

End of Year Report 24-25

Soundbite

Art at the *Heart* of the RUH

“Soundbite: The Music Programme for Art at the Heart of the RUH”



Supported by



The Joyce Fletcher
Charitable Trust



Introduction

The Soundbite music programme, is made up of two strands, Musician in Residence (MiR) and the Lunchtime Performance Programme bringing live music and musical interactions to the RUH, directly contributing to enriching the hospital environment for patients, staff and visitors. Live music can offer moments of joy, distraction, and emotional uplift, reducing the stress and anxiety often associated with hospital stays.

Music and sound have been shown to have therapeutic benefits, particularly in promoting relaxation¹, reducing pain perception², and enhancing mood³. The Soundbite programme serves as an important tool in delivering these benefits to patients and staff, helping to create a healing environment. Soundbite engages a wide range of people, from patients, staff, and visitors of the hospital to local musicians including school and university students and choirs, fostering a sense of community. The programme enhances the experience for hospital staff by providing uplifting and relaxing musical interludes, which can serve as a mental health boost in often challenging work environments.



Musician in Residence, Frankie Simpkins



Bath Folk Musicians performing on Combe ward

¹ Music and Stress Reduction (Meta-analysis)

de Witte, M. et al., 2020. Effects of music interventions on stress-related outcomes: a systematic review and two meta-analyses. *Health Psychology Review*, 14(2), pp.294–324.

Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33176590/>

² Music for Pain and Anxiety in Surgical Patients

Lee, J. et al., 2023. Effects of music interventions on pain and anxiety in surgical patients: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Asian Nursing Research*, 17(2), pp.71–82.

Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1976131723000312>

³ Music Therapy for Postpartum Pain and Mood

Mousavi, S.A. et al., 2021. The effect of music therapy on postpartum anxiety and pain: A systematic review. *Journal of Caring Sciences*, 10(4), pp.180–188.

Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8609126/>

Programme Overview

Mission:

The Soundbite Music Programme at Royal United Hospital Bath aims to enhance patient care and wellbeing through the integration of live music within the healthcare environment. Its mission is to improve the emotional, mental, and physical health of patients by offering a creative, healing space through music. The programme values the power of the arts to support recovery, reduce stress, and foster a positive, comforting atmosphere. Its goals are to provide musical experiences that promote relaxation, reduce anxiety, and uplift the spirits of patients, visitors, and staff, while also demonstrating the therapeutic potential of the arts in healthcare settings.

Key Stakeholders:

The key stakeholders of the Soundbite Music programme include:

1. Art at the Heart of the RUH: The primary organisation running the Soundbite Music programme, responsible for its overall management and coordination.
2. Frankie Simpkins (Musician in Residence): A long-standing member of the programme since 2012, Frankie plays an integral role in curating and performing music, contributing to the programme's continuity and artistic direction. Her ongoing presence ensures the programme's consistency and connection with the hospital environment.
3. The Friends of the RUH: Core funders of the programme, providing essential financial support primarily for the musician in residence post and some lunchtime performances.
4. RUHX: The official charity for the RUH providing Charitable funds and support to continue the Soundbite music programme across the hospital.
5. The Joyce Fletcher Charitable Trust: This foundation specifically funds the lunchtime performance segment of the programme, enabling local musicians to perform and offer a sense of relief and enjoyment to patients, staff, and visitors.
6. Live Music Now: A national organisation providing professional musicians to perform in healthcare settings. Their involvement ensures a high level of quality and diversity in the music offered through Soundbite.
7. Bath Folk Club: A local group contributing visiting musicians to the programme, helping foster community involvement and bring folk music to the RUH.

8. King Edwards School: Musically talented school pupils and their music teachers perform in public areas of the hospital for patients, staff and visitors. As well as building a sense of community for the students and hospital these performances also raise funds for the RUH Art Programme.
9. Bath Spa University Music Students: We offer work placement and internship opportunities to the students at Bath Spa University.

