

August 2017



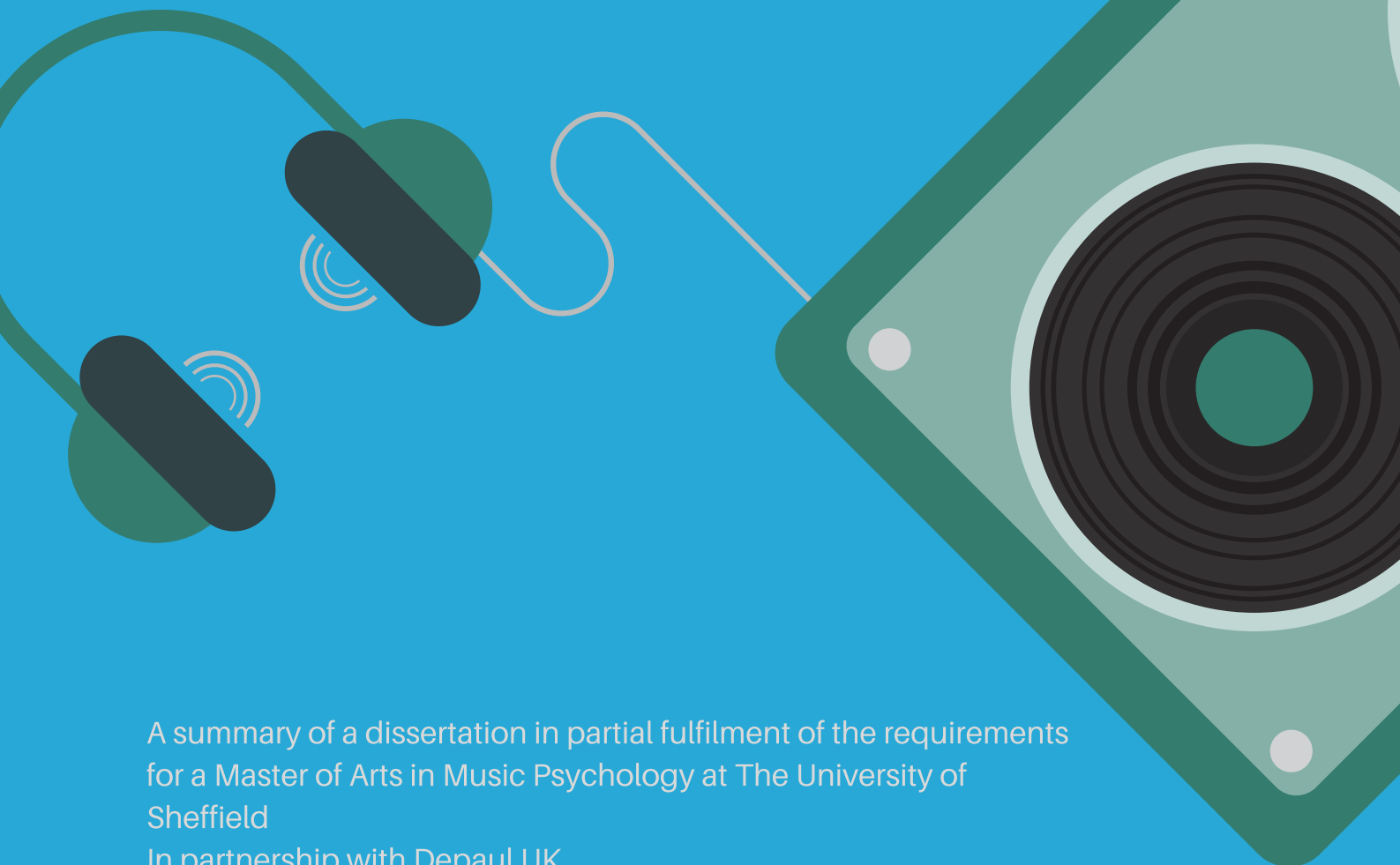
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DEPAUL

Homelessness has no place

HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE'S USES OF MUSIC

KATE WAREHAM



A summary of a dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for a Master of Arts in Music Psychology at The University of
Sheffield

In partnership with Depaul UK

About the project

Considering the significant challenges homeless young people face in terms of both finding physical and financial stability and emotional stability including good mental health and coping skills, the role and importance of music in homeless young people's lives was an rich area to study.

