

Sense Workshops - Reflective Journal

My weekly activities included;

Week 1: Booking sessions with Sense [Upcoming Scheduled activities – Sense](#)

(Appendix 1)

Week 2: Taking part in online Drumming to Music session with Sense

Week 3: Taking part in Sounds of Us: Sensory Gigs

Week 4: Taking part in Studio session at Sense

Week 5: Attending Sense music therapy session – Sound Bath and Gong

I am going to reflect on sharing my thoughts and experiences of the music making sessions and the inclusive music events I attended. All the sessions and the event were for people with disabilities and additional needs.

Drumming to Music session

At the beginning of the Zoom online session there was no introduction for newcomers, the Music Leader went straight into a warm up. Everyone in the session was muted but the chat feature was available, Loughborough College added into the chat that there were 15 participants, this is a specialist college based at the University. For me as a Visually Impaired person the explanation of the routines needs much more detail and explaining more than once, the session is more visual. The session was delivered online in the Music Leaders home, the background was just her home and there was no explanation of what she looked like and what was in the background. I have seen other online session from Sense where Music Leaders have included these details for blind people. They could include an interesting background rather than showing the room, a picture with a music themed background would have been better, such as a stage picture or musical instruments or even just a plain background.

There was a good music choice of tracks for the different routines, the song title to each song was given but it would have been good to know the songwriter / band. The songs that were played for the routines were: The Pogues -I would walk 500 miles, Tony Christie – Is This The Way To Amarillo, Black Lace- Agadoo, Roy Orbison – Penny Arcade.

In the session the Music Leader uses drumsticks for the first few routines, these could be replaced with items from around the home. Then there were Bongo actions, these could be done using hand movements, a Rave tune was used for the bongo routine.

The session has also been developed as an exercise session, it has health and wellbeing benefits and includes stretches, it is good for upper body exercise and includes a cool down with shoulder and arm stretches, Into the Unknown by AURORA was the music used for the cool down.

Sounds of Us- Sensory Gig session

The session welcomed all abilities, whatever sounds anyone made was completely fine and the session accepted warmly whatever a person did. The way the music was made was very experimental. A recording of the sounds that people made was done, taking segments and looping them. There was no expectations of music talent or knowledge, the facilitators showed excitement of the music making that happened. They couldn't be very outcome driven because of the low abilities of participants so they made sessions more social. They focused on coming together and being creative as a group. The Music Leader tried to help participants express themselves.

There were people with a variety of impairments mainly severely autistic some with hearing issues as well. The facilitators started with the basics making sure everyone was sitting comfortably, the room was large, the lighting in the room was ok for me as a VI person. There were no trip hazards and plenty of space to get around, there were a few issues with sound quality. The room was a good temperature, it was not hot and stuffy.

They explained refreshments were provided and went through Health and Safety. As there were wheelchair users the Music Leaders made sure to leave room within the chair circle for wheel chairs, they also made sure participants knew that there were wires on the floor. They provided equipment for vibration, the centre has bought Subpacs that are available for hearing impaired. They also explained that they had sound vibration available for deaf people on certain chairs, these Subpacs interfered with the acoustics.

They began the session with live music, playing as the participants came into the room, this set the tone and reduced the participant nerves by putting the focus on the music. The Music Leader also made the space sound as harmonious as possible, by putting all the instruments in the same key, choosing soft tone qualities and adjusting volumes. The Music Leaders introduced themselves and showed participants what to expect.

Sounds were created into a DAW and they were layered up to create tracks or another name used is Soundscapes. They started with a drumbeat, participants could make their own beat or copy a beat using a variety of instruments or making vocal sounds. The Music Leader recorded participants' beats into the DAW.

A variety of percussion were available to use and they were handed around the circle, participants could pick smaller instruments out of a basket, percussion included a triangle, wooden block, maracas, there were some larger instruments like bongos, steel tongue drum. I particularly like the steel tongue drum as it makes the same sounds as steel pans, they are part of my culture as I have Caribbean heritage.

They experimented with a microphone. The experience of having your voice amplified and with effects, is really cool. It was good for some of those participants who don't speak much to find their voice.

They used word association to create lyric ideas and visual art as inspiration for a new song, they set tasks for participants to make a beat or a melody and then went around circle for everyone to share.

During the session the Music Leaders engaged with the care workers, I thought this was very good because they have a really strong relationship with the participants and the participants care what they think, if care workers are having fun and making music, it is much easier to get participants doing the same.

The Music Leaders were very aware of all the participants actions and behaviours, they were aware of their needs and had ways to try and meet them and could figure them out.

They played pieces on piano and violin, they asked for suggestions, they gave participants an opportunity to share the music they like and learn from each other. The Music Leaders included cultural interest and talked about culture, I explained that I enjoy reggae music and they played Bob Marley, Three Little Birds on the piano. They talked about the Music Leader who was Polish and played Polish songs, bringing in culture. Another participant liked Eminem and Eastenders and they played a mix of Eastenders theme tune and Eminem to make something new.

