

# 'Thank You for the Music' : Exploring the Functional and Emotional Impact of a Community Aphasia Friendly Choir

Vicky Guise (Music Therapist, Chroma), Esther Goodhew (Speech and Language Therapist, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board)

## Background:

Communication disorders and impairments, such as aphasia, dysarthria and apraxia are frequently occurring for patients who have experienced an acquired brain injury (ABI). These complex challenges have been identified as some of the **'most prevalent and persistent problems after ABI'**<sup>1</sup>. As well as the functional communication challenges experienced in everyday life, previous research has demonstrated a **reduction in the experience of social connection to others and a reduced quality of life**<sup>2</sup>. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that **group singing interventions** can support those experiencing communication difficulties to improve both functional outcomes<sup>3</sup> as well as improving mood and quality of life<sup>4</sup>. The purpose of this research is to measure **the impact of an eight-week aphasia friendly choir project** created as a partnership between an NHS Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) Service, Chroma Therapies and Cardiff Metropolitan University (CMU) SALT Department to explore the impact on **communication, confidence and mood** of its participants.

## Method:

Six patients attended the eight-week pilot who had experienced a range of ABI's, including Stroke, Parkinson's Disease and Dementia. These sessions incorporated exercises to bring focus to **breathing technique, vocal dynamic and speech sound production** before singing familiar songs to encourage **word finding**.

The exercises and song lyrics were presented using **aphasia friendly resources** and songs were incorporated following requests by patients to develop a sense of ownership of the group. Patients were supported by Speech and Language Therapy students from Cardiff Metropolitan University, as well as a Music Therapist and Speech and Language Therapist



Figure 1: Example of aphasia friendly song lyric presentation

**Mood scores** were collected using an aphasia-friendly mood scale pre-and post each session when appropriate. Qualitative data was also collected from the patients to explore their experience of the choir through the **Patient Reported Experience Measure (PREM)** and comments made during the pilot project.

## Results:

Mood scores obtained suggest that **patients' moods improved significantly** following participation in the choir ( $p = 0.001$ ).

Quotes collected through self-reported outcome measures and verbal comments highlighted the **multi-factorial benefits of the choir**.

Attending the group has helped me manage my condition	All Agreed/Strongly Agreed
How likely are you to recommend a friend of family member if they needed similar care or treatment	All Likely/Extremely Likely
How would you describe the change you have experienced during the program	All Somewhat Better/A Great Deal Better

Figure 2: Results from PREM

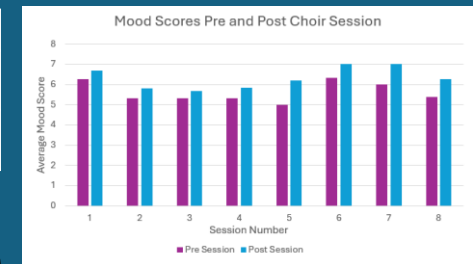


Figure 3: Pre and Post Session Mood Scores

"Fun and beneficial, 5 star!"  
Carer

"invaluable in many ways"  
Patient

"Reminder to use my voice properly"  
Patient

"This has been a fabulous adventure back into singing"  
Patient

"Please continue this experience for other patients"  
Patient

## Conclusions:

This project has suggested that **a group singing intervention can have positive impacts for patients who have experienced a range of ABI's**. These can include **increased mood** and perception of being able to **manage their conditions**. However, these results are limited by the small number of patients included and the brief length of the intervention. The researchers hope to use this pilot to explore the lasting impacts on emotional wellbeing and communication of group singing interventions in future projects.

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