

Music in Our Bones**Funded: August 2012 £1,900**

In 2012 Port Community Fund supported Music in Our Bones to help develop the pilot 'WellSpring Singing' project in sheltered accommodation near Felixstowe. The singing sessions provide the elderly residents at the sheltered accommodation with a regular joyful activity which helps reduce social isolation by meeting up fortnightly with fellow singers from the local community who join them. The project has been a huge success, becoming an important part in people's lives. Music in Our Bones has provided two case studies to demonstrate how beneficial 'WellSpring Singing' has been to people.

Mrs X Case Study

Mrs X lives in sheltered accommodation as one of their oldest residents aged 97. She has no close relatives living nearby, meaning she rarely has visitors. Her physical frailty is such that she hardly leaves the building, so her life experience is becoming sadly limited. Mrs X is someone who has lived a fascinating and full life in the past. Her life story is one of considerable adventure, as she has lived abroad both in Europe and in the Middle East. When Mrs X attended WellSpring singing initially, she was quite withdrawn and unresponsive to the sessions, her posture was slumped and she joined in quietly if at all. But, with regular attendance Mrs X has developed important relationships in the group, sharing both her life story and great sense of humour happily with others. She clearly enjoys the hustle and bustle of people coming in from the local community. As she says, "I enjoy meeting people outside our usual sphere".

Mrs X's breathing and vocal confidence have improved tremendously and she now sings with gusto. She says she loves the singing and has shown a huge improvement in her ability to learn new songs, memorising songs from different parts of the world without difficulty. She seems alert and enthusiastically engaged in every session, sitting with improved posture and joining in often with conducting the group. She's looking forward to singing in front of a large audience on Sunday 7th July at St Peters on the Waterfront as our eldest singer in a great celebration of Music in Our Bones' singing groups.

Mr Y Case Study

Mr Y is 40 and has moderate learning difficulties. He lives in supported accommodation near Felixstowe and has a voluntary part time job. Mr Y attends 'WellSpring Singing' with his father who comes over from Ipswich to spend the evening with him fortnightly. They have both spoken of how important it has been to them to find this new and social activity which they can enjoy together.

Mr Y was initially quite withdrawn and anxious in the group often needing reassurance that he was getting things right. In fact, he has a beautiful strong tenor voice and increasingly picks up material quickly and is aware of what an asset he is in 'holding' a part. Mr Y explains, "although I'm a nervous person, I became relaxed and happy after a singing session."

Mr Y has also become very involved in the community aspect of the group, taking 'orders' for teas and coffees, teasing people about the cocktails he could prepare for them! He often jokes with members of the group, and importantly now has the confidence to share new challenges he is facing and to seek encouragement and support from them. Mr Y suffers with anxiety, social isolation and depression and says that the singing sessions have really improved his ability to cope and feel good about his life. Being able to help others in the group has helped Mr Y have a sense of purpose, and he has spoken of how much he is enjoying getting to know the much older people in the group. The sessions offer him a positive new activity to enjoy with his father, a new circle of support and a real sense of belonging and achievement.