These stakeholders collectively work together to deliver a meaningful and enriching musical experience for patients, hospital staff, and visitors.

Target Audience:

Soundbite targets a diverse audience, including patients of all ages, staff, and visitors, with the goal of providing therapeutic and enjoyable experiences through music.

1. Patients: The programme is designed to benefit patients of all ages and backgrounds by offering soothing and uplifting musical interactions which are entirely patient-led, which can improve emotional well-being, reduce stress, and aid in the healing process. Music has been shown to have therapeutic benefits, helping patients manage pain⁴, anxiety, and depression⁵ during their hospital stay. For patients, it also offers a welcome distraction from their medical condition and the often sterile hospital environment.
2. Staff: For hospital staff, the Soundbite Music Programme serves as a form of respite and stress relief, offering moments of relaxation and refreshment during their demanding work shifts. The presence of live music in a hospital setting can help boost morale, reduce stress, and create a more pleasant working atmosphere, which in turn can improve staff productivity and job satisfaction^{6 7}.
3. Visitors: Visitors, including family and friends of patients, benefit from the calming and uplifting atmosphere created by the music. It helps to ease the emotional strain of visiting loved ones in a hospital setting, providing comfort and support in what may be a difficult time. Additionally, the music can offer a

⁴ Music Therapy and Mood in Neurological Settings

Ullrich, B. et al., 2022. Music therapy and mood in neurologic inpatient rehabilitation: A controlled study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 892531.

Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36129349/>

⁵ Meta-analysis of Music Therapy for Depression

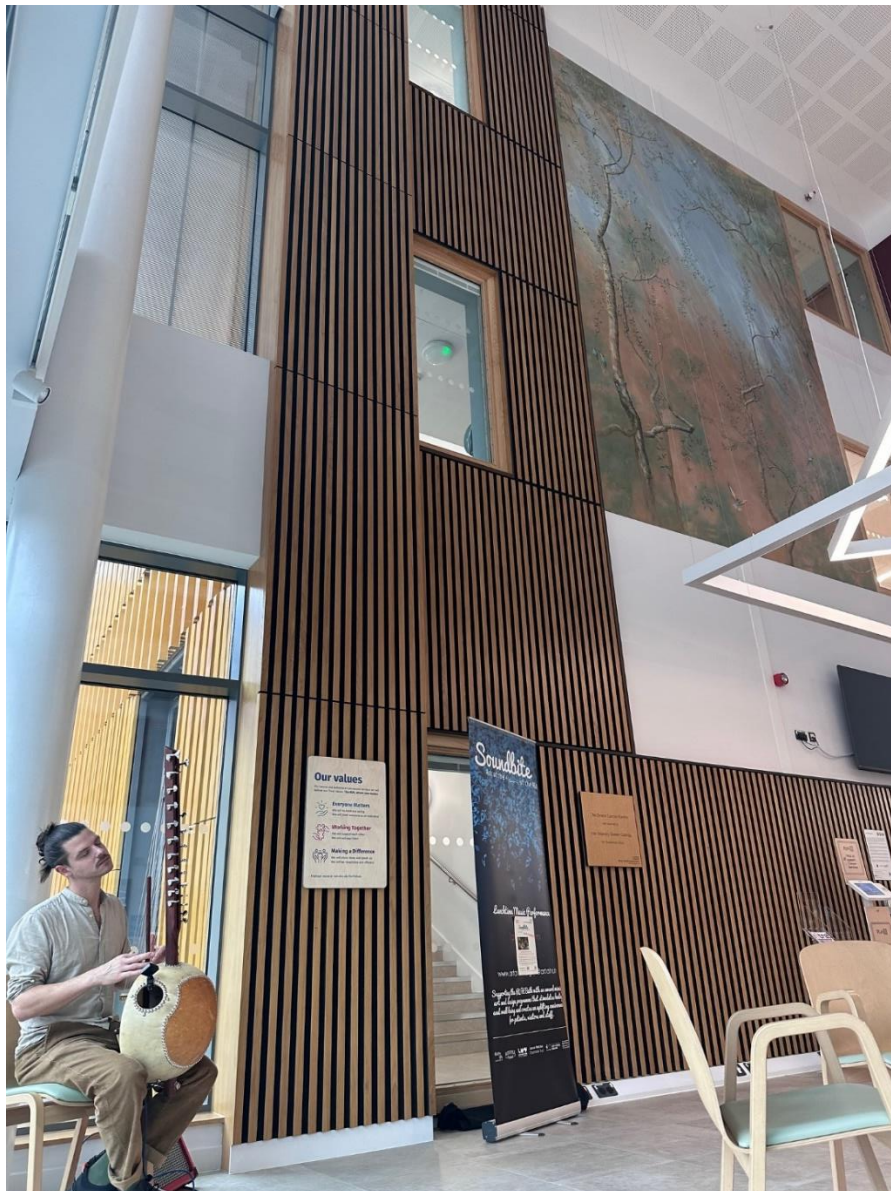
Tang, Q. et al., 2020. Music therapy for depressive symptoms in adults: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Psychiatry Research*, 284, p.112675

