



*My Experience as a Young
Music Leader on the Plugin
Project with Quench Arts*

By Shenâi Holgate

MY GOALS AND AIMS FROM BEFORE COMMENCING THE PROJECT

- ❖ TO DEVELOP MY CONFIDENCE - THAT BEING IN TEACHING AND AS A MUSICIAN. CONFIDENCE IN MY DELIVERY AND EXECUTION AND TO BE PERCEIVED AS SUCH BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING.
- ❖ TO ENGAGE WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE - FINDING A COMMON GROUND FOR MOTIVATION AND TO CREATE A SAFE PLACE WHERE PARTICIPANTS FEEL COMFORTABLE TO SHARE AND PERFORM WITH CREATIVE EXPRESSION.
- ❖ TO AID IN DEVELOPING AT LEAST ONE INDIVIDUAL'S CRAFT AND CREATIVE PRACTICE- TO THE POINT THAT ONCE THE PROJECT HAS CONCLUDED THEY WANT TO MAKE MUSIC AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR LIVES.
- ❖ TO ADAPT MY TEACHING STYLE IN ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO SUIT DIFFERENT TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH.

GOALS



HOW IT STARTED

→ MEETING THE LEAD MUSIC LEADER: CHRIS MAPP

UPON MEETING CHRIS I FELT AS THOUGH I WAS IN GOOD HANDS; HE WAS CONFIDENT IN LEADING AND TALENTED IN A MULTIFACETED WAY. HIS MAIN INSTRUMENT OF BASS GUITAR WAS DIFFERENT TO MINE, BEING VOCALS. WE BOTH HAVE EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF MUSIC TECH USING DIFFERENT DAWS. I BELIEVED THIS WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO THE PROCESS.

→ MEETING THE YOUNG PEOPLE

GIVING THAT THE SETTING WAS A CAMHS, MOST OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T HAVE REGULAR ACCESS TO THE ARTS. FURTHERMORE, MOST ARE ALSO ON THE AUTISM/NEURODIVERGENT SPECTRUMS AND/OR DEAL WITH MENTAL HEALTH ON DAY TO DAY BASIS AND ARE ON MEDICATIONS. I KEPT THIS IN MIND WHEN MEETING THEM AND TRIED TO MAKE IT A COMFORTABLE SETTING FOR ALL. CHRIS AND I DID AN IMPROMPTU PERFORMANCE TO DISPLAY OUR ABILITIES AND THEN ASKED WHAT SONGS THE YOUNG PEOPLE LIKED TO LISTEN TO SO WE COULD DO A RELAXED STRIPPED BACK KARAOKE STYLE SESSION WITH THEM. THIS WORKED REALLY WELL AS ONE OF THE GROUP ACTIVITIES THEY LIKE IS KARAOKE IN THE EVENINGS. IT WAS A GOOD ICE BREAKER AND EVEN THOUGH IT WASN'T A LESSON, CHRIS AND I COULD GAGE THEIR MUSICAL ABILITIES, BACKGROUNDS AND PREFERENCES.

→ FINDING MY ROLE

FOLLOWING THE FIRST SESSION, I HAD A CHANCE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT I HAD TO OFFER TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE BASED ON THEIR INTERESTS MATCHED WITH MY SKILL SET. I THOUGHT MY SONGWRITING ABILITIES COULD BE PUT TO USE ALONG WITH BEING ABLE TO PLAY BASIC GUITAR, BASS AND PERCUSSION.





WHAT WENT WELL?

→ WRITING ORIGINAL SONGS


AT FIRST, THE YOUNG PEOPLE WERE MAINLY INTERESTED IN SINGING COVERS WITH NO ONE REALLY INVESTED IN WRITING THEIR OWN MATERIAL. IT TOOK SOME TIME BUT ONE OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAD PREVIOUS MUSICAL EXPERIENCE, PARTICULARLY WITH VOCALS AND BASS DECIDED THEY WANTED TO HAVE A GO AT WRITING THEIR OWN SONG. THIS WORKED WELL AS THEY WERE THE ONLY PARTICIPANT FROM THEIR WARD SHOWING UP CONSISTENTLY AT THE TIME. THEY WERE VERY TALENTED AT WRITING AND I FOUND I COULD HELP WITH SOME MELODY WORK AND SYNTAX. AFTER THIS SESSION MORE YOUNG PEOPLE BECAME CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO SONGWRITE AS WELL ESPECIALLY AS THERE WAS NO PRESSURE FOR THEM TO SING THEM AS MYSELF AND CHRIS HAPPILY VOLUNTEERED.

