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### **Exploring approaches to community music delivery by practitioners with and without additional support needs**

A qualitative study

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## **Exploring approaches to community music delivery by practitioners with and without Additional Support Needs: a qualitative study**

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### **Introduction**

Community Music (CM) is increasingly recognized as providing positive effects upon the lives and musicality of people with Additional Support Needs (ASN). It also offers an important gateway to those excluded or alienated from conventional musical institutions and structures into music making. However, people with ASN can face particular barriers in becoming people who provide, rather than receive, music (e.g, musicians, teachers, community musicians). Tomlinson (2017) defines such barriers as environmental, structural and attitudinal, with combinations of each possible. Despite a growing number of examples of people with ASN gaining skills in delivering music education (Laes and Westerlund, 2018) and music therapy (Kalendaridis, 2020), more research is needed to fully understand career pathways in music, and particularly community music, for those with ASN. In the field of CM, there is an even greater need, given the influence that facilitator characteristics have on what is delivered, to understand how CM delivery by people with ASN may replicate or diverge from the practice of those without ASN, and how greater inclusion in the profession might transform or extend CM for people with ASN.

In this article we employ ‘ASN’ as the preferred term in (name of country) (redacted citation). It is also a legal term, such that a person has additional support needs if they cannot fully access and benefit from education without help which is extra to or different from their peers (redacted citation). ASN can be due to a variety of factors such as physical disability or Autism. The term is intended to be inclusive (redacted) and to recognize that people should have the right not to be defined by medical diagnosis or personal information (Goodley et al. 2019), as this should be private to the individual (United Nations 2006).

Unlike other types of music interventions, CM has opposed definition, as within the field ‘standardising’ is seen to be contrary to the underlying values of the practice (Camlin and Zeserson 2018; Lonie 2018; Higgins 2012). CM has been conceptualized as a ‘sister’ to music education and music therapy (Willingham, 2021). Community music therapy (CoMT) has emerged as a distinct field of practice from music therapy, from a realisation that music therapists’ skills could be reassessed and recontextualized to provide therapeutic benefits to wider groups in non-medical settings (Pavlicevic 2004). Therefore, CM can be informed by a wide range of practical and theoretical fields (MacDonald et al. 2012) depending on the practitioners’ knowledge and experience as well as the participants’ needs. CM practice can aim to have musical, social, educational, health and/or wellbeing outcomes, with any of these forming the main focus, or indeed can have purposely flexible objectives (MacDonald et al. 2012).

Both practices and practitioner backgrounds are recognized as diverse in CM. Nevertheless, approaches to achieving such outcomes are often based on the principle of inclusion (Bartleet and Higgins 2018). This has a practical application in ensuring that all participants experience a meaningful way in to making music. Another key aspect for CM facilitators is to ensure that opportunities for participants’ ‘personal and social engagement’ are available as well as opportunities for them to develop musically (Bartleet and Higgins 2018: 9). Reflexivity, a commitment to personal growth and that of others, as well as the ability to apprehend complex situations and select the best strategy to address difficulties have also been outlined as important for CM practitioners (Camlin and Zeserson, 2018).

Expert CM practitioner’s experiences and processes have been well documented (e.g., see Higgins, 2012; MacDonald et al. 2012; Stige et al. 2017). However, investigating the

pathways of people at different levels of experience would improve understanding of whether there are common elements to their professional practice that make the effects of CM replicable in different settings with different individuals involved. Furthermore, the paramusical aspects of CM workshops (i.e., processes which happen along with musical actions) may be key to the impacts observed and it is therefore important to understand the personal skills, reflective processes and strategies that practitioners use in workshops along with musical activities. Paramusical processes are described as such to emphasize the integratedness of musical and communicative actions, rather than ‘extramusical’ which can be understood as outcomes from music participation such as increases in confidence (Stige and Aarø 2011; Stige 2012). Both musical and paramusical aspects can be resources to develop collaboration and participation in workshops (Stige 2012).