⁶ Creech, A., Hallam, S., Varvarigou, M., & McQueen, H. (2024). Nurses' experiences of participatory live music on hospital wards: A qualitative study. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jocn.17213>

⁷ O'Callaghan, C., McDermott, F., Michael, N., Daveson, B.A., Hudson, P. and Zalcberg, J.R. (2015). "A quiet still voice that just touches": Music's relevance for oncology staff and patients' families. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 52(4), pp.460–484. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1029864915583375>

shared experience of positivity and relaxation for families and visitors who may be anxious or stressed.

The programme meets these needs by offering live, accessible, and varied musical interactions in many areas of the hospital, including on wards, corridors and atriums ensuring that it is easily accessible to all in the hospital environment. It creates a more welcoming and less clinical atmosphere, contributing to an overall positive experience for patients, staff, and visitors alike.



Josh Doughty, Live Music Now musician playing the Kora, African Harp in the Dyson Cancer Centre Atrium

Activities and highlights of 24/25

In the year of 24/25 the Soundbite Music Programme offered a variety of musical services, led by our Musician in Residence, Frankie Simpkins, who worked 1.5 days per week across the children's ward, NICU, and selected Older Patient Units (OPUs). Frankie brings a diverse skill set, including personalised live performances,

songwriting, ukulele lessons, and musical interactions enhanced by her iPad and recorded music. Her approach is entirely patient-led, adapting to the needs of each individual she works with. In addition to her regular ward visits, Frankie coordinated a referral program, enabling hospital staff to request musical visits for patients throughout the hospital, extending our reach beyond the typical wards. We maintain close connections with the Palliative Care team, Family Liaison Service, and Dementia Coordinators to ensure they are aware of the referral process. The lunchtime performance program offered live music performances in public areas of the hospital and across two OPU wards, once or twice a month, depending on funding. These performances were provided by musicians from Bath Folk Club and Live Music Now, selected for their diverse range of musical genres and on the day supported by our Friends of the RUH Soundbite volunteer Jess Kerridge. Additionally, Soundbite collaborated with the Music Department at King Edward's School in Bath, offering students opportunities to perform in public spaces within the RUH.



