

# THE BUDDY BEAT



'The Buddy Beat' is a drumming group, which meets weekly at Paisley Arts Centre. It grew from an Occupational Therapy social inclusion project, led by Lead Occupational Therapist Jeanette Allan in collaboration with community musician Jane Bentley. Jane believes that nearly everyone is capable of making music. The Buddy Beat was busy throughout the recent 2008 Scottish Mental Health Arts & Film Festival, running workshops at Paisley Arts Centre, the Town Hall and at the Community Mental Health Teams Away Day. The also opened and closed the show at the 'Mindin' the Arts in Renfrewshire' event which concluded with the whole audience making music.

## PETER GABRIEL AND KATE BUSH "Don't Give Up"



*"In this proud land we grew up strong  
We were wanted all along  
I was taught to fight, taught to win  
I never thought I could fail*

*No fight left or so it seems  
I am a man whose dreams have all deserted  
I've changed my face, I've changed my name  
But no one wants you when you lose*

*Don't give up  
Cos you have friends  
Don't give up  
You're not beaten yet  
Don't give up  
I know you can make it good.....  
.....but somewhere there's a place....  
.....there's a place where we belong..."*

This song resonates around my befuddled brain and means more to me than any other. Life throws most people challenges, but to me life has pelted me with one trouble after another. I suffer from depression and anxiety. I have a fear of being out and about and find life so hard. Every day is a challenge. Some days I struggle to put a foot over the door, others I become emotional and withdrawn. 2008 has been a horrible year in no short measure. It had seemed to me that in this cruel world no one cares and that you are on your own.

Joining The Buddy Beat was a huge step for me but very quickly I made excellent new friends and found my love of drumming. We all care for one another in a way that has surprised me and we use one another to sound off, with no-one being judgmental. By the time I get to our weekly meeting I am often stressed and frazzled but as soon as we begin drumming, my troubles and worries hurry out of the door and for two precious hours a week, I am my old self. Jane Bentley is a Community Musician and is our leader and she possesses an unending energy and she is the most infectious person I have ever met. The drumming group is a tonic and I wish it could be bottled to give me that escape the rest of my week.

The Occupational Therapy team at Buddy Beat consists of Jeanette Allan and Karen Auld and they have been a terrific force in keeping the group going and they both make us feel wanted and more than welcome. They have helped in my quest to have the courage to get out and meet new friends, and have been instrumental in a positive reversal of my self confidence. It is such a cliché, but I cannot think of another way to say it; my journey has been incredible since joining The Gang.

The Buddy Beat is without doubt my "place where I belong."

Tom C

### ALL TOGETHER

We were there together but on our own,  
Thinking about how things would be.  
In a strange place for them and me.  
A twist in the normal run of things,  
An adventure. Something new.

Waiting our turn to perform  
We talked together, thinking alone.  
Where was this thing taking me?  
Why did I agree to put myself here?  
Now's the time for us to go on... ..

Sitting in my place ready to start  
A quiet darkness all around  
The onlookers vanished from my sight  
My hands at first shaking then bang!  
I've started, we're on, we're going to astound.

We got it together, merging, listening, feeling  
A part of it all'  
Turning in time,  
A whole of our several parts.

Anne



**Beats working – the thinking behind the music  
by Jane Bentley (group facilitator)**

It's not just 'learning the drums'. Neither is it music therapy. Instead, Buddy Beat engages in a new form of music-making, called 'integrative musical interaction'. Arising out of the community drum circle movement which has emerged from the USA in the past 15 years, this way of working with a group is aimed primarily at engaging the awareness and communication skills of participants, and in providing a successful music making experience right from the outset, regardless of ability.

Drums may be the most accessible 'way in' to music making – less threatening than beginning with the voice, and less complex than other instruments, yet still offering a satisfying sound. Rather than the therapeutic cliché of: 'let's beat our anger out on the drums', group members are encouraged to support each other through playing in time, and by creating their own rhythm patterns. There is space for everyone within the music, whether they are a beginner playing a simple part, or a more experienced musician who can add complexity. Playing in a group also offers relative anonymity – a group member can experiment and try new ideas without fear of exposure, or being seen to 'get it wrong', because they are covered by the sound of the rest of the group. There are no wrong notes.

A typical session might involve:

- unpacking and setting up the drums
- Welcoming those who arrive, and, if there are new members, offering a brief (1 min) demonstration of basic, safe hand drumming technique.
- A 10-20 minute period of 'make up your own' improvised drumming. Participants are encouraged to listen to the supporting beat, and to either play along with it, or create patterns that fit with it. Although it may appear unstructured, it is supported throughout by the facilitator, who covertly acts to 'solidify' and sustain the music – responding to changes in volume, rhythm, or speed of group members, and assisting musical transitions. This period is aimed at helping members to 'arrive' and become fully present in the workshop situation. As the group progresses, they are encouraged to take on more responsibility for sustaining the music by themselves.
- 20- 30 minutes of rhythm games and developmental exercises. To begin with, these are aimed at encouraging group members to acknowledge each other and interact, such as

'passing a beat' across the circle to each other; imitating rhythms, or working in smaller sub-groups.