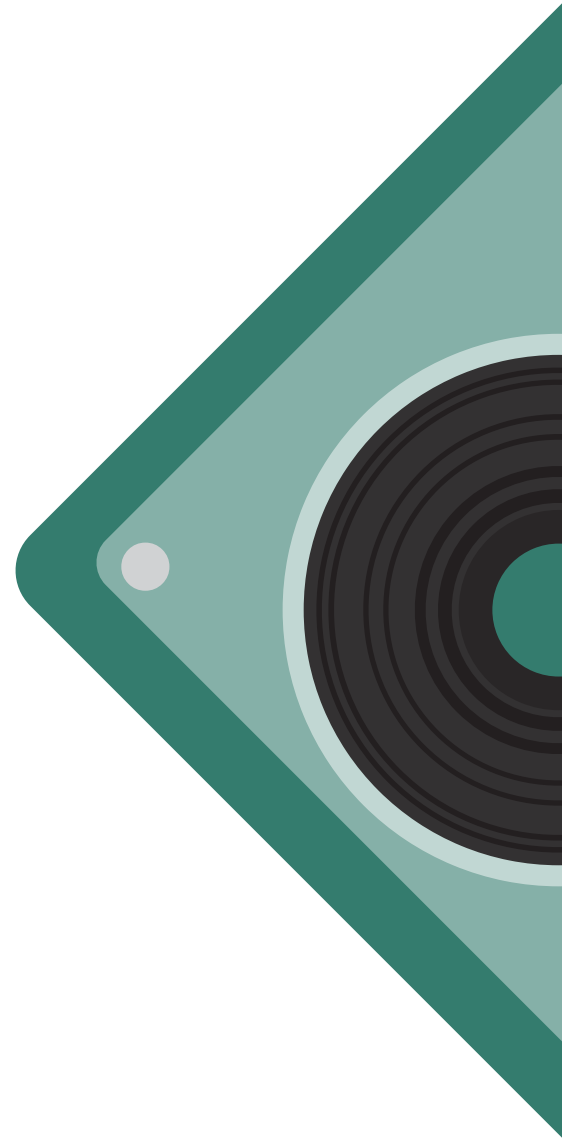
We sought to explore this with young people in Depaul's emergency accomodation (Nightstop) and supported accommodation with the view to understand the role of music in this little studied subset of society, and to draw from this potential applications to the service delivery of Depaul UK.

The study has been submitted in partial fulfilment of a masters of arts degree in music psychology at the University of Sheffield.

Objectives

The project aimed to:

1. Understand how homeless young people access music
2. How much homeless young people listen to music
3. How important music is to homeless young people
4. What the reasons are for homeless young people to listen to music



Methodology

For this exploratory study, young people, staff and volunteers were approached to complete a survey or participate in an interview.

Young people were identified by their support staff and the survey was provided within their supported lodgings or on the morning after they stayed in emergency accommodation. Interviews were carried out with young people in various locations.

Participants

Supported accommodation

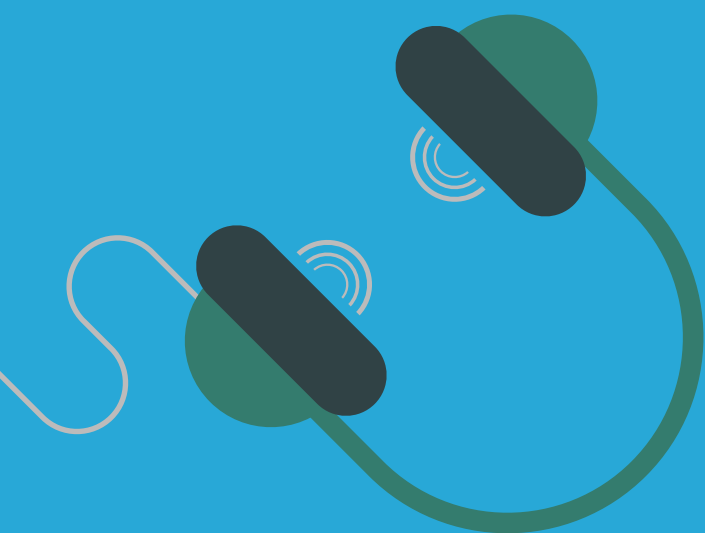
31 young people participated with a mean age of 20 and 63% male. Four of these young people participated in interviews.