Musician in Residence, Frankie Simpkins performing on the wards

King Edwards School Musicians

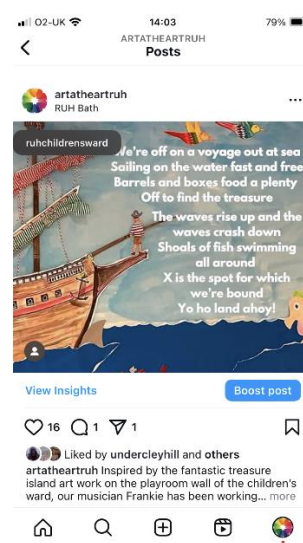
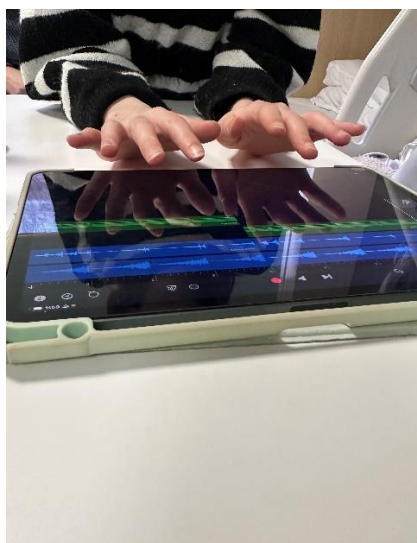
Key Performances and Events:

The 2024/2025 year was marked by several memorable musical performances and events that brought joy and comfort to patients, staff, and visitors. At Christmas, we had a stunning performance from the local choir Capella Nova in the main atrium, filling the hospital with the sound of beautiful Christmas carols that echoed down the corridors, attracting many people who stopped to listen. Another highlight was the performance by King Edward's School Baroque Ensemble, which captivated staff as they took a break after their shifts, and patients and visitors as they moved through the atrium. In addition, we introduced live music to the new Dyson Cancer Centre, with Josh Doughty, a talented musician from Live Music Now, playing the Kora (a West African harp) in the entrance hall and on the William Budd Ward. The performances received fantastic feedback from patients, visitors, and staff, and more performances by Josh are planned for the centre.

"Beautiful, calming and uplifting music. Made my day, thank you."

Carer, Dyson Cancer Centre Atrium

Frankie Simpkins, our Musician in Residence, continued her invaluable work on the children's ward, with songwriting being a particularly popular activity. She has worked with many patients on the children's ward, including working alongside the ward youth worker, helping one patient who was extremely anxious about moving to a CAHMS inpatient unit by guiding them through writing a song about their feelings. Afterward, the patient was more at ease and expressed a desire to put the song's lyrics on the wall of their new room. Frankie also collaborated with a patient in isolation to write a Christmas song, which was performed at the RUHX Christmas concert. Additionally, she worked over a number of weeks with a number of patients and their parents, creating a sea shanty inspired by artwork made by patients on the ward. A new opportunity that arose and something we will continue to offer and develop over the next year is instrumental offerings. Art at the Heart was contacted by a ward asking about whether we had a keyboard for a long-term isolated elderly patient who was a passionate pianist. Frankie brought in her own keyboard and following a conversation with the patient, printed sheet music for her to play. The patient expressed deep gratitude, saying, "You have no idea how much this means to me" and went onto to play the keyboard daily for the following 2 weeks before she was discharged. These performances and interactions highlight the profound impact of music in fostering a sense of connection and comfort for those in our care.



Creating a Sea Shanty with patients on the Children's ward inspired by the Artwork made during Artsparks participatory workshops in the playroom

Impact and Outcomes

Soundbite has received positive feedback from patients, visitors, and staff over the last year. Patients have described it as an unexpected pleasure, with one long term young patients mother noting that her child recognises Frankie's voice and listens for it from the corridor. Visitors have expressed appreciation, with one saying, "we were privileged to hear you sing today." Staff members have also shared enthusiasm, with comments like "I bet the other wards love you like we love you!" and "We have been waiting for you!" Additionally, a patient mentioned, "I would

have never thought I'd hear something like that here, it's cheered me up no end!" Staff have observed the uplifting impact of Frankie's performances, with one remarking, "I can literally feel the difference on the wards when Frankie is singing." A pharmacist praised the lunchtime performances in the atrium, calling them "lovely, brightening the atmosphere," while another staff member simply said, "you do a good job, we love it!" Overall, the programme is highly appreciated for its positive impact on the hospital environment.