→ USING NON-MUSICAL IDEAS AND SAMPLES TO CREATE MUSIC

THERE WERE A FEW YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WERE RELUCTANT TO TRY AND INSTRUMENT OR SING BUT THEY WERE INQUISITIVE ABOUT THE MUSIC TECH SIDE OF THINGS. WE ENGAGED THEM IN LEARNING DAWS SUCH AS CUBASE AND GARAGEBAND BY RECORDING SENTENCES OR SOUNDS OF OBJECTS IN THE ROOM TO CREATE SAMPLES FROM WHICH MIDI COULD BE USED TO CREATE BEATS AND LOOPS. THIS WAS QUITE ENJOYABLE AND WE NOTICED MORE LONGEVITY IN THE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THIS METHOD.

→ POETRY AND SOUNDSCAPES

THERE WAS ONE PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL WHO REALLY TOUCHED ME AND IMPACTED MY EXPERIENCE ON THE PROJECT. OVER TIME CHRIS AND I HAD BUILT A RAPPORT WITH SAID PERSON AND HAD ENCOURAGED CREATIVE WRITING AS THEY HAD EXPRESSED IT WAS AN INTEREST THAT THEY HAD NEVER TRIED. THE POEM THAT THEY SHARED THE FOLLOWING WEEK WAS NOT ONLY DEEP AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING BUT WELL-WRITTEN AND FLOWED ELOQUENTLY. THEY HAD A REAL TALENTED FOR WRITING AND DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT! I RECORDED THE POEM FOR THEM AND THEY PROVIDED THE SOUND DESIGN WHICH PAIRED PERFECTLY. I WAS REALLY PROUD OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND COULD SEE THE PROJECT HAD HELPED THEIR CONFIDENCE NOT ONLY MUSICALLY BUT ON A PERSONALLY LEVEL WHICH WAS THE PURPOSE.



Positive
Thinking

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?

→ 1-1 SESSIONS WORK BETTER THAN GROUP SESSIONS

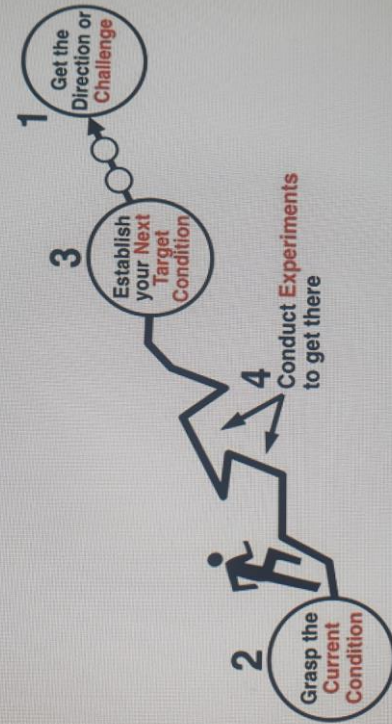
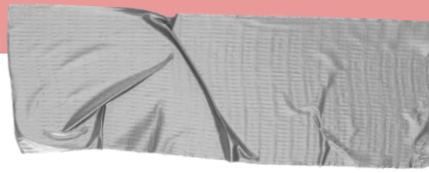
IT TOOK SOME TIME TO GET THE BALL ROLLING BUT FROM QUITE EARLY ON CHRIS AND I NOTICED THAT HAVING TOO MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IN A SESSION PREVENTED PROGRESS AND STUNTED DEVELOPMENT. SOME FOR EXAMPLE THOSE WHO ARE NON-VERBAL, COMPLETELY DISENGAGED AND FELT TOO SHY TO PARTICIPATE. THE MORE CONFIDENT YOUNG PEOPLE COULD PROVE QUITE DISRUPTIVE AT TIMES ESPECIALLY IF THEY HAD THEIR FRIENDS WITH THEM. SOMETIMES IT COULD ERUPT INTO CHAOS IF TOO MUCH WAS GOING ON AT ONCE AND RESULT IN SENSORY OVERLOAD.