Emergency accommodation (Nightstop)

13 young people participated with a mean age of 21 years with 85% being male.

Staff and volunteers

10 members of staff and volunteers were interviewed as part of the study.



Music in everyday life

MOOD MANAGEMENT

Young people and adults use music listening as a significant tool for mood management, for instance to cheer and give motivation, and to feel sad emotions safely.

IDENTITY

Research has shown that music is particularly important in the formation of identity in adolescence. It is a badge, a symbol of belonging.

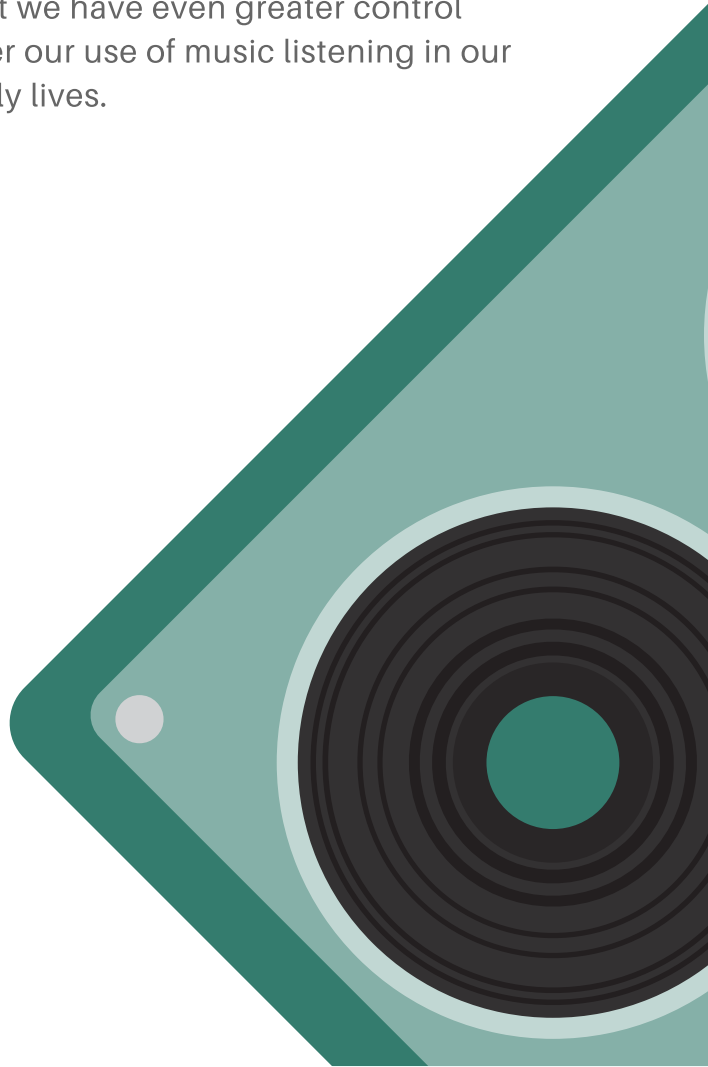
SMARTPHONES

Over 91% of adults aged 18-44 own a smartphone and over half of smartphone users look at it within 15 minutes of waking up.

In the last sixty years of research into the uses of music, there has been a developing focus on the uses of music listening.

The functions of music listening can range from the deeply personal management of emotions, coping and stress relief, to the social role of communication, social representation and even dance.

The development of recording technologies in the 20th century and of increased portability of listening devices in the 21st century means that we have even greater control over our use of music listening in our daily lives.



Homelessness

Rough sleeping has doubled since 2010 and yet the statistics on rough sleeping do not tell the full picture as many, young people particularly, sleep on friends' sofas, spend the night on busses or at all night parties and stay in a multitude of other unsafe places, forming the difficult to document "hidden homeless".

Young people are particularly likely to become homeless after family breakdown, leaving care or prison.

Mental health problems are prevalent amongst homeless young people, potentially both contributing to and being effected by their homeless status.

