

SHAPESHIFTER

PRODUCTIONS

Changing lives through music

TESTIMONIALS

THE SMILING SESSIONS

We have many touching & life-changing stories to tell from the last 17 years. Here are some examples from the most recent years:

Case Studies in Redbridge:

An elderly couple who were living in the same Sanctuary Care home in Redbridge suffered from mild dementia and had become distant and disorientated with each other. Their daughter made a point of attending the sessions, as she knew they loved to sing. They would become particularly animated over the two hour period. Gradually, she was moved to tears to witness her parents holding hands, hugging each other and kissing their daughter. She had her parents back, and their behaviour and quality of life continued to improve from week to week.

Toni suffered from anorexia and anxiety and wouldn't normally leave her apartment. After Alison went to speak to her at her door to try and encourage her to join in, Tony was subsequently always first in for the singing, and became very confident and proactive. Her therapist couldn't believe it. By the end of the project, Toni had joined the local church choir and was loving it.



Case Study at Amber Court, Stratford, LB Newham:

We delivered weekly sessions in Newham, for people aged 18+ with mental & physical health issues of varying degrees hoping to be rehabilitated. One young man in his 30s was in a wheelchair, clearly unhappy, in a lot of pain. We found out he had had an accident at work and that he is paralysed down one side and had been told he would never be able to use this side again. He used to play guitar, and loved the sessions. One of our musicians lent

him a small guitar to see if he could play it and stayed behind to offer tuition. By the end of the project, the resident told us this had been life-changing for him and that this was the first year since the accident that he felt like celebrating his birthday. He now owns 3 guitars and has set up a studio in his home.

Stephens Court residents, LB Newham, loved coming to join in sessions at Bishops Wilfred Woods House. We have known them for quite some time, when Stephens Court was owned by Genesis Housing, who have since merged with Nothing Hill Housing. One particular resident has never spoken or shown any engagement or reaction in all the 4 years we've worked with him. Usually only the tea break has interested him. By about the 4th session with them all, he started to animate, move side to side in his wheelchair vigorously and sing! He was smiling and so happy, we couldn't believe it, it was such an achievement for him to be so engaged and comfortable about expressing himself.

During one of the sessions at Heavitree Court, LB Waltham Forest, a regular participant began to talk about the importance of love when she saw what the next song was going to be in the songbook, "Secret Love". She had the courage to stand up and emotionally explain that this was her and her late lover's song. She spoke about the importance of this relationship and how she missed her lover, then asked if she could sing it with the Smiling musicians in front of everyone-at least 25 were present that day. At the end everyone clapped and were quite moved. The music clearly tapped into this loss and allowed her to express her emotion within the group.

Conrad Court, London: Benjamin is a young resident who always sat as far away as possible in the oversized communal room. The first week he had his head on the table throughout, foot or fingers tapping. The 2nd week, lying on the sofa then moving to a faraway table, out of sight. The 3rd week, he was sitting closer, with his back to the session and again during Session 4, but he kept throwing his arms in the air and singing out loud and cheering at the end. He also requested Tina Turner and spoke to Alison. Major breakthrough!

Cumbria House (Folkestone): David, who usually sits and smiles but doesn't make much noise, went to the loo during Edelweiss. He returned half way through the song, stood in front of Pete, and sang at the top of his voice to him saying things like 'wonderful' and 'beautiful' then at the very end he held the last note on 'ever' for so long that the whole room turned to look at him in amazement. Then applauded him. Very special moment.

Leander Court, LB Lewisham: Angela had stage 4 cancer and very little time to live. She rarely joined a group activity, but made a special effort to attend and absolutely loved The Smiling Sessions. Sadly, she could only attend the first one before she was confined to her bed. The family asked the Smiling team to go and play a song by her bedside the week before she passed. They sang a song by her all-time favourite singer, Elvis Presley. It was a powerful and very emotional moment for all concerned. The room was packed with family and they said they would never forget that moment.

Tudor Lodge (Folkestone): a woman with severe dementia, not usually engaging very much with her daughter, who comes to visit on a regular basis, lit up and started singing during the session. Her daughter was attending on that day and at some point, they got up to dance together and were hugging and laughing. The daughter was very emotional by the end of the session and burst into tears as she explained to Alison: "It's been ages since I've been able to engage with mum, and today, I feel I have had her back for a while. Thank you so much!"



Buckland Court, Dover: Tony, 80+years, who attended the sessions, was at first very shy and used to stand as far away as possible, moving about quite a lot from one side of the communal room to the other. The musicians always acknowledged him by his name and knew he is a huge Elvis fan (he always wore an Elvis T-shirt!). He progressively started to gain trust and engaged by the 3rd session, when he started singing, giggling and smiling and the members of staff said this was unusual. During Session 4, he clearly wanted to sing with the band, so they invited him up for his favourite Elvis songs to sing with them. By the end of the project he was always dancing and singing very happily, engaging with the musicians, being in front of his friends, singing with the band. Major breakthrough!