While the experiences, aesthetic approaches and development of musicians with ASN through participation in CM have been researched (e.g., Baker and Green 2017; Docherty 2019), there is a gap in apprehending the experiences and challenges they face in delivering workshops. In music education, Laes and Westerlund (2018) investigated student teachers’ perceptions of teaching delivered to them by musicians with ASN, proposing that music education needs to expand ideas of professionalism and how expertise is conceptualized. Opportunities for students with ASN to become included in music education practices (both formal and informal) are unequal compared to those without, and there are very few professionals with ASN to provide positive role models (Moscardini et al. 2013; Laes and Schmidt 2016). Importantly, to research the experiences of practitioners with ASN, their ‘expertise in matters concerning their own lives’ must inform research methods (Knox *et al.*, 2000: 49). The scarcity of professionals with an ASN, and the time and consideration needed to hear their voice and analyse their views requires us to go beyond mainstream research

practice. For example, lay researchers from the communities being researched can provide access to experiences, interpretations and views which are usually not possible for researchers, thus increasing relevance of findings (Knox et al. 2000; Newell and South 2009). Another important reason for involving lay researchers is informed by overarching aims of increasing equity and empowerment through participation in research (Lindsey and McGuinness 1998).

### Research with vulnerable groups

While there has been a movement to include people who use disability services (often referred to as service users) in research to improve these services (Cameron et al. 2019), they are often not fully recognized as equal to other stakeholders (Cameron, Moore and Nutt 2019; McDonald et al. 2021). The failure to fully recognize service users can lead them to feel diminished and that participation in future research and consultations is not worth the personal cost (Cameron et al. 2019). Ensuring transparency about the ‘extent of power sharing’ possible can address this issue (McDonald et al. 2021: 103). *Nothing about us without us* (Charlton 1998), an early example of disability activist research, has provided an often-cited phrase and influenced approaches to disability research (Goodley 2019). However, more investigation is needed into the nature of participation and relationships to address both inevitable challenges and transformational possibilities which may arise in such work (Goodley et al. 2017; McDonald et al. 2021). Fostering a sense of belonging; maintaining long relationships where possible; employing flexible, inclusive ways for participation; ensuring all have agency; and committing to reflexivity have all been proposed as crucial features of ‘becoming an ally and advocate’ in research with people with ASN (McDonald et al. 2021: 102).

## Background to the study

Previous studies investigating social (Redacted 2019) and wellbeing (Redacted 2020) impacts of CM workshops delivered by the music charity, Limelight Music, employed two lay researchers with ASN to contribute to observations and analysis. These lay researchers are fourth and fifth authors on this paper. The second and sixth authors co-authored the first study and first, second, third and sixth authors co-authored the second study. The second and sixth authors have worked with the organisation (e.g., as workshop facilitators, researchers and board members) in recent years and during earlier iteration of Limelight (Sounds of Progress). The first study found that music workshops for a group of young adults with ASN led to an ongoing enthusiasm to engage in music; wider recognition of musicality; increased self-confidence; being happier, more relaxed, and/or enthusiastic; better ability to interact with unfamiliar situations and people; and unprecedented sustainment of participation in social activities (Redacted 2019). A second study demonstrated improvements in participant's self-expression, confidence, mood, and social skills across three groups of varied ages and abilities in different areas (urban, semi-rural and rural) following workshops led by an expanded range of facilitators (Redacted 2020). In this paper, we turn to investigating experiences of the CM practitioners who delivered workshops in these two studies. Through this research we provide a detailed examination of how one practitioner with ASN and four without ASN, at different stages of their careers, understood their practice.

The following questions guided the investigation:

How do community music practitioners understand their personal approaches in delivering community music to diverse groups?

How can accounts about community music practice from diverse practitioners contribute to understanding extramusical impacts across different settings?

How does a musician with ASN experience becoming a community musician, and how does this resemble or differ from the accounts of musicians without ASN?

### **Project and interviewee information**

Limelight Music (LM), a Scottish charity, has over 30 years' experience working with individuals of all ages with ASN and is Scotland's largest employer of musicians with a disability. As well as investigating distinct impacts of workshops, an important practical aspect of the project was for two expert practitioners to deliver training in workshop leading to three trainees, one with ASN. All trainees had experience in workshop assisting for the organisation. In the workshops<sup>1</sup>, there were always at least three musicians (with at least one expert present) delivering CM activities to diverse groups of participants with ASN.

Information about the participants is given in Table 1.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1. Practitioner information

Limelight personnel	Information
Gordon Dougall	Founder member with 30 years of experience leading workshops.  Professional Musical Director, composer, writer and theatre director.