Studio session

As a participant I was spoken to briefly before the workshop started. The Music Leader explained what we will be doing together, I felt this was to get an idea of my vibe and the level I was working at, I was asked what kind of music I like, and what musical activities I already do.

The Music Leader asked about my sight impairments. He explained how they can support hearing impairments with vibratory speakers, and partial sight with large print or various technologies.

He provided a touch tour of the various instruments in the room, this was to help me get my bearings as a blind person in an unfamiliar room. He did a tour with me, beginning with feeling the sensory board on the door entrance, I thought this was an interesting idea and is welcoming to Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired people.

I mentioned that I use Logic Pro, he asked how I navigate it and I explained through voice over technology, he didn't have this software available but he offered alternative music making software like Reper, so we didn't do any composing during the session which was a shame as this is what I am particularly interested in.

I mentioned that I play the keyboard so he wanted me to show him some of my keyboard skills, so I played a few chords and scales. Then we moved on to playing some classical music, me playing the keyboard and him playing the violin.

Then for the last half of the session he suggested I play the drums to learn a new skill and we did a jamming session together with me on the drums and him on the guitar. Finally I had a go on another new instrument that was a mini piano with a blow feature, called a Melodica, it is a free-reed instrument a bit like a harmonica.

It was good to spend time to experiment and interact in the music studio. At the end I was asked about ideas for next time and I was asked how I found the session and invited to give feedback. I didn't feel the session fulfilled all of my expectations and was a bit disappointed that I wasn't able to do any composing.

Sound Bath and Gong session

This was a sound therapy / healing session using ancient practices with instruments from the Tibetan and Chinese cultures.

The session leader explained how 'Sound therapy uses sound, music and specialist instruments played in therapeutic ways combined with deep self-reflection techniques to improve health and wellbeing.' She also talked about a method of reflective process based around The Cooper Sax model of Experiential Processing, The 7R's.

The sounds of the instruments with certain techniques can alter brain wave and can change altered state of consciousness, people can have dreams and may see colours.

The Himalayan singing bowls from Nepal are to relax, they are nurturing and relax the nervous system. I had a go at striking it with the wand on side and making it sing by going around the bowl, low bowl is a B, can get other notes. The Gong quite intense, I had a go at striking it with the mallet.

A variety of percussion is used to bring the participant back awake. Percussion included a rain stick that sounds like water, wind chimes, soft rattles, harsh rattles, dumb bell chimes, Wawa tube, these different instruments can be used in a sequence.

I had a relaxing experience for 20 minutes listening to all the different sounds, it felt very spacey, I had a comfortable bean bag to relax on and I took in all the sounds. It was interesting to find out about all the different instruments, their history and how they have been used for many years in different countries and how they are used now in this country to heal.

Photo evidence

Drumming session online - screenshot



Sound of Us, Sensory Gig– photos



Studio session - photos



Sound bath and gong session - photos





Appendix 1

Music at Touchbase Music studio session (Birmingham)

Type: Arts

Interests: Music TouchBase Pears community activity

Accessible one on one music sessions, led by one of our expert musicians, exploring instruments, sound and creative expression. There is a whole host of instruments to choose from and a range of listening devices and techniques that ensures there is truly something for everyone, no matter your age, ability or taste.

Who is it for? Anyone, of any age, who might enjoy exploring music, or developing their creative expression, including d/Deaf and hearing impaired people.

Please note, one booking is for up to 3 people + support

Access -Tactile listening techniques will be used where possible to enhance the sonic experience for hearing impaired people.

Drumming workshop – online

A weekly online class, Drumming to Music or also known as Pound Fit with trained instructor Abbey Clayton. Get moving to the upbeat music, and practice your drumming skills using wooden spoons, pens, or whatever you have at home! Suitable for people with complex disabilities.

This class will be hosted on Zoom.

Sounds of Us: Sensory Gigs

A selection of colourful instruments spread out on an orange bean bag, including colourful bells and a drum

Location: Sense TouchBase Pears, Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, UK

See all in series: Music at Touchbase Sounds of Us Sensory Gigs

Type: Arts

Interests: Music Performance TouchBase Pears community activity

Sounds of Us is a series of immersive and intimate musical performances. Led by experienced percussionist and audio artists, these improvised sensory music gigs are bespoke, experimental and LIVE

Who is it for?

Anyone who might enjoy exploring music, including d/Deaf and hearing-impaired people.

Children must be with an adult

Access - These performances are interactive, immersive and tactile

Sound bath & Gong for Sense Services

Friday 21 April at 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Location: Sense TouchBase Pears, Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, UK

See all in series: Wellbeing at TouchBase Pears Wellbeing for Sense supported people

Type: Wellbeing

Interests: Wellbeing

Experience 30 minutes of a relaxing sound bath or gong session with our experienced sound bath therapist. Take the time to chillout in our comfortable therapy room & choose the session that you want to experience.

Who is it for? People aged 16+ in Sense supported services only, with support

Each session is for max 2 people supported by Sense, with support

Access -Therapy room & bathroom with hoist