

Melodies for Mums progress - February 2019

Please also do watch our short [film](#) about the project, where you can hear directly from some of the women who've taken part.

Project Progress

In 2017, after Daisy recommended Breathe as the delivery partner to continue her work in this area, our Project Manager Tim Osborn started visiting health centres and clinics, building relationships with midwives and health visitors and chatting to new mums about the project. Tim invited women to apply to join the programme and had an amazing response.

Our first group in Southwark started singing in early 2017. Since then, we have run eight more groups (2 per term) and had 125 women sing at a Melodies for Mums group.

| Intake | Sign-ups | Screened for PND & accepted | Started sessions | Completed all sessions |
|--------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| 1: Mar – May 2017* | 65 | 30 | 22 | 14 |
| 2: Oct – Dec 2017 | 91 | 30 | 24 | 21 |
| 3: May – Jul 2018 | 100 | 27 | 20 | 17 |
| 4: Sep – Nov 2018 | 99 | 31 | 30 | 27 |
| 5: Jan – Apr 2019 | 102 | 30 | 29 | TBC |
| Total | 457 | 148 | 125 | 79 |

**pilot project with Guys & St Thomas's Charity; all other sessions funded philanthropically*

Learning

On the ground, we have seen that 'Melodies for Mums' has offered women a much-needed space to be themselves, to create, to meet others and to build vital bridges that help them to find a way out of loneliness and depression. Our group leader Rosie selects songs in a variety of languages and styles to make everyone feel included. The mums sing, smile, make friends, connect with their babies and learn a new skill. We have also invited healthcare professionals in to promote talking therapies so that women can access deeper support if they need it. We've had fantastic feedback.

"A wonderfully uplifting experience for my baby and me" - Participant

During this past 18 months, we have also learned a lot from meeting so many women and hearing their stories. What has been most startling has been the high numbers of women Tim has met that were presenting with depression scores in the 'moderate' or 'severe' categories in the screening questionnaire but were not talking to their GPs or health visitors. They have needed help but haven't been getting it. The project has therefore really highlighted the need for this kind of support.



'Melodies for Mums' illustration by Claire M (project participant), 2018

Other programme aspects

Local health visiting teams are embracing the programme; they are now meeting women who have participated and are reporting back about their positive experiences so more direct referrals from local services are now occurring. By connecting with local talking therapies teams, we are now able to signpost participants to their services and vice-versa.

Tim now has a 1:1 telephone conversation with every mum ahead of their first session and offers regular reminder texts to improve engagement. Women report this as being helpful and reassuring. A resource pack of other local activities is also now given to mums when the programme finishes, and we now facilitate a 'WhatsApp' messaging group for participants to keep in touch. Women report still singing songs from the sessions months later.

We have had students volunteering at the sessions from the Central School of Speech and Drama, London South Bank University and the Royal College of Music. A participant from the 3rd Group has also joined as a volunteer to help others with the singing.

We have presented the project at the Aesop Conference, The London Arts Forum and several Greater London Authority events. In March 2019 we will contribute to the 'Music and Motherhood' research think tank - led by Daisy and Rosie Perkins - to see what more can be learned.



The next 2-3 years

Our mission now is to a) expand the service as much as possible and b) to educate those within the healthcare, policy and public spheres to understand the significant need for better support for women at risk of postnatal depression. Therefore, as well as continuing to run our Southwark groups, we now want to set up more groups for many more women across South London and beyond.

As part of that we will shortly be running a focus group with mums and clinicians to look at how the sessions might be improved or adapted, and we are speaking to NHS commissioning groups to see what the future may hold for making this an NHS service. We are also talking to mums to see what more we can do for them after the 10 weeks of singing has ended, perhaps through digital technology or setting up a choir group in Southwark.



<http://breatheahr.org/melodies-for-mums/>