

*The Towersey Foundation  
Providing Music Therapy in Palliative Care*

# **TOWERSEY NEWS**



## **Music therapy at Dove House**

The following is an extract from a very full report submitted by Briony Ming, music therapist at Dove House Hospice, Hull;

“I want to start by asking a question: what does music mean to you? Some people can’t live without it, others feel that they don’t have much of an interest in it. To some people it can be a lifeline. However you feel about music though, it accompanies us throughout our lives.

Music can be a great way of expressing feelings that we may have inside us, but just don’t know how to put them into words. Also, through illness, some people are not able to express themselves verbally. Victor Hugo once said “music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent”. Part of my job is to give people a different way of expressing themselves. This may be through improvisation – playing instruments together or making the music up as we go along – when words aren’t working.

*You don’t have to have any prior experience of playing an instrument to take part in music therapy. So many times I hear people say “I don’t play any instruments, I won’t be any good at that”. The point of music therapy isn’t ‘being good at music’, it’s about being; it’s about a different way of coping with the experience that we are going through.*

As well as improvisation, I may just listen to songs with them and talk about why they’ve chosen particular songs and how that makes them feel. Part of the reason we like certain songs is that we identify with the words. It’s comforting to know that somebody else has felt the same way. It can also feel safer to say things through somebody else’s words, so we might use a song to give a message to somebody. Another way of communication is actually writing songs with a message. Again, no prior experience is necessary. I will ask the person what it is they want to say and we’ll form that into a song. I can help them write the music to go with the words and we can record the song onto a CD to give to whoever the message is for. When we create something, we feel good about it and it gives us a sense of achievement and wellbeing.

When people are facing loss, life can seem like a lot of effort and they might not see the point of trying any more. Another thing that I do with people is get them to talk about their life; what’s happened to them; important events and memorable moments. Music therapy can take place in groups or one to one sessions.

The other part of my work is simply playing for people who may be tired, breathless, in pain, anxious or agitated. Music can be calming and soothing and encourages relaxation which can aid pain relief and induce sleep.

Music can provide fun and laughter in any environment. We want to challenge people’s thoughts on this and show them the value of life and of giving people the opportunity to live that life as fully as possible even in the face of serious illness and death. Music is one of the ways that we can help people to find enjoyment and I hope to bring that enjoyment to many in my work at Dove House”.

March 2010

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## New Trustee

The Trustees are delighted that Tony Brooks-Daw has joined them; he is a long-time supporter of the Towersey Foundation.

## Hospice News

The Towersey Foundation is due to hand over the running of the music therapy appointment at Rainbows Children's Hospice, Loughborough, at the end of May. The appointment has proved to be very successful and the hospice has extended its care to the 18-25 age group.

The appointment at Dove House Hospice, Hull, developed so well in the first six months that the music therapist has been working on a full-time basis since the beginning of February.

The project at Hospice-in-the-Weald, Kent, is due to end this month (March 2010).

Fund-raising for the new Music On Wheels 2 project is continuing. It is hoped to set up this appointment during the summer.

## Future Events Diary

**'ExeVox, 8th May 2010 at St. Andrew's in Ipplepen'**, ExeVox is an award-winning, auditioning chamber choir of around twenty musicians based in Exeter. The music is varied, ranging from Baroque pieces to contemporary and from serious to witty. The Exevox website is: [www.exevox.org.uk](http://www.exevox.org.uk)

**'Riviera Concert Brass with Soprano Jenny Abbott, 15th September 2010, 7:30pm at The Avenue Church, Newton Abbot'**, Riviera Concert Brass have very kindly offered to organise another superb concert in support of Towersey and The Avenue Church, catering for a wide variety of musical tastes.

**'The Big Sing, (Newton Abbot Music Hub) at Stover School, Newton Abbot'**, A new collaboration of musicians, charities (of which Towersey is one), music educators and trainers is about to be launched in Newton Abbot. It will take the form of an information sharing network of like minds and common aims to put Newton Abbot's music scene firmly on the map.

Please visit [www.newtonabbotmusicclub.org](http://www.newtonabbotmusicclub.org) for more details of this event.

*If you wish to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact us **preferably** by email ([chairman@towerseyfoundation.org.uk](mailto:chairman@towerseyfoundation.org.uk)) with your contact details. Enabling us to send out communication via email saves the charity much needed funds.*

*Alternatively, please provide your details by telephone on: 01626 365878 or use this tear-off reply strip. Thank you.*

## Creative Music Therapy Groups

The Newton Abbot Creative Music Therapy Group now meets regularly at Coombeswood House Care Home, Kingsteignton. These groups are organised by Val Elms and supported by Rosemary Deacon, both of whom are volunteers. The sessions are led by Claire Phillips, music therapist. There is a warm up session of gentle exercises for body and voice followed by rhythm activities using percussion instruments. Next comes a singing session of old favourites; there are large print song books available but most of the group know the songs off by heart. After an enthusiastic medley of songs the tea-tray makes a welcome appearance! At the December session carols and mince pies were included in the programme!

*"The residents really do enjoy it. They look forward to the sessions and it brings the outside world in to them. All of them enjoy music and can relate to it regardless of their different needs. Some of our residents with dementia can no longer put a sentence together but they can sing the songs still because they are so deeply rooted. We so much appreciate the visits from Towersey".*

*Comment from Barbara Byrne at Coombeswood House.*

St. Benet's and The Croft Care Homes have provided positive feedback on the new music therapy project stating it is very beneficial for their patients. Bramble Down Nursing Home has reported similar benefits.

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