Quotes from participants:

"I enjoy The Smiling Sessions Group singing and the songs that they sing - songs that take me back to my childhood and growing up days. I also enjoy more than ever when I am not feeling very well - they cheer me up more than ever." Resident at Clifton House (Waltham Forest)

"They brighten up our lives and it's wonderful to hear and sing all the songs we know the best!". Resident at Park Court (LB Hammersmith & Fulham)

"To exercise our body in a relaxed environment while we are singing and to meet more people and friends. Please come back next year." Resident at Lee Samuels (LB Lambeth)

"Because they were oozing out joy and happiness throughout the room. I could listen to them every day" Resident at Forest Dene (LB Redbridge)

"It makes sorrows drown away" Resident at Clive Lloyd (LB Newham)

"I love singing! It stimulates energy. Always look forward to it." Service user at Oasis Infinite Care (LB Waltham Forest)

"It is like a breath of fresh air on a hot summer day" Resident at Bishop Wilfred Wood Court (LB Newham)

"It is a wonderful experience, helps me to relax" resident at Ivydale Road (LB Southwark)

"I was very impressed with their performance. It was sensational. I loved it very much." Resident at Donnybrook Court (LB Tower Hamlets)

"Because it makes us feel young again and I always look forward to every other weekday and attend without fail. I'm looking forward to seeing them again next year. They make us happy and a lot of socialising. It's good to be with happy people like Shapeshifter Productions. Thank you so much." Resident at Len Williams Court (LB Brent)

"I have depression and it really helps me. It helps me to get out of the flat and spend time with others which I love." Resident at Leander Court (LB Lewisham)

"I so enjoyed this music session. A great way to rid the problems of today. Splendid songs I know and love. Please come back." Resident at Albion Road (LB Hackney)

"It made me feel happy and it was very welcoming and engaging" Resident at Rose Court (LB Hackney)

"I am happy I can take the book home and can sing with my grandchildren" resident at Elmwood Court

"Lovely to meet up with friends & neighbours for a good sing song. Brings back so many good memories of happy times" resident at Darwin Court (LB Southwark)

"Makes me happy and I end up singing all day. The musicians are so lovely and happy. I just love them." Resident at Churchill House (Brighton & Hove)

"It helps to keep your lungs strong, to sing and be happy" resident at Wells Lodge (Folkestone)

"Keeps my mind working as thinking about the songs" resident at Laburnum House (Folkestone)

"Brilliant entertaining and we love to join in with the old songs. Hope to see them often. It brightens up our day." Resident at Sunny Corner (Dover)

"Thank you so so much for making us happy. This is what it's all about-smiling and to be happy" resident at Hayter Court (LB Redbridge)

"A lovely social gathering with other residents. A chance to have fun (which I did) and avoid social isolation. Thanks! Also to use my singing voice and exercise my lungs." Resident at Lime Court (Essex)



Quotes from members of staff:

"I must confess with their first session I thought to myself do I really need to do this every week, I'm far too busy! However, as the weeks went on it warmed my heart to see the smiles on the clients' faces and how motivated they were to sing. Not to mention their addictive songs! Even got my kids singing BellaMama! It was my Thursday tonic after a stressful morning. It helped by beautiful music, lovely personalities. It's impossible not to smile after the group. Well done to you all. Look forward to seeing you all again for the next sessions." Carer at Day Centre for Mental Health, NHS Redbridge

"Just wanted to write and thank you for the song books and CD that you left with us after the last sessions that you did here. The staff have in particular found them very useful when organising their own singing sessions with the residents as for many of the staff, they do not know the words of the songs. The song books are proving to be very beneficial and have given the staff a lot of confidence, as they can now sing along with the residents. In turn the residents get even more out of the activity and staff and residents are having fun together!!" Karen Martindale, Manager, George Mason Lodge, Waltham Forest, London

"There have been a number of significant successes with the programme. Customer engagement has increased since the start of the session. What we have found is that customers who never normally engage with social activities have taken part in this project. There are a number of reasons for this which includes, they found it fun, they remembered the songs of old, they felt part of a group without having to directly talk to people. We have also found that the new group who did attend have started to attend other events at the scheme. Customers have also passed the message on to others who have then in turn attended sessions. There has also been a great deal of flexibility and customer involvement within these sessions, this is another reason success. Customers have suggested songs they like and the next time the sessions are delivered the song is included on the song sheet. Customers always look forward to the sessions and are keen for it to continue." Genesis Housing Association, partner

"Your musician's left us a good few hours ago,(...)But their songs and the joy they all brought along is still with us. Can I take this opportunity to say what a fantastic morning we all had over at Bramley Gardens. People came out of their flats and visited from other schemes and we had a pretty good turn-out. The Xmas theme went down well too and the songbooks were great to follow when people didn't know the words. I haven't sung like that for a long time. At the end of the session, I overheard one resident say 'Thanks for uplifting us and making us feel very special' and that's exactly what your musicians did. Thanks so much for the pilot session, we all really look forward to partnering and working together more in 2018." Notting Hill Genesis Housing, Volunteer Programme Officer

"The Smiling Sessions contribute to a better atmosphere in the scheme, encouraging feeling of togetherness and friendship among customers and staff." Care staff, Lee Samuels, Lambeth, London