- A tea break – the musical interaction serves as a 'rehearsal' for conversational interaction!
- 30-40 minutes of more focused rhythm work. This is normally structured in response to the first half of the session, and may involve more interactive activities; activities which focus on a particular musical skill; developing rhythm 'pieces' to play; more improvised drumming, or activities which enable group members to experiment with a leadership role within the group.
- packing up the drums and resetting the space.

However, there has been one significant change in the life of the group as a whole – at the outset, it was carefully explained that nobody would be put on the spot, or would have to perform in front of others, so as to minimise fear of exposure. On our fourth week, a passer-by heard the group in progress, and imagining we must be a performing group in rehearsal, invited us to play for an opening event. Surprisingly, several of the group were actually fairly keen to perform, and so we did! Using music that has a mix of structure and improvisation means that participants can play at their own level, - if we all played the same part, a 'mistake' would be very obvious in performance. By keeping it improvised, enough flexibility is retained so that nobody can be singled out! Now, performance forms a significant part of the life of the group, for those who wish. Others are happy simply to come along to the regular group, and enjoy music making just for the sake of it.

To conclude, these are some of the effects reported by participants in this, and other groups, drawn from a qualitative research study in progress.

**Physical**

- holistic 'flow'
- physical coherence
- energisation
- relaxation

**Expressive**

- self-expression
- confidence
- contribution
- skill building

**Relational**

- listening
- feeling heard
- dialogue
- self management

**Communal**

- group attention
- self-transcendence
- shared experience
- co-operation
- levelling
- belonging



The Buddy Beat performing at Paisley Farmers Market Sep 08

### The Buddy Beat Engagements

Dec 07	Paisley Museum Christmas Celebration
June 08	Creating Capacity for Socially Inclusive OT Conference Scottish Youth Theatre
Sept 08	Community Drum Circle Paisley Farmers Market
Oct 08	Drum Along with Buddy Beat at Paisley Arts Centre
Oct 08	Community Drum Circle Paisley Town Hall
Oct 08	Mindin' the Arts in Renfrewshire Event Paisley Arts Centre
Oct 08	Renfrewshire CMHT Development Day, Reid Kerr College
Oct 08	Positive Mental Health Day at Reid Kerr College
Nov 08	Hillside View Nursing Home, Paisley
Dec 08	Renfrewshire CHP Staff Development Day
Dec 08	One Great Tapestry; A Celebration of Diversity Paisley Museum
Dec 08	How to Survive Christmas, St Ninians Church

### Watch Buddy Beat on You Tube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcxW8dTJgd0> **OT Conference**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqRqDEgEVKI&feature=related> **Paisley Museum Gig**

## My Experience of Drumming

Finding it hard to exercise other than short walks, after some thought and consideration, my OT came up with drumming. Now most people would think, 'What's drumming got to do with exercise?' but I was most pleasantly surprised and thought it would be a complete change from anything else I've done before and I don't know anyone who can't tap their feet, clap hands or drum their fingers to a favourite tune. Armed with knowing how much I enjoy music of many kinds, me and my OT went to a drumming group.

Going somewhere new is very hard for me now and so it was then but the welcome given to us was very positive, not overwhelming, just chairs available to hide in, drums, a few group members and Jane. In my previous life I would have been 'the Jane' but I felt so shy and backward, racking my brains for something to say to introduce myself to the group, trying to stop myself shaking, which was futile, not wanting OT to move from my side. That soon changed to becoming really involved in the beat and there was also a break for a cuppa.

Since that time a lot has changed. We, The Buddy Beat, have played 'gigs' for various Mental Health forums starting at the OT Conference in the National Youth Theatre and latterly at the Paisley Arts Centre. So as you can see I've come a long way from that first day.

In my younger days I played in an orchestra and was always full of the jitters before we started to play but this time round I am more confident in my ability and we are a team. We work together as a group when we are playing and look to each other for support and we always get it. Although we all have issues, each of us is able to reach out to the others and give or receive whatever support is needed. We have each others phone numbers and email addresses so we can get in contact if one of us hasn't turned up. It is non invasive just reassurance that someone is there if any help is needed.

This experience also gave me the courage to read out a poem I had written at my friend's request at her dad's funeral service. This, I would never have done previously but being in front of an audience of people collected for a communal purpose it seemed just the right thing to do. Just like playing with The Buddy Beat.

**Anne R**





## Evaluation of 'The Buddy Beat' Experience so far. . . by Karen Auld

The Overall Aims of Buddy Beat are to help in the recovery of ordinary lives and to help people to discover new lives.

We aim to effect positive change on people's mental health - on mood, on ability to concentrate and use attention, on self-confidence, on ability to make decisions.