Feedback:

On a scale from 1-10, my enjoyment of the live music is...
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10**
Not much Average Lots

Did taking part in this music session make a difference to your stay in hospital?
Yes No

Did you participate in a new musical activity e.g. Songwriting?
Yes **No**

Thoughts | Ideas | Feedback
Beautiful, calming and uplifting music.
Made my day. Thank you.

Live Music

Date: **6 11 24**

Are you a:
Patient ☐
Carer ☒
Staff member ☐
Other ☐

Where did you hear the music?
Atrium ☐
Courtyard ☐
Ward area ☐
Ward ☐ **DCC atrium**

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"Frankie has a super voice and entertained myself and other patients superbly. Great range of songs. 5 stars" Patient, OPU ward

"Very fun, engaging and makes you happy" Patient, Children's ward

"Love hearing your lovely voice" Patient

"Comforting, especially in the afternoon" Patient

"It was a lovely surprise to have music played on the ward, it cheered me up no end, more often please." Patient, Cheselden ward

"Very important to hear music, cheered me up, amazing!" Patient

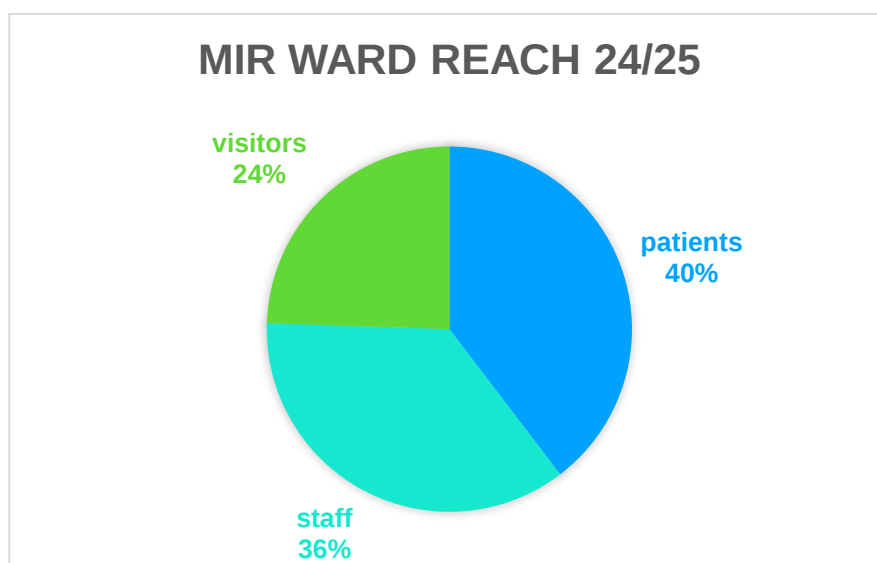
"Frankie was excellent, lovely voice and warm person. Great distraction for my granddaughter after treatment and a comfort with the familiarity of the songs."
Carer

"We will think of you now as you made our day. Come here anytime. Singing is out of this world." Patient

Numbers and Statistics

The Musician in Residence (MiR) has reached a total of **6,114** patients, staff and visitors over the course of the year April 2024 – March 2025.

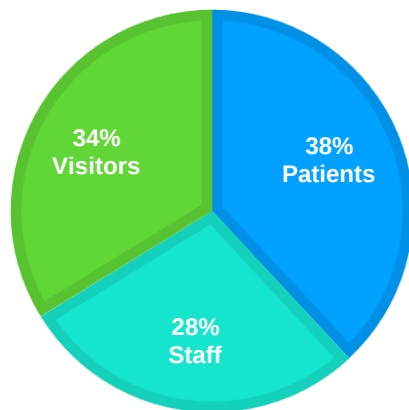
This pie chart below demonstrates the percentage of patients, staff and visitors reached. A total of 2401 patients have experienced Frankie's music visits this year.