→ PRESENT THE OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN A MORE FORMAL MANNER

CONSISTENCY WAS QUITE HARD TO COME BY ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF PARTICIPATION. SOME OF THIS WAS OUT OF OUR HANDS AND THE CHANGE OVER WITH PATIENTS BEING ADMITTED AND DISCHARGED COULD BE ANYWHERE BETWEEN 6 WEEKS AND 12 MONTHS. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WERE SOME YOUNG PEOPLE THAT WOULD COME FOR A COUPLE WEEKS AND START WORKING ON SOMETHING AND THEN NOT COME TO ANY FURTHER SESSIONS SO THERE WAS A LOT OF INCOMPLETE WORK/PROJECTS. IF THERE WAS A SIGN UP SHEET AND A TIMETABLE FOR SESSIONS MAYBE THIS COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED AS WE COULD DELEGATE TIME TO THOSE WHO WERE MORE INVESTED. SAYING THIS, I KNOW SOME CIRCUMSTANCES ARE UNAVOIDABLE GIVING THE NATURE OF THE SETTINGS AND THE VOLATILE MOODS/EMOTIONS PATIENTS CAN HAVE ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS.

→ TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

THE FACT WE COULD TAKE MUCH TECH ONTO THE SETTINGS WAS SOMETIMES A HINDERANCE. WORKING ON AN TPAD WASN'T ALWAYS SUITABLE AND HAVING A COMPUTER THAT STAYED ON SETTING LIKE THERE IS AT ARDENLEIGH HOSPITAL WOULD NOT ONLY MEAN FASTER PROCESSING BUT THE YOUNG PEOPLE BEING ABLE TO WORK ON PROJECTS AWAY FROM SESSIONS IN THEIR OWN TIME. ALSO, THOSE WHO WERE INTERESTED IN PLAYING KEYS OFTEN STRUGGLED USING THE MIDI KEYBOARD DUE TO LACK OF/SIZE OF THE KEYS. ADDITIONALLY, IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO ENCOURAGE THE SETTINGS TO ALLOW THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO USE THE INSTRUMENTS MORE FREQUENTLY AS THEY WOULD BE PUT OFF FINISHING PROJECTS AS THEY COULDN'T REMEMBER CHORDS AND MELODIES DUE TO LACK OF PRACTICE DURING THE WEEK.



WORKING IN MENTAL HEALTH

→ AUTISM

HAVING RECENTLY BEEN DIAGNOSED AS AUTISTIC MYSELF, I TOOK GREAT INTEREST IN WORKING WITH THOSE WHO ARE ON THE SPECTRUM. GOING ON THE AUTISM AWARENESS COURSE HELPED MAJORLY AS BEING DIAGNOSED AS AN ADULT I FELT AS THOUGH I LACKED INSIGHT ON CERTAIN THINGS AND THE COURSE HELPED ME TO GRASP CERTAIN CONCEPTS AND BEHAVIOURS. I FOUND THAT I COULD RELATE TO SOME OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND EVEN BOND OVER THIS AT TIMES. FOR EXAMPLE, I DID A SESSION AT PARKVIEW CLINIC AND SPOKE TO AN INDIVIDUAL WHO SHARED SIMILAR EXPERIENCES TO MYSELF AND THAT ACTUALLY HELPED THEM TO BE MORE COMFORTABLE AND CONNECT ON A LEVEL THROUGH MUSIC AND SONGWRITING.

→ BLAKESLEY: FORWARD THINKING BIRMINGHAM

WORKING AT BLAKESLEY ON A WEEK LONG PROJECT WAS EXPONENTIALLY INSIGHTFUL. I WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH OUTPATIENTS WHO WERE IN MY AGE GROUP AND I HONESTLY BELIEVE THIS FACTOR AIDED THE PROGRESS AND THE MULTITUDE OF MUSIC THAT CAME OUT OF IT. IT WAS A DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE TO WORKING IN CAMHS AS WE COULD SPEAK ON MORE MATURE TOPICS AND I GOT TO SEE THE OUTCOMES OF BEING A PATIENT AND WHAT LIFE IS LIKE FOLLOWING DISCHARGE.

