



Getting to know new people in Lockdown and beyond!



This resource has been put together to support the integration of new residents, service users or children into a care setting while COVID restrictions and the impact of lockdown is still having an impact. Our thanks to Music Therapist Clare Reynolds for creating it for us.

Remember: There will come a time when we can think beyond infection control. However, at the moment the need to take responsibility for minimising risks associated with COVID-19 and the spread of the virus remains important. Please follow your current local guidance at all times and adapt the advice and ideas below to fit with how you are able to work at the moment. If you would like further information relating to specific risks or guidance associated with making music, please [get in touch](#).

A message from Clare: As I write this, I feel I am possibly a year too late! Hopefully, we are now beginning to move out of the various Lockdowns which we have all had to live through over the past 12 months. However, as we emerge from our various roles and settings, I am sure we will continue to be met with new faces and challenging care needs.



The idea behind these activities evolved from the idea of new residents coming into care home settings during lockdown who would often have family members/friends coming in to help provide vital information and give a sense of who the new resident might be. With no access to visitors discovering who a person is/was, must have been much more challenging.



Alongside this in early years or school age there will be new children beginning nurseries or schools, some may have had little or no contact with other adults or children for the best part of a year. This is a huge chunk of time in the life of a 3-year-old for example.

Music offers the perfect nurture group setting for both ends of the age spectrum and everything in between. Activities are easy to adapt to be age appropriate and the non-verbal element of music makes it less threatening than perhaps having to speak. The use of a drum to 'talk' may seem much more appealing. As well as this music is spontaneous and interactive and the element of fun and surprise can spark all sorts of wonderful responses and reactions even from those, we feel may be unable to do this. There is so much we can learn from people by how they make music, the conversations we have when we have made music together (or while we are trying to!), and the details they reveal to us about their preferences, their humour, their understanding and their backgrounds.

So I have pulled out a few simple activities which I hope might be helpful for you. I know it has been such a difficult year for so many and you are doing such a brilliant job. Thank you for that and hope you can have a little fun with these.”

Activity Ideas



Flying tambour

This is a real favourite of mine to begin a group be it with 3-year-olds or 80-year-olds. It encourages attention, anticipation and is good fun. It gets a group sitting up and creates a very simple opportunity for each group member to become aware of the others in the group.

Standing in the middle of a circle say or sing something about the tambour whilst moving it around. Little ones generally love this over their heads like a flying saucer. I sing or say (at the moment): *“watch for the flying tambour, it’s flying all around, watch for the flying tambour, who can make a sound?”*

At this point hold out the tambour to someone sitting in the group and they have to “bang” it, just once, but this is up to you as the facilitator. I always say the person’s name as I hold it out to them, and this creates an immediate connection and allows others in the group to identify that person with their name. Continue this as often as you like. Once the group are familiar with this, perhaps they could become the ‘leader’ in the middle.

Top Tip You can play this with just one person too, making it more into a game of anticipation - when will you hold out the tambour?

Top Tip You can extend this activity into a musical conversation: Stay with one person and copy back to them what they have played on the tambour. If they played loudly, play loudly; if they played quietly, play quietly. If they played a single note, do so yourself; if they played a rhythm or several notes, try to copy this as closely as you can at the same volume and speed. Then offer the tambour back to them and continue to ‘converse’. When it feels right, thank them and return to the “flying” activity



Would you rather?

This is based on the talking game where you must choose between 2 questions. For example: “would you rather have jelly or ice cream?” In addition to asking the questions introduce an instrument such as a drum or a wood block and tap the rhythm as you say it. This allows the responder to just tap their choice rhythm back to you rather than say it if they find that difficult as well as giving you some information about that person.

Top Tip You can ask specific questions if there is something you want to find out. “Would you rather brush your hair or have it brushed for you?”



I like!

This is similar to 'would you rather' but is just simply "I like ketchup". With this game, which can be played in a group round in a circle or individually, a 'theme' can be suggested such as food. So in turn everyone would tap out a food that they like. "I like lasagne". This could be developed into music preferences; "I like country music" or activities; "I like arts and crafts". There are all sorts of possibilities and is a good way to find out little bits of information about your clients.

Top Tip This can also be extended so that within a group you have to say something that you like about the person next to you! "I like Chloe's smile".



We'll be coming round the mountains

Using this well-known tune you can adapt the words encouraging your group members to find a suitable mode of transport to be coming round the mountains on: "*We'll be coming round the mountains in a bus, we'll be coming round the mountains in a bus, we'll be coming round the mountains, coming round the mountains, coming round the mountains in a bus.*" Or, why not try some other ideas: Traditional modes of transport (like a train, motorbike, plane, van or car) or get creative ("On a lion", "In a spaceship", "with my friends" etc)

Top Tip Again, this song and many others could be adapted to suit your own settings and situations better. What this allows is the person or people you are working with to come up with ideas, and ideas often lead to discussions and is another way of gaining information. "has anyone ever been on a bus?" simple questions can lead to lost memories or chat that might not have been forthcoming before.



Musical Conversations

These can be done in a small group setting or with an individual. The idea is you 'set up' a conversation but there is no verbal talking, this conversation will take place on a xylophone or drum or whatever instrument you have available. It involves turn taking, one player plays – the other listens and then they swap over, and the other person responds. It is interesting to see how this evolves and to begin with it may need some modelling by you the practitioner. Perhaps you could be one of the people having the conversation each time. However, as the activity becomes more familiar it is interesting to see how the participants begin to respond to each other. Do they argue? Is it a gentle discussion? Does someone try to play over the top of someone else? Is there someone who barely 'says' anything?

Top Tip If you have time to think about how folk play and reflect on this it might give you some useful hints as to personality traits.

Top Tip This game can also be played with the participants sitting back-to-back so they really have to listen and cannot see what and when the other person is going to play.



Be a Musical Detective

Never has it been more important to consider the heritage of the people we are working with. Music is part of that heritage. Whether it is someone who has had a full and healthy life before you meet them, or a child with a family background which is different to yours, finding out about the music that is familiar to them can be a helpful way to get to know someone. Listening to familiar music together can be a way to spend enjoyable time together or to spark a conversation. Playing familiar music can be a way to connect with someone, but it can also provide reassurance, distraction or purpose.

Take care Particularly when exploring meaningful music with people living with dementia we must remember the guidance of our colleagues at Playlist for Life: “Music can take you to another time or place. That is a great gift, and a great responsibility. Red Flag Songs are tunes that may take someone back to a bad place or bring back fearful or unwanted emotions. If someone becomes agitated or distressed listening to a particular piece of music, stop the session immediately. Make a note of the Red Flag Song, so that it’s not played again.”

Top Tip A conversation with a family members can help you find out what music is or has been played at home, popular TV themes, favourite pop musicians, tunes linked to significant milestones, people or places etc.

Useful Resource *Playlist for Life¹ has compiled lists of the top 100 songs from every decade from 1910s to 2010s. There are also lots of helpful resources on their website to help you create and make the most of personalised playlists.*

¹ <https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/the-100-years-book/>