MENTAL HEALTH

Between 30% and 50% single people experiencing homelessness have mental health problems compared to between 10% and 25% of the general population.

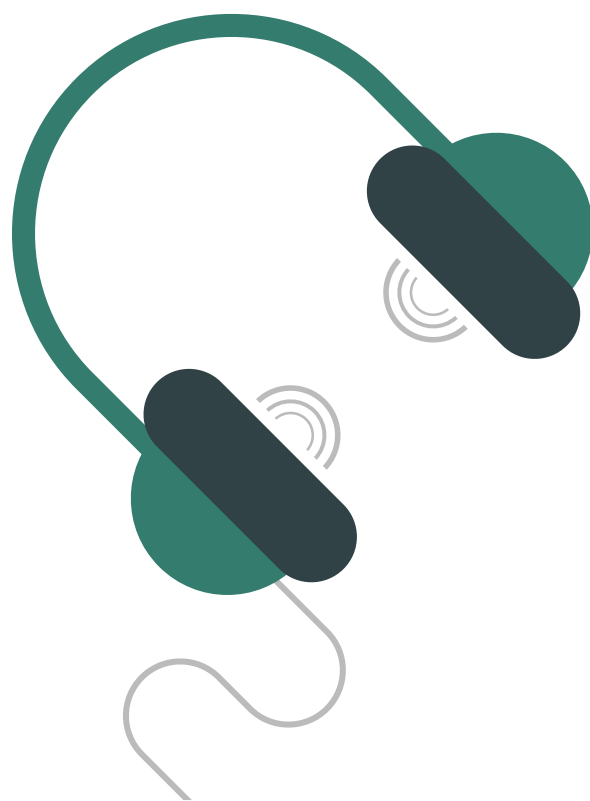
SMARTPHONES

Smartphones are important for homeless young people as they are a source of information and contact with people and organisations who can support, and of course, for music.

Depaul UK works with homeless young people across England both at the point of crisis (finding a bed for the night through our Nightstop scheme) and at giving longer term support and accommodation to enable young people to reach independence.

DEPAUL UK

Depaul supports 1,500 young people a year providing emergency accommodation, 800 a year in medium-term accommodation and 2,000 a year in support for young people in the community.



Results

Music was found to be very important in homeless young people's lives.

GENRES

Dance, grime, gospel, classical, film, RnB, pop, reggae and rap. A wide range of genres were listened to.

"Classical if I'm doing coursework"

DEVICES

100% of supported accommodation young people listened to music on their own (phone) device.

ACCESS

77% of young people streamed music via YouTube.

REASONS NOT TO LISTEN

Young people reflected social reasons (etiquette) for not listening to music in some situations, and also the negative influence of some lyrics.

"I know how corrupting it is"

IMPORTANCE

83% rated music's importance to them as 4 or 5 out of 5.

"music has been there for me"

REGULARITY

73% listened to music all or most of the day.

"Every day for as long as my battery lasts on my phone I'm not even joking."

LOCATIONS

Young people said they listened to music when alone, when travelling and when chilling with friends.



Mood management

Mood management was the most cited reason for using music, whether taking from a neutral mood into a good mood (cheer, entertain) or to move from anxiety or feeling bad, to things feeling better. In particular music as a form of distraction was frequently mentioned in the interviews.

"when I'm not listening to music I'm just within my own thoughts and then I start thinking too much but if I'm listening to some music it kind of distracts me from that for the five or six minutes of the song"

"I think sometimes when you listen to music and you know block out the real world and reality it just lets you sit on a cloud for a little bit."