Fletcher Mathers	<p>Founder member with 30 years of experience leading workshops.</p> <p>Actor with the National Theatre of Scotland.</p> <p>Professional singer and writer</p>
Catriona Kirk	<p>Recent member (<math>\approx</math> 4 years experience with LM). Drama training in HE and 12 years of instrumental music lessons.</p>
Lennie Holt	<p>Recent member (<math>\approx</math> 18 months experience with LM). Drama practitioner with 10 years experience delivering workshops with ASN participants. Mainly self-taught musician with sporadic singing lessons over 15 years.</p>
Joseph Delaney	<p>Long-time member (21 years) beginning as a workshop participant at school. He has 9 years professional experience as a musician.</p> <p>He has assisted in LM workshops for 8 years and has a BA (Applied Music).</p>

## Methods

Qualitative methods were adopted, as they are concerned with how people understand themselves (Willig, 2001). Additionally, inductive enquiry with a qualitative approach is well suited to examining how practitioners describe their idiosyncratic ways of working (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2014). Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the purpose of capturing participant's beliefs while providing flexibility to explore interesting tangents

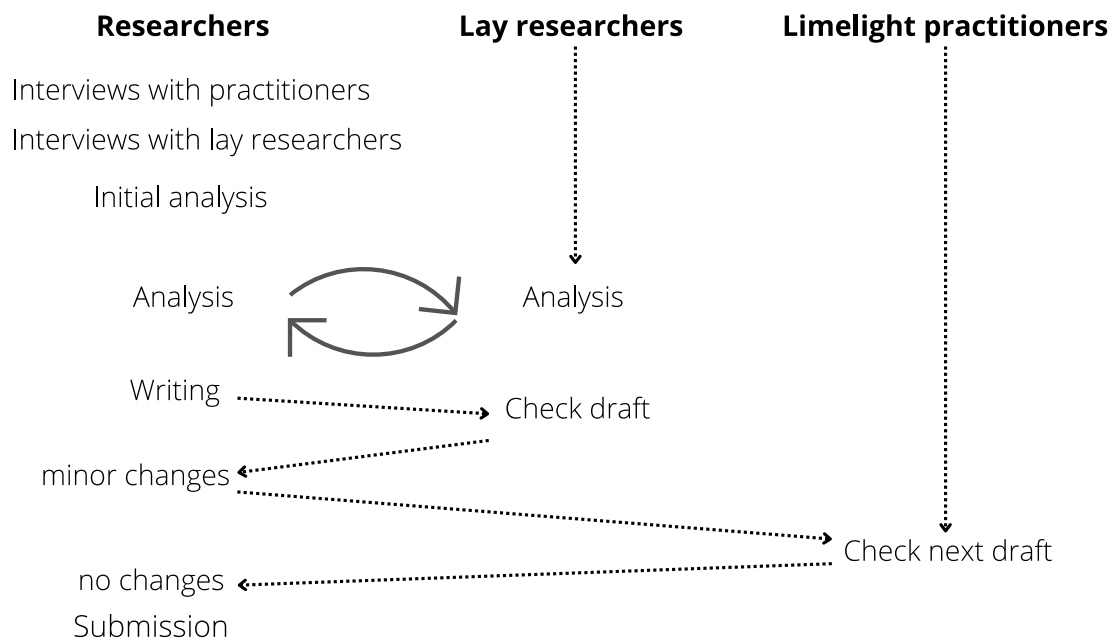


(Willig 2001). All five practitioners who delivered workshops in this project were interviewed.

As with previous work (2019; 2020), two lay researchers with ASN, (redacted name) and (redacted name) were involved in the research process. They undertook observations of workshops and were interviewed about these. Both lay researchers read a complete draft of this article and offered comments. As they contributed to the conceptual development of themes and discussion they are credited as co-authors. A draft was sent to Limelight personnel for member checking; no issues with the analysis or conclusions were raised.

Figure 1 illustrates the process of data gathering, analysis and triangulation.

