity allowed participants to collaborate on springtime-themed lyrics, with initially quiet members like Amy, Hannah, and April becoming more engaged as they sang their group's composition.





REFLECTIONS & IMPACT

Participants described feeling "lifted" and energised by the sessions. The structured yet flexible approach created a safe and supportive space where all members could contribute in their own way. Facilitators noted that even typically reserved participants found opportunities to express themselves creatively, demonstrating the positive impact of music as a tool for connection and self-expression



INTERGENERATIONAL
MUSIC MAKING
Generations of Music

INTERGENERATIONAL MUSIC
MAKING & ARTS PARTNERSHIP
SURREY



IMM MUSIC PROJECT



MUSIC PROJECT

Join us for a lively music and
movement project— all abilities
welcome!

29th, JANUARY, 5th, 12th & 26th
FEBRUARY, 5TH, 12TH MARCH
10.30-11.30AM

VENUE - LinkAble 2 Board School Rd, Woking
GU21 5HE

alana@imm-music.com

www.imm-music.com





CASE STUDY: SHEMINA'S JOURNEY

Shemina was initially hesitant to participate, often opting to observe and draw rather than engage in musical activities.

Progress Over Sessions

- 5th February: Engaged in independent drawing but showed curiosity about instruments.
- 12th February: Began experimenting with vocal sounds and movement.
- 12th March: Actively participated in Mindful Mark Making and shared her artwork with the facilitator for the first time.



OUTCOME

Shemina's confidence visibly grew throughout the sessions. While she remained reserved, she actively engaged in structured activities, using music and movement as tools for self-expression.

Key Findings & Impact on overall project

- **Increased Confidence:** Members demonstrated growing self-expression through music, movement, and songwriting.
- **Engagement Growth:** Individuals like Clive and Hannah, initially hesitant, gradually found ways to participate comfortably.
- **Social Interaction:** Singing, dancing, and group compositions fostered teamwork and social skills.

Staff Observations

Facilitators noted significant improvements in participation, particularly among those who were quieter or struggled with anxiety.





IMAGES



The background is a solid yellow color with various musical icons scattered across it. These icons include a guitar, a drum, a microphone, musical notes, a bass clef, a treble clef, a sharp sign, and maracas. The icons are rendered in a lighter shade of yellow, creating a subtle pattern.

Twister Music **Session Examples**



SESSION OVERVIEW

A six-week initiative that encouraged musical creativity and emotional expression.

The Twister Music Sessions aimed to provide a creative and engaging space for young people to explore music. The sessions ran over six weeks, with regular and occasional attendees participating in various musical activities. This report highlights observations, successes, challenges, case studies, feedback, and recommendations for future sessions.

Observations

- **Regular attendees:** Charlie, Sam, David, and Matthew (attended half the sessions).
- **Occasional attendees:** Victor and Alex.
- Charlie and Sam consistently returned, showing high levels of engagement and enjoyment.
- Participants frequently suggested activities, increasing their sense of ownership and motivation.

Participation Overview

- Attendance ranged from 10-15 young people per session.
- At least one staff member was present in most sessions.

What Worked Well

- **Twister Playlist:** Encouraged discussions, self-expression, and consistent attendance.
- **Bean Bag Game:** A favorite activity, requested weekly.
- **Instrumental Expression:** Playing instruments to express emotions, an idea initiated by David, was beneficial for emotional release.
- **Learning Piano Songs:** Learning "Mars" by Yungblud (Sam's choice) was accessible and meaningful.
- **Making Shakers:** Charlie's idea, which boosted confidence among participants.
- **Collaborative Music-Making:** Structured piano parts allowed group play, fostering a sense of belonging.
- **Drawing to Music:** Successfully engaged new attendees in Session 3.

Challenges

- **Songwriting & Singing:** The group was not receptive to these activities.
- **Decision-Making:** Open-ended questions did not work well; offering structured choices or private discussions was more effective.





FEEDBACK

Young People's Feedback

- David (Session 1): "I was angry, so it was helpful."
- Charlie (Session 2): "I liked making the instruments... and the stickers made me feel appreciated."
- Alex (Session 3): "It was adequate, I had fun."
- David (Session 6): "They were fun, but my attention span was short."

Case Studies

- Charlie: Took initiative, suggested creative ideas, and rediscovered an interest in piano.
- Sam: Shared favourite music, brought his guitar, and demonstrated leadership.
- David: Used music for emotional expression and built confidence through piano.
- Victor: Opened up socially through music discussions, despite irregular attendance.
- Alex: Initially disengaged but showed increasing interest by the final session.

im INTERGENERATIONAL MUSIC MAKING Generations of Music

INTERGENERATIONAL MUSIC MAKING & ARTS PARTNERSHIP SURREY

ARTS PARTNERSHIP SURREY

IMM MUSIC PROJECT

MUSIC PROJECT

Join us for a lively music and movement project—open for SEND youths ages 11-19, all abilities welcome!

24th , 31st JANUARY, 7th, 21st,
28th FEBRUARY & 7th MARCH
6.30pm-7.30pm

VENUE - TWISTER

alana@imm-music.com





PROJECT PLANNING & FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Duration:

6-week project (1-hour sessions).

