

Participant W1B24, Wavelength Project Case Study

Written by Music Leader Paul Carroll with additions from Quench Arts

Participant W1B24 joined the Wavelength project whilst studying music business and production at BIMM Music Institute in Birmingham. He had some experience of playing keyboard in a group and produced his own music in Apple Logic Pro audio software. Participant W1B24 said that as a visually impaired young person it could be difficult to socialise and make new friends and it could also affect his mental health. He had also become much more withdrawn since the death of his father a few years before. At the same time as supporting his mental wellbeing, Participant W1B24 hoped that joining the project could help him with some of his assignment work. His mother and carer said, “it will be good for him to have a mentor he can also build a rapport with.”

Participant W1B24’s mentor was Wavelength music leader Paul, who had creative one-to-one sessions with Participant W1B24 and also led some of the group sessions that Participant W1B24 attended. A rapport was quickly established as Paul and the other music leaders learnt how Participant W1B24 could be supported in terms of feeling comfortable engaging in sessions and safely navigating the music venue and its facilities.

In the first session, Participant W1B24’s mum stayed in with him but for sessions after that he was confident enough to attend on his own. It turned out that what he called “basic keyboard skills” were more than adequate to start creating original music of his own and with a group of other Wavelength participants. What was impressive was that Participant W1B24 was always willing to explore the keyboard and try out new ideas and so building up new musical compositions was quick. In his first one-to-one session, Participant W1B24 introduced Paul to Birmingham rappers such as Mist and M1llionz.

Participant W1B24 said he enjoyed his first group session and he particularly worked well with another project member, Participant W1A24, who was interested in music production software. This was partly because Participant W1B24’s strengths lay in playing keyboard whilst Participant W1A24 was more hands-on with the software itself. They were both quickly comfortable sharing ideas in a positive way and tweaking the music until they were happy with it. Furthermore, this production duo complemented other members of the group who could share production ideas with them but were more inclined to sing and play instruments.

Participant W1B24 was proactive in making the most of his one-to-one sessions. As well as creating two new tracks in Logic Pro, he documented his collaboration with Paul thoroughly, keeping a diary, audio files and screenshots of each session and then, in the later months, preparing interview questions for Paul about the process, all to support his coursework at college. He also put his recording skills into practice for one of his songs, Deep, Stringy

Streets, where he oversaw the positioning of microphones to record drum kit and then acoustic guitar. Here, Paul performed the role of a session musician and, once ready to record, Participant W1B24 suggested ideas for Paul to try playing and chose what he thought worked best. Participant W1B24 took a copy of the Logic Pro project and mixed it at home. He then brought it back to Paul for further collaborative tweaking and produced the final version for the 2024 Wavelength CD.

Participant W1B24 was proud of what he achieved and in his third one-to-one session invited his mum into the room to hear his new song (session report 29 Feb 24). Later in the year, he was pleased to announce that he'd got the results from his collaboration assignment back and had got 72%, a 1st.

In his feedback about the project, Participant W1B24 said he liked "Producing and getting hands-on in both group and one-to-one sessions" and "getting back into playing in a band because I haven't done it for about 5 years" adding "The one-to-ones helped me with doing my collaboration assignment at Uni. I got a 1st for it, 72%."

In terms of his social experience of the project, Participant W1B24 said, "I'm always confident. The group are a good bunch of people though. I go out by myself. I got the train by myself to Hereford." He said it was good "chatting with people in group sessions."

In his baseline scores about how he feels about his musical skills, all of his scores increased when comparing the first session with the last one. The area that increased the most were 'understanding elements of music' and 'feeling music allows me to be creative.'

For wellbeing, Participant W1B24 scored himself mostly top marks at the end of the project, especially for 'feeling useful', which went from 2 at the beginning to the top score of 7. Participant W1B24 felt he had improved in all areas but in particular it can be seen from his baseline scores that he felt his social skills had improved (from 2 to 6 out of 7) and overall health and wellbeing (4 to 7).

For the goals he set himself at the beginning of the project, Participant W1B24 felt that for 'Getting active' he had helped out with the producing in group sessions, and got out and engaged with different people in sessions. He said he is still working on meeting new people. He wanted to do more sampling in Logic Pro but is still working on that too.

Participant W1B24 has 2 individual tracks on the CD and features on the Wavelength group tracks. His individual tracks are:

Dreamy, Dark, Stormy - https://soundcloud.com/quench_arts/07-dreamy-dark-stormy-ryan-1?in=quench_arts/sets/wavelength-cd-2024

Deep Stringy Streets - https://soundcloud.com/quench_arts/11-deep-stringy-streets-ryan-1?in=quench_arts/sets/wavelength-cd-2024