Figure 1: Research Process



The research obtained ethical approval from the Edinburgh College of Art Research Ethics Sub-Committee, University of Edinburgh before the study commenced. Informed consent

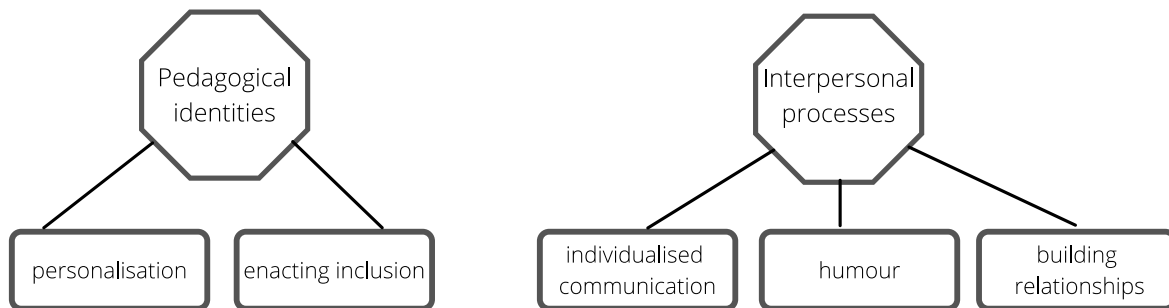
was gained from each participant before interviews took place. It was emphasized to each interviewee that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the research at any stage without consequence. Consent for real names to be used was discussed during the research, and a final check was undertaken just before the manuscript was submitted.

Practitioner interviews explored how they approached leading workshops and what, if any, challenges were perceived and what they noticed about their own and other practitioners' approaches to delivering different activities. Lay researcher interviews focused on exploring their overarching impressions of the workshops and interpretations of successful and challenging events. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. Thematic analysis, which seeks to identify, analyse, and report patterns within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2014) was applied with a contextualist orientation. The interview transcripts were initially coded by the first author and then read repeatedly by first, second, third and sixth authors. Coding was discussed with the team to achieve a consistent interpretation. Themes were patterns of interest noted in all interviews, considered in relation to the whole data set and agreed in regular monthly meetings during this phase of analysis.

## **Findings**

Findings are reported by theme with data from Joseph presented as a discrete section within each. This is to ensure his voice as a practitioner with ASN can be appreciated. There are overlaps between the themes, demonstrating links between the identities of the practitioners and the various interpersonal processes in workshops. Figure 2 presents themes and subthemes.

Figure 2 Thematic map



## **Pedagogical identities**

### *Personalisation*

The practitioners frequently talked about their personal approaches to workshop facilitation, the values which informed these and how they negotiated their identities. Rather than learning a fixed method for workshop delivery, LM practitioners described retaining a strong sense of personalisation in their work. For example, Gordon proposed, ‘you have got to be honest and natural with everybody, but on a level[...] to be big and bold enough to engage with everybody[...] you’ve got to be able to perform yourself up to a point’. This construction suggests an expansion, an amplification of distinct personal qualities, but not to a point where they are unrecognisable. For Gordon, maintaining a balance between the need to keep many people engaged by presenting a characterisation of yourself, and being ‘natural’, was important. Fletcher asserted that the leading role must be individualized: ‘you will always progress *your* leadership. [...] I go out and I am crazy, that’s what I find works best for me and works best for the people I work with, but you might find that your approach is slightly different’.

Fletcher's 'crazy' approach allowed her to lead workshops successfully, she did not expect that others could or should replicate what she does in all respects to achieve the same success. The trainees should 'find' an idiosyncratic approach that achieves the same results. One trainee, Catriona, described such a process of experimentation in her training: 'It's trial and error as well, because nothing's going to work for everyone. Even what I've learned from Fletcher and Gordon and actually going out and applying it, sometimes you'll go away, "that still didn't work."' For Catriona, reflecting on how she fared in delivering a workshop as leader, she found that trying out what the experienced leaders prescribe was not enough for her to accomplish what she has seen them do. Workshop leadership was understood by both experienced and trainee staff as a role that must be individually shaped by each person.

#### *Enacting inclusivity*

The musicians understood creating a bespoke approach to each participant to be vital in creating a reciprocal environment where participants could also be themselves; this was as important to the endeavour as providing musical opportunity. Fletcher articulated that her goals for the participants as being for them to 'progress as individuals' and that the organisation aimed for an 'expansion of them'. This aim for a holistic development of the person rather than a singular focus on music was developed further by Gordon: 'It's not about making them into better musicians *yet* [...] it is making sure that they are at their most comfortable [...] The possibilities to do anything are there because they feel open, they don't feel they have to protect themselves'

Gordon did not exclude gaining musical skills; rather, creating conditions where personal development could happen was the initial priority. If participants had to 'protect themselves', this would counter the opportunities for development, musical or otherwise.