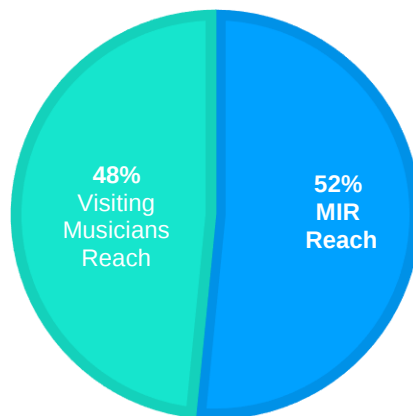
Our visiting musicians have reached **5742** people with their lunchtime performances in public spaces and on the wards for patients.

In total, the Soundbite music programme has reached **11856** patients, staff and visitors over the past year.

VISITING MUSICIANS REACH 24/25



SOUNDBITE TOTAL REACH



Soundbite has had a significant positive impact on both patient wellbeing and staff morale, creating a more uplifting and engaging hospital environment.

Impact on Patient Wellbeing and Mood:

The feedback from patients highlights that the programme has provided a welcome and unexpected source of joy and comfort. For many, particularly those who may be going through difficult treatments or extended hospital stays, the music has acted as a pleasant distraction and mood enhancer. One patient described how the performances “cheered me up no end,” suggesting that the music has a tangible effect on improving emotional wellbeing. The recognition of Frankie’s voice by a child patient is another example of how the music creates a sense of familiarity and comfort, particularly for younger patients who might feel anxious or isolated in the hospital setting. The opportunity to experience something outside of the typical hospital environment, such as live music, helps patients to feel more at ease and less focused on their medical condition, promoting a more positive hospital experience.

Impact on Staff Morale and Engagement:

For staff members, the programme has proven to be a morale booster. Several staff comments highlight how much they look forward to the music and the sense of joy it brings to the workplace. The anticipation of Frankie's performances, as expressed by a staff member saying, "Where have you been we've missed you the past few weeks!" reveals that the music is seen as a special event that staff eagerly look forward to. Additionally, the observation that staff "can literally feel the difference on the wards when Frankie is singing" suggests that the music has a profound impact on creating a more positive atmosphere, which can help reduce the stresses that healthcare workers face in a hospital environment.

The music also supports staff-patient relationships, giving shared moments of joy, often with singing together and sometimes dancing. Clinical and OT teams can begin assessments and consultations with a shared enjoyment of some music or talking about music, which can break down hesitation or worries from anxious patients.

The programme also plays a role in fostering a sense of community and connection among staff, as they come together to appreciate the performances. The comment from a pharmacist, "lovely, brightens the atmosphere!" highlights how the music serves to create a more engaging and lively environment, which can boost overall staff engagement and job satisfaction.

Overall, the Soundbite music programme contributes to a more vibrant, supportive, and positive atmosphere in the hospital, benefitting both patients and staff by improving mood, reducing stress, and enhancing the overall experience for everyone involved.

Looking ahead -

Looking ahead, we are excited to expand and enhance our staff wellbeing initiatives, including the introduction of a "Sing for Yourself" group. This drop-in session, an alternative to the traditional staff choir, will focus on relaxation, vocal and physical warm-ups, and simply enjoying singing for fun. Additionally, we are committed to further embedding the referral programme and Soundbite deeper into the hospital, working to ensure they regain the recognition and reach they had prior to COVID. We are also exploring the possibility of extending the musician in residence programme with an additional half-day session to increase its impact across more wards. Finally, we will continue to offer placement and volunteer opportunities for local students, providing valuable experiences while contributing to the hospital's vibrant community.

Thank you's -

Thank you to our core funders Friends of the RUH, The Joyce Fletcher Charitable Trust and RUHX Charity for the charitable funds and support to continue the Soundbite music programme.

Thank you to our partners King Edwards School music department, Live Music Now, Bath Folk Club and Bath Spa University.



Soundbite Images Oct 24 – Apr 25 (King Edwards School Music Department and Musician in Residence, Frankie Simpkins)