

BBPlus! - What it Means to Me



With Buddy Beat drumming since September 2007, many of the long term members recognised the need for an extra drumming session where they could learn new skills, for the very nature of the groups regular Thursday morning sessions saw ourselves welcome new members on a constant basis, and with each new recruit we had to go back to basics.

And so in autumn 2010, we received funding from Renfrewshire Council and this allowed us to set up BBPlus! Meeting every second Monday in the Scottish Holistic and Spiritualist Church in Paisleys Argyle Street, this became a much treasured and important part in our continuing mental health recovery and here are some thoughts from the group members on what it has meant to them:-

“BBPlus is a great opportunity for members of Buddy Beat to learn more drumming techniques and hit the beat more. When I first joined BBPlus in January I was nervous as I don’t usually step out of my comfort zone, but once I started learning more techniques and beats I started to enjoy it. So please help us continue this wonderful group.”

Connor

“When BBPlus first started I was excited at this new challenge and intrigued as to what it would entail. Meeting every second Monday for 2 hours, free from the restrictions of our regular Thursday meetings, our musical director Dr. Jane Bentley showed us new and different drumming techniques, pushing us as we had never done before. In fact, we travelled to Glasgow in March and had an African drumming workshop which lasted three hours and the chap drilled us intensely, and we were only able to cope with the demands of this because Jane had pushed us at BBPlus.

Our numbers began small but have risen gradually over time and we have bonded tighter as a group. We use our time wisely and create new rhythms which we then take to our main group and this year we have seen our portfolio of Buddy Beat compositions rise from just the one to a healthy three, with more ideas waiting on the sidelines. I think it pays to challenge yourself when you have a mental health issue and BBPlus enforces that. Our initial block of classes have been a revelation to me and without doubt enhanced my own personal recovery. My dearest wish is that we can continue this vital class throughout the coming year.”

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Some of the BBPlus! Members proudly showing off drums purchased with grant funding

“BBPlus has been really good for me. Our teacher Dr Jane Bentley is always coming up with new ideas and hints to improve our drumming skills.

I find this very helpful as I am dyslexic and sometimes it takes me a bit longer to learn new things so the extra time and tuition helps me a lot. And lastly it is fun to learn new skills.”

Eileen.

“I have been a member of Buddy Beat since the beginning almost 4 years ago, which was only meant to last 8 weeks, so you can imagine our luck that we’re still jamming away.

After the first two years I thought that my talents had reached the top of my ability, but with BBPlus I have surprised myself with what I’ve actually achieved. We don’t have to start with the basics as we do at the Thursday sessions as new people come along. But before you know it they progress to BBPlus as well.

It was never in my wildest dreams that I would find that tranquillity and freedom in my head, but beating that drum has drummed up confidence and self-esteem. I’m learning every week and for the first time during my mental health I have found something that, with practice, I could be good at and is something that I love and enjoy.

So I am hoping we find funding for keeping BBPlus alive. It is a challenge but it’s one we all love doing and hopefully progress even more in the future.

Dr Jane is a very patient and inspirational woman who we all love and respect and without her we couldn’t have achieved as much we all have. So as I said earlier, I hope this isn’t the end of BBPlus.”

Anne

“When the idea of an Advanced Group was first suggested, I saw it as an opportunity to hopefully improve my drumming techniques. I love our Thursday morning sessions, but somedays I would find that I was becoming bored of just playing games – I wanted to just sit and drum more. And it seemed like this group was the ideal next step for me.

I have thoroughly enjoyed each and every session of the group, which became known as BB Plus! No two sessions are the same – and while there are still games and exercises, the focus was more on the way we were drumming than on just having some fun.

Through the BB Plus! we have developed ideas which have then been followed through and taken on to the Thursday morning sessions.

As well as developing and improving our drumming techniques, we have also developed some new musical pieces, The Weather Report and London Bridge. These pieces were subsequently taught to the full group on a Thursday, and will be regularly performed at future events.

A highlight of the BB Plus! year was our workshop with Gameli and Pan African Arts. He was an excellent tutor, and taught us a completely different style of playing than we were used to ... and certainly pulled us out of our comfort zones.

I personally hope that BB Plus! continues as a regular session of The Buddy Beat.”

Hazel

As the facilitator of Buddy Beat's fortnightly Monday morning group, I feel that it has been a very valuable addition to the activities offered by the group. Specifically:

- it has allowed longer-term group members to sustain their involvement with Buddy Beat. Because the Thursday group always has to be open and accessible to newcomers, it can occasionally feel that there is a lack of progression for more experienced members. The Monday group has been able to offer a greater musical challenge to members, who have developed their skills much more than might otherwise have been possible. Experienced members have continued their attendance at the Thursday group and taken on more of a mentoring role to inexperienced members.
- the smaller numbers in the Monday sessions have allowed some members to return to the group who had felt overwhelmed by the larger numbers that are now present on a Thursday.
- the Monday sessions have acted as a 'laboratory' for testing and developing ideas for musical pieces and activities that have subsequently fed in to and enriched the Thursday sessions.

In short, the group has benefited not only the experienced members, but has contributed significantly to the on-going work of the wider Buddy Beat membership. It has been a pleasure to facilitate and a valuable experience for all concerned.

Jane

“For me personally I needed a change from playing games and wanted to be more challenged and BBPlus came along at just the right time. Smaller than the main group, it has been a delight to take part and we work hard but also have fun. It has helped my mental health and given me another reason to get out of the house. I hope that we can continue this important part of Buddy Beat well into the future.”

Noreen

We hope that this document gives you a sense of what BBPlus is all about and how the Buddy Beat members value meeting up every 2nd Monday morning and our dearest wish is that this very special class is allowed to continue into the future to help in our continuing mental health recovery.

The smiles say it all...



Tom Chalmers / Buddy Beat