Balance of Structure & Flexibility:

Provide options while allowing creative freedom.

Potential Theme:

“Under the Sea” for enhanced creative engagement.

Required Resources:

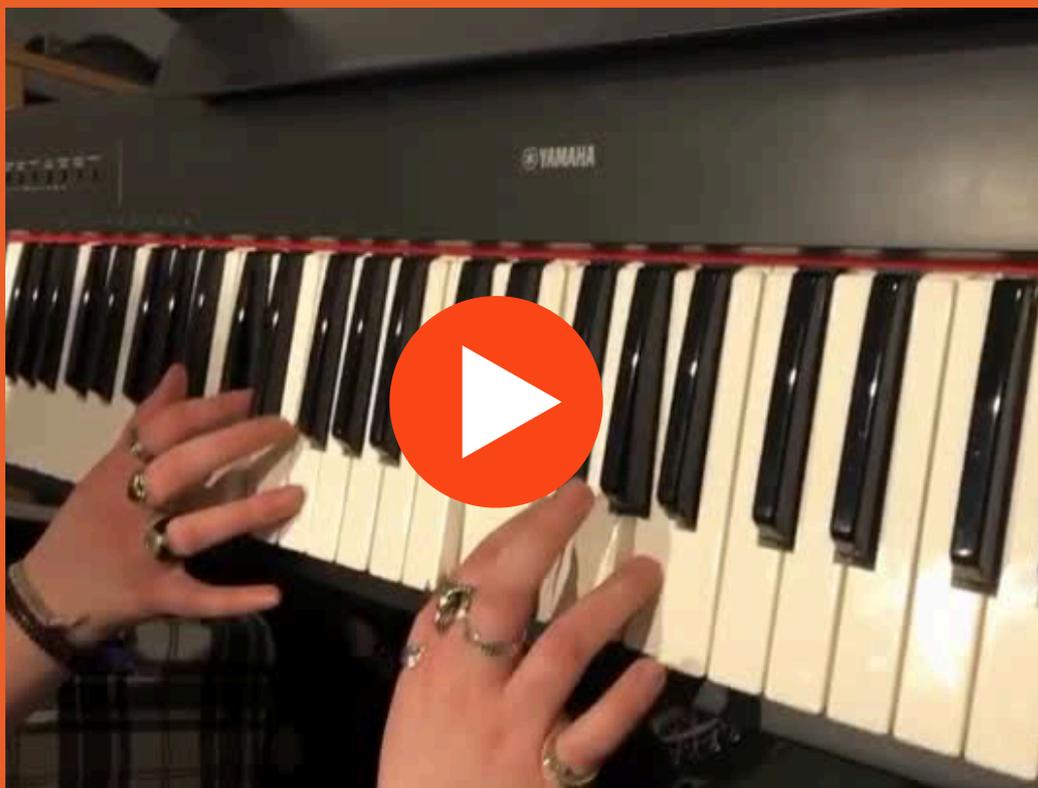
Bean bags, parachute, keyboard, art materials.

Activity Suggestions:

- Rhythm games
- Movement to music
- Collaborative songwriting
- Visual arts integration

Engagement Strategy:

Recognize that some participants may take time to warm up to activities.



The background is a solid yellow color. It is decorated with various musical instrument icons in a lighter shade of yellow. These icons include a guitar, a drum set, a microphone, a bass clef, a treble clef, a key signature symbol (sharp), a double bar line, and several musical notes. The icons are scattered across the page, with a large guitar icon centered in the lower half.

Halow Project
Session Example



SESSION OVERVIEW

The Halow music sessions provided a dynamic and inclusive space for young people, supported by two staff members, to explore music through the innovation labs singing, movement, and interactive games. The sessions catered to a range of SEN needs, ensuring that every participant could engage in a way that suited them.

Engagement & Participation

Each session welcomed a small but consistent group of attendees, allowing for a supportive and familiar environment. While some participants were initially reserved, they became more engaged over time, with music serving as a tool for self-expression and confidence-building.

What Worked Well

- Interactive games & activities encouraged participation and social interaction.
- Familiar and energetic songs helped keep engagement levels high.
- A safe and supportive atmosphere allowed participants to explore music at their own pace.
- Improvisation and singing played a key role in boosting confidence and self-expression.

Overcoming Challenges

Some young people were hesitant at first, but as the sessions progressed, engagement grew steadily. Finding the right balance between structure and flexibility helped maintain interest, ensuring that all participants could take part comfortably.

Memorable Moments & Progress

One standout moment was David's journey—initially quiet, he gradually gained confidence and eventually led a sea shanty, demonstrating real growth in self-assurance and participation. Group activities also encouraged social interaction, helping all young people, regardless of their needs, to find ways to connect through music.