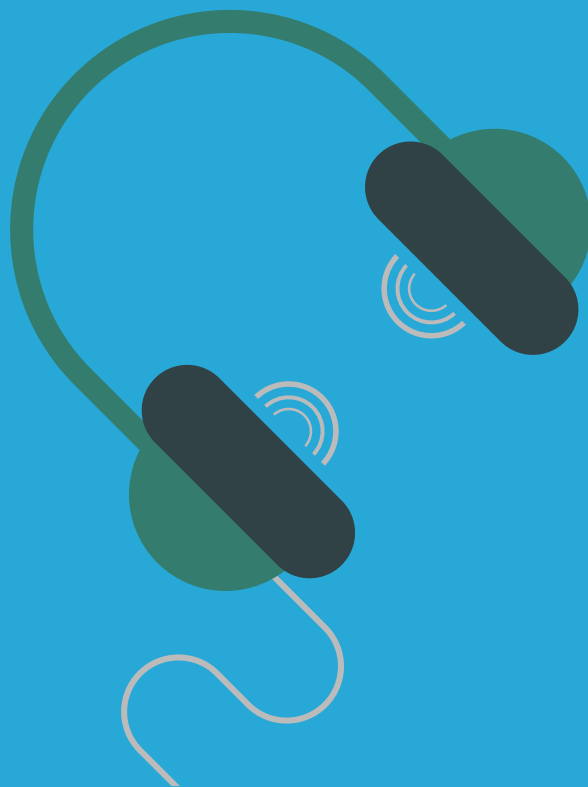
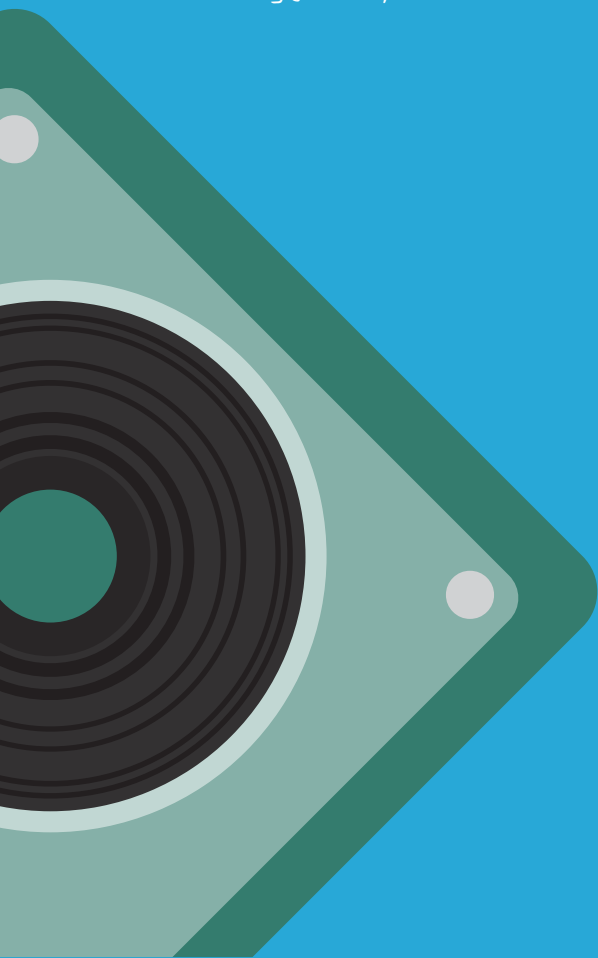
"Whereas outside it's not like to block out people that are there but to keep yourself occupied on the train, long journeys"

"We had a young man in last week and we were chatting to him and he just said he put his headphones in and it stopped him thinking about all the sad things really that he was kind of faced with"

"It puts me in a good mood and gets me through the day"

"I think it helps people to chill out"

"Music is the reason why I've continued when there's been times when I've wanted to stop everything"



Other emerging themes

IDENTITY

Some young people suggested that music was a part of expressing their identity - either through family connections, identity as a musician, or something related to their character.

NIGHTSTOP ENVIRONMENT

Many Nightstop young people reflected a similar pattern to their Nightstop stay, arrive, have the tour, eat dinner, return to the bedroom and listen to music.

CURATING A DAY

Some young people used music to give their day structure when they had little to do.