The belief that participation and learning happen best when people feel ‘open’ went along with a high value being attached to providing opportunities for personal choice in workshop activities in statements such as ‘we think it’s fine to let them say whatever they want and express themselves’ (Catriona) or ‘a key element is to give platform to them just to be themselves and to speak and to talk and to join in creatively however that may be with dance, jokes... even whispering’ (Lennie). This may represent a very different approach to music activity than what takes place in, for example, school music education, where primarily musical goals may be fixed and achieved sequentially. The impulse to dance as a valid and accepted response articulates a broad view of how musicianship can be expressed. Lay researcher, (redacted name), for example, described the workshops as a place where participants could express their ‘voice’ and that this could manifest in verbal expression or in other ways such eye contact or movement (Redacted, 2020).

Personalisation and enacting inclusivity were key dimensions of being a workshop leader. ‘Being yourself’ could be extended to ‘performing yourself’ and exaggerating personal qualities. Inclusivity was a value that was reinforced by maximising opportunities for participants’ self-expression in ways that they chose (e.g., telling a story or dancing), thereby supporting their agency in workshops.

### **Pedagogical identities: Joseph**

In discussing his identity as a workshop leader, Joseph offered examples of his early musical experiences as well as his experience as a pupil in special needs schools as having informed his approach to workshop facilitation. He explained the qualities he saw as important in a workshop leader as follows: ‘It’s all about confidence. Being in a group, not feeling inferior

about what you want to do, and just learning to relax around people.’ For Joseph, becoming a workshop leader involves the ability to project a calm and capable persona.

In common with the other practitioners, Joseph expressed the wish for participants to have space for expression: ‘Just give them a chance to prove themselves and come out of themselves [...]. It’s not to say we don’t think that person is capable so we’re not going to let them do it. I experienced that when I was in school’. This suggests a key process for Joseph, as for the others, is to build participants’ confidence through facilitating their self-efficacy. However, he situated this as a personal ‘feeling’, and recognized this importance on the basis of his own experience of education, rather than something instilled as part of the training. For Catriona, enabling participants to contribute what they wanted was a ‘general rule’ that it was ‘fine’ to observe; for Joseph, an important part of his pedagogical identity is the wish to provide opportunities that he himself was denied. Joseph also reported that he created his own workshop activities, for instance devising a role-playing game. His own expression of a pedagogical identity can be seen as one that values creative agency in his own practice as a workshop leader.

### **Summary of Pedagogical identities**

Rather than using a standardized approach, practitioners in this study espoused distinct pedagogical styles; although common values are recognized (being ‘honest’ and being inclusive), these must be combined with personal qualities (e.g. Fletcher’s description of being over-the-top). All three trainees described a process of experimentation to see what worked for them, and as Catriona mentioned, understood that the expert practitioners’ approaches would not necessarily be transferrable. Joseph identified confidence, adaptability

and creativity as key qualities for a workshop leader and stated that being relaxed and communicating clearly were two aspects he was working to improve. He expressed a strong personal identification with the facilitations of participants' self-efficacy.

### **Interpersonal processes**

This theme gathers descriptions of interpersonal processes in the workshops: patterns of communication or interaction between musicians and participants occurring alongside and around musical activities. The musical skills required to deliver LM workshops, such as instrumental skills, singing or choice and creation of songs, are outlined in previous work (Redacted, 2019). However, the crucial role of inclusive communicative skills in the workshops was commonly emphasized. Fletcher explained this as follows: 'As a musician, somebody still has to be confident enough about engaging everybody in the group. You can't just sit and play the guitar and hope that folk will pick up on it'. Three subthemes were identified: individualized communication, humour and building relationships.

#### *Individualized communication*

Consistent with the perceived importance of personalising workshop delivery, all practitioners frequently asserted the importance of getting to know all the participants as individuals who had their own thoughts, feelings, needs and preferences, irrespective of any ASN. They tailored their interactions with each participant according to their perceptions of the participant's wishes and a constant process of reflection on communications and interactions with them. This could take place during workshop activities or in any of the

times around them, such as setting up, breaks or tidying up. They were careful to speak to participants directly rather than through support workers.

Once participants' needs were understood, it was seen as important for workshop activities to take account of this. An instance of tailoring activities for an individual was in accommodating the interests of one participant, Anthony. Over the course of the workshops, he articulated that he liked making up his own stories about princesses and princes.