"The residents become more socially active as The Smiling Sessions give them more confidence" Care staff, Forest Dene

"The activity stimulates the service users wellbeing. They are all engaged to the singing. The music reminds them about the past. They stated they would like the sessions to continue." Member of staff, Southwold, Hackney, London

"Some of our service users do not attend activities but when it comes to music they seem to really enjoy and participate in the singing. Some service users are quiet, reserved and will not participate but from my own observation this changes with music especially when the musicians interact with them which they do on each and every session. There is one particular service user whose condition tends to be very sad and becomes depressed but when she is at The Smiling Sessions it changes her whole persona. Fantastic, we aim to reduce social isolation and loneliness and these sessions certainly support this. Well done, thank you for offering us this opportunity." Staff, Century Court, Hackney, London

"Your team is doing a fantastic job, supporting Hackney Housing with care service users with music therapy. This is evident in the feedback that the service users give after the sessions. There is evidence that music is a very powerful tool for service users with different disabilities, especially the service users living with Dementia. After the sessions the service users start talking about the memories that music brings to them. In their words, Music reminds them of the past. The service users are very happy with the choice of music, and they continue to ask when the smiling team will visit again. I hope we get more sessions. Regards, Hannah Likowo Teke" Welfare & Activity Officer, Hackney Housing with Care



"Just wanted to say a huge thank you for The Smiling Sessions at Churchill House on Friday, it was very much enjoyed by all who attended. I must tell you that two maybe three tenants that attended suffer with anxiety/depression and both told me how uplifting the session was. One lady smiled like I've not seen her smile since pre covid and it was so nice to see how the session made a difference!

I am really hoping we receive funding for further Smiling Sessions later on in the year! This is the most exciting and fulfilling session we have had at Churchill House since the last time the shapeshifter's team attended, quite some years ago !!Makes me happy. Many thanks, kind regards. Jenny" Churchill House, Brighton & Hove

"Our clients enjoyed The Smiling Sessions from start to finish and it was clear from participation and their reactions that they very much enjoyed it. Smiling Sessions helped clients that would not normally participate in activities participate. Thank you very much all. The sessions provided to Hatfield lodge was enjoyed by all and hopefully in the near future we will see you again. kind regards Hatfield Lodge team." Folkestone

"Our dementia clients enjoy the music, clapping and singing along. Tudor Lodge is a busy home and we all enjoy the sessions, it is really worthwhile. Clients appear happy and smiley and move along to the music". Staff at Tudor Lodge, Folkestone

"The music was upbeat and the residents all knew the songs. The singers are a lively band. All residents engaged either with both singing and tapping hands / feet and dancing on their chair or actual dancing with the activity supervisors. All residents appeared happy throughout and at the end, at each session, they always wanted more and were looking forward to the next session." Staff at Saltwood, Hythe

"I just wanted to say how much we have enjoyed having Alison, Pete and Neil here at Buckland Court and we are sad that today is possibly the last session. Their sessions have made such an impact on many people's lives here and have brought staff and residents together in an enjoyable activity. What's so amazing about these sessions is that it is accessible to everyone, there is no age, gender, disability or other type of barrier for joining in. Most importantly, no judgements, it doesn't matter on the ability level of singing or dancing. From all of us here at Buckland, we really are thankful." Dover

Creative Agency, We Are Social, chose to support us over 2 years, volunteering at sessions and raising funds.

"Volunteering with Shapeshifter Productions was a great experience. Their music and infectious personalities brought a huge amount of joy to the audience. There was singing aplenty and even localised outbreaks of dancing. It was an honour to be able to help them out in my own small way and I wouldn't hesitate to do it again." Rory, employee

Other quotes:

"I cannot highlight enough the profound significance of The Smiling Sessions initiative in its attempt to significantly improve the overall physical psychological health and wellbeing of those residents in care homes and sheltered housing.. The Smiling Projects contribution will undoubtedly enrich the brain processing speed of all residents and will potentially influence in a positive way, their mood regulation state and both episodic and semantic memory processing. The array of genres and songs together with the colourful visual effects and rich tones will facilitate happy memories of events in their entire life span and add meaning to the quality of their everyday lives." Dr Arthur Cassidy C. Psychol, Chartered Psychologist, Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society.

"The Mercers' company has supported Shapeshifters for seven years and has always been impressed by how the organisation places the older people at the heart of activity, works collaboratively with partners and is always aiming for self-sufficiency through a sustainable exit strategy. I have personally attended one of the sessions and saw firsthand the level of engagement in the older people. There is a strong evidence for the power of music, and expertly curated by the team, this was there to see in the sessions. People were moving, engaging and connecting." David Terrace – Grants Programmes Manager, Mercers' Company.

"I just wanted you to know how much I enjoyed the visit last week. When I walked into the home all the residents were either sleeping in their chairs or just sitting and not even talking to each other. Once the singing started it was a transformation – some were even dancing. What a fantastic job Alison, Pete and Neil do – and I imagine it is not always the easiest audience, but what a difference it makes to those in the homes. I will be reporting back to Trustees on my visit at their next meeting." Emma Long, Roger De Haan Charitable Trust



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