Young People's Feedback
Participants described the sessions as:

🎵 "Fun"

🎵 "Exciting"

🎵 "Music"

🎵 "Good"





FEEDBACK - VOICE NOTES

Twister Sessions



LinkAble Sessions



The background is a solid yellow color. It is decorated with various musical instrument icons in a lighter shade of yellow. These icons include a guitar, a drum set, a microphone, a bass clef, a treble clef, a maraca, a tambourine, a xylophone, and a keyboard. The icons are scattered across the page, creating a musical theme.

**Parenthood Wellbeing
& Mental Health
Support Sessions**



SESSION OVERVIEW

As part of the Creative Voices Lab & Wellbeing Support initiative, we delivered 25 Parenthood Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Sessions (1.5 hours each), held across FoxGrove School, GRU, Linkable, Twister and Woodlands School. This critical element of the project directly responded to the recognition that caregivers and families of autistic individuals often experience significant emotional and mental strain. The sessions were designed not only to support the wellbeing of parents and caregivers but also to strengthen the broader ecosystem of care that surrounds autistic individuals.

Approach & Structure

Each session was structured to provide a safe, supportive space where caregivers could explore their mental health needs, share experiences, and gain valuable coping strategies. Participants were encouraged to discuss challenges and reflect on their emotional responses to caregiving, which allowed for deeper insight into the dynamics of care and the mental toll it often takes. The focus on sound bath therapy, guided mindfulness, and peer support offered participants tangible tools for managing stress and enhancing their mental wellbeing.

The sessions incorporated mindfulness practices such as sound baths, an innovative therapeutic approach using vibration and frequency to promote relaxation and mental clarity. This calming and grounding technique proved particularly effective for the caregivers, offering them a deep sense of tranquillity and emotional reset. Sound baths, combined with guided breathing exercises, provided a unique opportunity to relieve stress, ease anxiety, and foster emotional resilience, empowering participants to better support their loved ones.

In addition to sound baths, group discussions allowed participants to connect, share stories, and gain strength from the collective wisdom of the group. Each session also provided mental health resources, encouraging caregivers to reach out for further support, both locally and nationally. The inclusion of practical strategies for self-care and stress management reinforced the overarching goal of creating long-term sustainability, ensuring that caregivers felt empowered to continue supporting their families in the future.





IMPACT & FEEDBACK

The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with 90% of parents reporting a noticeable reduction in stress levels following the sessions, and 80% expressing an increased sense of confidence in managing the emotional demands of caregiving. Participants specifically appreciated the opportunity to share experiences in a non-judgmental environment, which fostered a deeper sense of community and support among peers.

A key outcome of these sessions was the creation of an ongoing peer support network that has already started to extend beyond the scope of the project. Many parents and caregivers have formed informal support groups, ensuring that the benefits of these sessions will be sustained long after the funding period has ended.

Furthermore, the sound bath sessions emerged as one of the most requested components, with caregivers noting its immediate impact on mental relaxation. The therapeutic nature of the sound baths facilitated emotional healing and provided a sense of collective healing that bolstered participants' resilience.

LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure that these mental health and wellbeing sessions continue to have an impact beyond the initial phase of the project, we have worked closely with all partners to establish a replicable model. This model includes training staff and community leaders to facilitate future wellbeing sessions, ensuring that the community remains equipped to provide ongoing support to families and caregivers of autistic individuals.

The Parenthood Wellbeing and Mental Health Support Sessions have proven to be a critical pillar of this initiative, providing essential support for caregivers and fostering a deeper sense of community. By addressing the mental health needs of families, we not only enhanced individual well-being but also promoted social inclusion and long-term sustainability. The success of these sessions demonstrates the importance of caregiver support in creating an inclusive, resilient community where all members can thrive.





IMAGES





CONCLUSION

The Creative Voices Lab & Wellbeing Support initiative has delivered significant positive outcomes for the autistic community in Surrey, aligning directly with Surrey's All-Age Autism Strategy and addressing key gaps in support for autistic individuals and their families. Through a blend of creative, evidence-based interventions and a person-centred approach, the project has enhanced social inclusion, reduced isolation, and improved the mental wellbeing of both autistic individuals and their caregivers.

Key achievements, including strong engagement rates, sustained participation, and impactful outcomes in terms of self-expression, social confidence, and mental health, underscore the importance of integrating creative practices into health and community support services. The successful implementation of the Innovation Labs and Parent Wellbeing Support Sessions has created a positive ripple effect across the community, laying the foundation for long-term sustainability and inclusivity in local services.

By leveraging the insights and feedback from participants, as well as fostering strategic partnerships with local organisations, this initiative has helped to build a lasting infrastructure for creative health interventions that will continue to benefit the community long after the project's completion. Moving forward, embedding these creative interventions into mainstream community health services will ensure that autistic individuals and their families have continued access to holistic, inclusive support, promoting both individual and collective wellbeing.

Ultimately, the Creative Voices Lab & Wellbeing Support initiative not only responded to immediate needs but also contributed to the broader vision of an inclusive, supportive, and connected community for all individuals, regardless of neurodiversity. The project's outcomes have provided valuable learnings to inform future practice, funding applications, and policy development, ensuring that creative health solutions remain a cornerstone of Surrey's approach to autism support.

Written by IMM www.imm-music.com

April 2025

www.imm-music.com