Consequently, a section of a piece was created to accommodate his desire to tell a long and involved story. (Lay researcher name) said, 'That was one thing that was kind of individual to him and it was recognized by the team that it was important...They've seen he's a bit of a storyteller.' Using Anthony's spoken contribution creatively in the larger musical piece was a way of demonstrating that his story telling was valued and his interests could be reframed, explored and shared through music.

### *Humour*

Humour was consistently described as vital in demonstrating to participants that they were on the same level as the practitioners. For example: 'Sometimes I would just like sing a random thing [...] back to front, whatever. [...] because we just fall about laughing. It shows [...] that she's normal, she's just a human being [...] They take the mickey out of me for getting it wrong'. A point that may be funny for the group was Lennie's mistake, perhaps because it's unexpected; her job is to lead songs. The team developed jokes and sets of comical situations with practitioners. For example, Gordon would pretend to fall asleep and have to be 'woken up' by workshop assistants and participants. He outlined that humour should be directed at oneself: 'What's important... [is] laughing at yourself and allowing yourself to appear



vulnerable'. He expanded on this point as follows: 'Watching the dynamic between the people taking the session can be fun [...] with a lot of people in the circle as well, they suspend their disbelief about things like that'. Gordon performed different roles and played with usual expectations of how a leader would act. Watching the musicians inhabit different and unexpected roles may provide the participants with a theatrical experience. The playful nature of the workshops can provide a place where people can 'suspend...disbelief' and thus give another way in which to experience the workshop.

It can be hard to articulate a shared understanding of music and of humour, as both can be experienced and described in diverse ways. However, jokes and stories may offer an accessible means of framing musical activities. (Redacted lay researcher name) proposes that humour functions to create a sense of reciprocity in the group: 'It is because it kind of opens it up to people that [...] you can make a mistake because mistakes are part of life, but it's okay'. (Redacted lay researcher name) also identified that those with ASN often did not have opportunities to 'tell their stories'. She saw humour as a way in for some participants to express themselves. (Redacted lay researcher name) described the world of the workshops for participants as being a 'bubble' where most interactions are based on a presumption that they could not tell stories or be funny. Therefore, the workshops offered a place to practice and develop humour with others in a safe space.

### *Building Relationships*

This subtheme captures descriptions of how practitioners built relationships with the workshop participants, and the importance of this process that happened over time. Trust and openness were positioned as necessary precursors for creativity, confidence and enjoyment. Lennie described why she considers this to be a crucial aspect of facilitating workshops:

‘Building relationships [...] is so important [...] If you want them to open up, you have to be open as well [...] but you still have to be professional. I'm not saying that you're sharing all your problems’.

The openness from both sides was necessary for Lennie It implied creating warm relationships, although there was still a need to maintain the facilitator’s role. This may indicate a ‘professional’ openness where she presents herself as friendly and encouraging, being open to accommodating ideas. She may also set boundaries about how much or what type of personal information she discloses. Gordon mentions his experience in theatre as informing his skill in appreciating and acting on how a room of people feel at a particular time: ‘Looking at what’s going on in the room. And that’s just a director’s thing. You have to know what everyone’s feeling and thinking in order to know what’s the best thing to do.’

### **Interpersonal processes: Joseph**

#### *Individualized communication*

Joseph described ways of communicating with various participants that were different from the practices of the other interviewees. For example, he emphasized the importance of giving participants a range of opportunities as part of the process of getting to know them. He proposed that participants ‘may take a while to come out of their shell’ as they may have been denied opportunities in school. He explained that every individual needed the ‘right kind of help’ for them and that facilitators should build a series of experiences based on this information.

#### *Humour*

Joseph described other staff and participants using humour in workshops; he could give reasons for this but did not mention using it himself. He stated in his interview that he found it ‘difficult to know if somebody’s being serious or joking’. He reflected on humour as follows:

I think he [Gordon]’s trying to help them by joking [...] Donald in the group at [place name], he’s told a couple of jokes and they’re funny.[...] It’s nothing to do with his disability, but that’s kind of his gift [...]Because I think a lot of people are treated like robots, you can’t move this way or that way.