→ BEHAVIOUR AND ENGAGEMENT

I WASN'T SURE WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN STARTING THE PROJECT. I KNEW THERE WERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH BUT WORKING AT CYGNET ALLOWED FOR WORKING WITH PEOPLE ACROSS THE SPECTRUM WITH DIFFERENT BEHAVIOURS, PERSONALITIES AND NEEDS. SOME WERE QUITE CONFIDENT AND FORWARD WITH WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO EACH SESSION. SOME WERE NON VERBAL AND I HAD TO ADAPT AND LEARN HOW TO GIVE GUIDANCE WITHOUT GIVING ALL OF THE IDEAS OR DOING THE WORK FOR THEM. OTHERS WEREN'T OPEN TO TRYING NEW THINGS UNTIL PRESENTED WITH APPROACHES THAT FIT THEIR NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS. THESE ARE ALL THINGS I HAVE HAD TO LEARN AND OVERCOME THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT AND IT'S BEEN A LEARNING CURVE.



DID I ACCOMPLISH MY GOALS?

- TO DEVELOP MY CONFIDENCE - THAT BEING IN TEACHING AND AS A MUSICIAN. CONFIDENCE IN MY DELIVERY AND EXECUTION AND TO BE PERCEIVED AS SUCH BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING.

BY THE END OF PROJECT, I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD DEFINITELY BE ABLE TO RUN A SESSION INDEPENDENTLY AND THIS IS NOT SOMETHING I BELIEVED PRIOR. I FOUND THAT I NOW HAD A VOICE TO NOT ONLY TEACH AND SHARE MY SKILLS BUT ALSO TO LEAD AND DELEGATE WHEN APPROPRIATE. I HAD RESPECT FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE BUT ALSO A LEVEL OF FRIENDSHIP TO A DEGREE WHERE IT WAS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST MUSIC BUT DELVING INTO LIFE MATTERS WHICH HELPED THEIR CONFIDENCE IN TURN.

- TO ENGAGE WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE - FINDING A COMMON GROUND FOR MOTIVATION AND TO CREATE A SAFE PLACE WHERE PARTICIPANTS FEEL COMFORTABLE TO SHARE AND PERFORM WITH CREATIVE EXPRESSION.

I LEARNT TO LISTEN AND REALISED COMMUNICATION IS KEY IN TEACHING BUT ESPECIALLY IN MENTAL HEALTH AND THAT THERE ARE VARIOUS WAYS TO DO SO. I ALSO DISCOVERED THAT A HUGE PART OF TEACHING A LESSON IS THE EXPERIENCE AND ENJOYMENT THAT COMES WITH IT. ALLOWING THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO DRIVE THE SESSIONS WAS IMPERATIVE FOR ANY MUSIC TO BE CREATED. HOWEVER, SHOWING THAT I WAS THERE TO ASSIST AND GUIDE WAS INSTRUMENTAL.

- TO AID IN DEVELOPING AT LEAST ONE INDIVIDUAL'S CRAFT AND CREATIVE PRACTICE- TO THE POINT THAT ONCE THE PROJECT HAS CONCLUDED THEY WANT TO MAKE MUSIC AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR LIVES.

BEING ABLE TO SPARK AN INTEREST IN MUSIC WAS EXCEPTIONALLY REWARDING. WRITING IS MY FORTE AND TO BE ABLE TO ENCOURAGE ANOTHER PERSON TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH THAT OUTLET FELT POWERFUL. THIS MADE ME REALISE THAT TEACHING IS WHAT I WANT TO DO. IN PARTICULARLY, IN THE MENTAL HEALTH SECTOR, ALONG WITH BEING A MUSICIAN.

- TO ADAPT MY TEACHING STYLE IN ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO SUIT DIFFERENT TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH.

LEARNT NOT ONLY HOW TO TEACH NON VERBAL PARTICIPANTS BUT ALSO THOSE WHO WOULD TEND TO BE MORE DISRUPTIVE. THIS WAS ONE OF PRIMARY GOALS AS THIS IS A NEW FIELD AND I KNEW THE CHALLENGES I WOULD HAVE TO OVERCOME GOING INTO THIS. I ALSO DISCOVERED HOW TO CREATE A RAPPORT WITHOUT LOWERING THE RESPECT LEVELS BETWEEN MYSELF AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE. THIS IS SOMETHING I THOUGHT MY CONFIDENCE WOULD NEVER ALLOW AND I NOW FEEL READY TO DELVE INTO TEACHING INDEPENDENTLY.

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