LYRICS REFLECTING LIVES

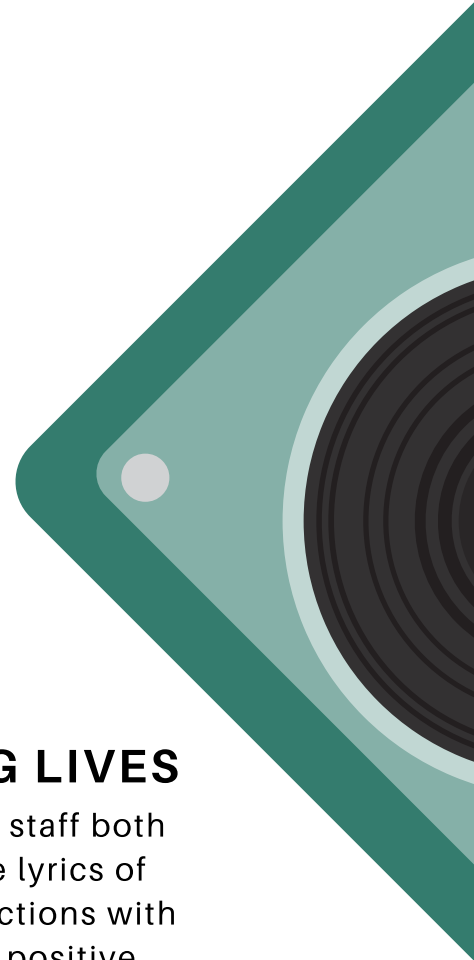
Young people and staff both suggested that the lyrics of songs have connections with their lives (in both positive and negative ways) and give a sense that they are not alone in finding life hard.


Some also suggested that they relied on music more than people for consolation and support.

"One young man said 'I don't really have much to do so I sat in a park, put my headphones in and occupied myself that way'"

"I've come to a place where music takes preference over people. Cos you know like in times when things haven't been all rosy, music has been there for me and not everyone has"

"I'd be so into the music and what it was talking about, that I literally wanted to act it out"





Implications for service delivery

If music is already so powerful in young people's lives, there is a great opportunity to maximise on this in service delivery and contribute to the development of skills needed for education and or employment. The following potential implications have been identified for discussion with Depaul UK.

1. Consider music's role in the creation of psychologically informed environments within hostels
2. Train Nightstop hosts on the role of music in young people's lives and how to engage them in conversation about music or musical activities
3. Consider the use of music listening in the development of coping skills, resilience and emotion management
4. Seek opportunities for young people to engage in music making related to their music listening practice and measure the impact it has on well-being, coping and resilience

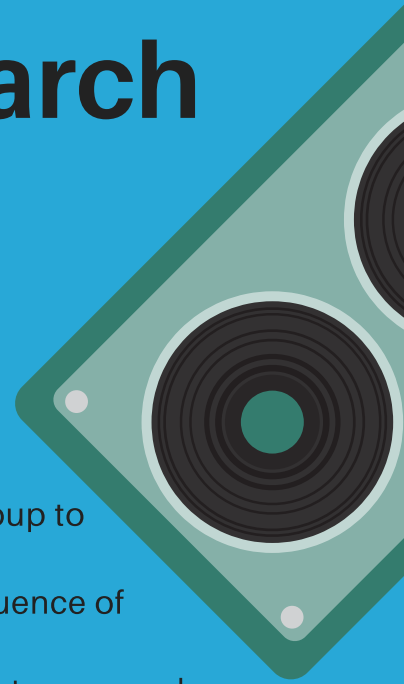


Areas for future research

Potential future studies

Subsequent studies would give us greater clarity about the role of music in young people's lives and allow us to find more impactful methods of using music to benefit homeless young people's lives.

1. Repeat the study with greater sample size and using a control group to identify any differences for homeless young people
2. Explore healthy and unhealthy uses of music, particularly the influence of lyrics on behaviour and value systems
3. Explore opportunities to use music to develop socialisation and interpersonal bonds between young people
4. Test the impact of music within hostel communal spaces both for listening and music making



Kate Wareham

All about the researcher

After fifteen years in fundraising for a number of charities, including Depaul UK, Kate turned to a long-term interest - music psychology - to study at masters level.

During her time at The University of Sheffield she has taken an interest in "music in everyday life" a branch of music psychology which concerns music listening and how music is used in normal life rather than on the stage or in schools.

Kate also has masters degrees in mathematics and educational psychology. She plays the flute, piano accordion and ukulele and enjoys cycling.

Kate lives in Amsterdam and regularly returns to the UK to visit the university and clients.



This summary has been written, designed and published by Kate Wareham, August, 2017. Find out more about music listening in everyday life at www.onanoisycorner.com.

Further information can be found by contacting Kate Wareham on kate@sogood.org.uk

For information about Depaul UK's services, visit www.uk.depaulcharity.org

For information about The University of Sheffield, visit www.sheffield.ac.uk

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