Joseph saw Gordon’s use of humour as having an overall purpose of helping participants; it is not clear in what way from this context (although Gordon may have previously explained this to Joseph as his intention). At the end of the extract, he articulates that people with ASN are treated ‘like robots’, restricted in movement but perhaps also restricted in the affordances and consideration given to them by others. Seeing Donald’s ability to joke as a ‘gift’ indicates the value that he attributed to the ability to take part in this interaction, but perhaps also the scarcity of such opportunity for Donald. Joseph positioned those with ASN as widely dehumanized by others, with certain types of interactions denied to them.

### *Building relationships*

Joseph also articulated the importance of: ‘getting to know them really well, and some of the carers that come with them [...] If I would see them on a regular basis, I would know what they want and what they need and how to help them.’ Knowing the carers was not mentioned as a priority by the other practitioners, but potentially offers another useful channel for finding out more about participants by observing their interactions and relationships with

carers. He also expressed the importance of finding out participants' wants, whether these were musical preferences or broader desires. Joseph asserted that knowing the differences in what each individual likes and what will allow them to take part to the best of their abilities is crucial to his successful delivery of group activities, but also that this understanding can only be achieved through establishing relationships.

## **Discussion**

The first question asked, How do community music practitioners understand their personal approaches in delivering community music to diverse groups? Our findings highlight that a high level of personalisation was important and encouraged, even at the trainee stage.

Practitioner approaches were different, but the importance for all to accommodate different means of expression indicates a shared value of inclusion, a key and unifying process in CM (see Bartleet and Higgins, 2018). LM strategies were constructed in relation to reflection on own characteristics, shared values and in response to the needs of the group. This aligns with skills proposed by Camlin and Zeserson (2018) with respect to reflexivity and commitment to personal growth.

The process of reflection and development of one's own strategies, while powerful for the individual, requires time and patience to reconstruct disjointed experiences into new understandings (Johansen 2019). In *Limelight*, the practitioners had varying backgrounds with different sets of practical knowledge (e.g., music, drama, musical theatre) and roles (e.g., musician, actor, director, writer). As practitioners drew on skills from their diverse backgrounds and were able to openly compare approaches, a transdisciplinary and responsive practice was created.

A second question asked, How can accounts about community music practice from diverse practitioners contribute to understanding extramusical impacts across different settings?

Although the practitioners differed in aspects of age, experience and neurodiversity, both themes outlined in this paper offer ways in which to understand how CM workshops can be effective for different groups. Recognising and accommodating people's interests was achieved in the context of musical activity (e.g. with Anthony's story) but the interpersonal processes of individualized communication and building relationships were seen as key to gaining this information. Participants could have musical experiences which also accommodated their thoughts, feelings and preferences. Through jokes and stories, playing with roles and taking part in a larger narrative they had opportunities to suspend disbelief and practise complex social interactions. Similar processes have been detailed in community music therapy by Stige (2012: 118) who described the 'performative character of almost any music therapy session'. In common with our study, some facilitators used humour as a vehicle to engage participants through playing with and subverting roles, allowing participants to do so as well. Humour was one way of creating a workshop narrative and playing with identity (leaders casting themselves as less leaderlike). In music therapy, humour provides familiar patterns for interactions that allow close contact between participant and therapist (Haire and MacDonald, 2021). Although Limelight is not a music therapy organisation, the use of humour as a means to create social cohesion and a comfortable environment, appears analogous. This could facilitate the aim for participants to be open and relaxed as a basis to then express themselves subsequently.

Findings demonstrate the complex and multimodal nature of CM practice. Processes such as individualized communication, humour and building relationships are characteristically *emergent* (see Sawyer 2003; 2011), where each action depends on the one before. The spontaneous and emergent nature of such communications could potentially derail music activities in workshops. Achieving the balance between choice and structure has been described as a necessary skill in facilitating workshops (Yerichuck and Krar, 2021). This may depend on the workshop leader being able to steer interactions through uncharted waters at times. This could be achieved through playing music to create a mood, by altering the order of activities and when to foreground certain people's skills (e.g., storytelling or drumming). This skill can be framed as dramaturgy, or having awareness of, and influence over, people's 'trajectories of participation' (Stige 2012: 192) in an activity. Gordon expressed the importance of trying to appreciate what everyone was 'thinking and feeling', when making decisions about the best way forward.

While interviewees had varied musical backgrounds and skills and asserted the need to adopt personal features in their approaches such as humour, 'craziness' or being relaxed and calm, they also endorsed features in common, such as person-centredness, tailoring to individual needs, attention to relationships and social interaction or creating opportunities for experimentation. Such common principles may offer a basis for the translatable beneficial impacts of CM across the highly diverse facilitators, groups and settings that characterize this field; crucially, they are *paramusical* features of engagement. The practitioners may have varied approaches, but benefits accrue from consistent ways of interacting alongside and with music. Further research could further investigate relationships between musical and paramusical. This has been described as 'circular' (Stige and Aarø, 2011), where paramusical

communications are incorporated into music and the music chosen affords different kinds of interactions (DeNora 2003; Stige and Aarø 2011).

Our final question asked, How does a musician with ASN experience becoming a community musician, and how does this resemble or differ from the accounts of musicians without ASN? In previous work we identified self-expression as the means through which individuals with ASN began to develop their musical identity (Redacted 2020) which aligns with other research (Docherty 2019). Our sample included one individual with ASN. Joseph has been supported, over many years, within an organisation which employs many musicians with a disability, each with their own individual challenges and pathways to becoming a community music professional. This suggests that he had stability which provided a safe space to develop skills at his own pace yet enough flexibility to accommodate his changing roles and identity. He was given freedom to create his own activities and had agency in that he identified his own areas of challenge and potential improvement.

In the introduction we identified that those with ASN may face diminished expectations in education and work environments which can be internalized (Schur et al. 2017). In addition, beliefs about musical talent being hard to achieve even for those who are without ASN (Jaap and Patrick 2015) can make it even more challenging for those with ASN to access music careers. As a community musician who has overcome any such challenges, Joseph represents a role model for others who might wish to follow this career path. Despite experiences in school where he was not treated as capable, he was able to progress in musical and pedagogical ability and in confidence through the sustained support of an organisation. Such consistency in learning environment over many years may be difficult to replicate. However, knowing more about the identity and paramusical processes through which he was able to

find his own approaches to facilitating workshops offers a valuable basis for thinking about how other individuals with ASN could and should be supported in shaping their own CM careers. This presents a strong direction for future research; more knowledge on these aspects from a wider range of musicians with ASN could usefully inform practice.

Joseph's account of his CM practice shares many characteristics with those of the other interviewees, such as his attention and care towards communications and relationships with participants. Some distinctions were apparent, however. He drew on his own experience of education as a person with ASN in tailoring workshops, thus contributing an important perspective in having been on both sides of CM workshops. He was the only interviewee who described the value in getting to know carers as well as participants themselves. In a qualitative study, differences in Joseph's approach cannot be assumed to be due to him being an individual with ASN. However, unlike all the others he did not profess using humour in workshops, and also said he found humour challenging, preferring to concentrate on being relaxed and confident. He found his practice to be effective and recognized his own style as distinct from that of his mentor, Gordon. This suggests at least one way in which we might expect to see distinct CM practice emerge and enrich the field in the event of greater numbers of CM practitioners with ASN. This may also encourage yet more to pursue musical fulfilment in CM careers.

### **Implications**

Music participation and careers in music can be inaccessible to those with ASN (Moscardini et al. 2013; Schur et al. 2017; Wilson et al. 2020). However, appreciating artistic and pedagogical contributions of those with ASN offers novel ways of envisaging identities, creativity, communication, inclusion and communities for the benefit of all people (Goodley



et al. 2019). We propose that CM can provide a space where those with ASN are listened to and valued, and crucially, are able to develop both musical and leadership skills over time. This is challenging to achieve with CM employment being largely project-based with freelance practitioners. However, the importance of time and opportunities to experiment, and to develop pedagogical identities and key interpersonal processes highlight the need for sustained CM projects. Inclusion in CM organisations is vital at all levels. Training is a long-term investment, but the value of practitioners with an ASN becoming more visible and involved could expand ideas of what professionalism is for the benefit of the field (Laes and Westerlund 2018). For participants, having role models and seeing that diverse expertise is valued can provide a powerful impetus to re-imagine personal trajectories (Goodley et al. 2019). In addition, future CM research would benefit from including lay researchers with ASN to provide perspectives and interpretations not possible for researchers, thus strengthening the relevance of findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Workshop content is described in Redacted (2019). There were 50 workshops in total.

Trainees led at least one activity in each workshops and assisted for the rest. Before and after

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the workshops they discussed their ideas and experiences with the experienced staff (GD or FM).

<sup>2</sup> Further information about LM personnel can be found on the company website:

<https://limelightmusic.org.uk/the-team/>.