We aim to have a positive effect on people's motivation to maintain and/or increase activity levels, picking up old interests, developing new interests.

This article is looking at summarising the content of the three evaluations completed.

Initially six out of seven were completed, in the second evaluation four out of seven completed and in the third, three out of 9 were completed.

All six reported that the group helped them to feel better about themselves, in relation to 'a sense of accomplishment', 'working with others to an end', 'helping to focus thoughts', 'the group gives me a reason to get out', 'feeling relaxed'. Five out of the six reported that they had met new people who have become friends.

### Renewed a leisure/hobby interest:

Majority reported yes, Three people in the group have purchased their own drum, one reported to have started creative writing again and taking up art again. 'It gave me an interest which I needed'. Comments included 'yes, especially when playing in front of an audience'; 'Yes I've always wanted to play a musical instrument, this has helped me reach that goal'; 'Yes, I have more self confidence' (majority reported this), 'I don't feel such a failure'

### About changes in habits or lifestyle since coming to the group:

All reported to be more creative than before and to spend more time on hobbies/interests. The majority reported to be enjoying life more, to feel more independent and more able to concentrate than before. Comments example; 'Can do more than I thought', 'confidence returning', 'I have found fun again', 'made new friends', 'gets me out of the house'.

### Can you describe the activities that you most enjoyed?

Five out of six reported on practising for the OT conference on 'Recovering Ordinary Lives' in Glasgow, it surprised some of them that they enjoyed playing at this large conference.

### Did you find any aspects of the group beneficial?

The majority reported 'YES' - in developing a certain skill level, acknowledgement from peers, process of creating, and in producing an end product. Comments included 'feeling proud of what we had achieved', 'encouragement builds self-esteem'.

### About your experience since coming to the group:

The majority reports to have made friends in the group and are arranging to meet out-with the official 'group time' and are in contact via phone/e-mail.

### Have people seen a change in you?

Majority reported yes, commenting on 'more to talk about', 'less anxious and nervous', 'friends hear me talking about it and see the pleasure it gives me'.

### Other comments:

'Sense of community is very important to me', 'Super Group, Go Green'; 'Being accepted into the group, making new friends, and valuing their friendship.' 'Thursday morning is a 'me' morning, when the drumming session is over, I look forward to the next one.'

'The Buddy Beat is so important to my well-being'.

Our evaluation shows that 'The Buddy Beat' Group is helping in the recovery of ordinary lives, effecting a positive change in people's mental health. The people who attend this group all have issues in relation to their self-esteem, confidence, self-worth and it is a real delight to see encouraging and constructive comments made between them all (facilitators included), to hear the laughter and see the fun that is had all chipping away at their negative beliefs in themselves helping to see themselves in a much more true, healthy and productive light. They leave the group each week, lifted in spirits, motivated to plan and organise meeting up or help organise mini projects the group has coming up and look forward to the next group session.





Hi, my name is Anne; I'd like to share my story of my journey of recovery.

I was a shy, nervous child and that carried on through adolescence and adulthood. Unknown to me this was observed, interpreted as a weakness and led to continuous physical, sexual and verbal abuse which continued for years. This had an adverse effect causing mental health problems - depression and anxiety, but a more frightening aspect came unexpectedly - self harm and eating disorders. Over this period my body was physically damaged including developing a visual impairment. All these events led to multiple psychiatric hospital admissions.

My longest admission was for seven months. I underwent a strict regime of rehabilitation for both my mental and physical health. I regarded this as a challenge, although my thought was "I want to sleep and not wake up". Thankfully, I achieved my objective and returned home but my marriage was over, partly due to the fact that I was unable to come to terms with the physical side of our relationship.

I had been working for fifteen years but was unable to continue. I was referred to RAMH (Renfrewshire Association for Mental Health) and fortunately received support 4 days a week. This was a godsend along with the continuous support from my mum although this rapidly developed into a dependency which increased as time went on. At this point my worst fears were realised. My mum became unwell and I couldn't give her the care and support she gave me. After a year of deteriorating illness my mum never woke up.

During a hospital admission I was referred to an O.T. Jeanette Allan for bereavement counselling. In our sessions we discussed key events of my life, which were causing my anxiety and suicidal thoughts. I was also hearing voices. Together we have worked on 'Wee Anne' (when I am small and take myself away in a wee bubble), and 'Big Anne', (when I'm grown up). Every one of us has a child within us which comes out in different ways; it's how I survived through the years. We also worked on my eating disorders and self harm. The pain on the outside took away the pain on the inside. Jeanette's methods were a bit unorthodox, or as I would say a bit mad! On one occasion my anger was so intense she took me into the hospital grounds where I released my frustration by hitting a tree, shouting all the hurt, dirt and confusion out of my body. We also painted the pictures inside me and doing that released tension. I did a lot of writing which brought up images I had blocked out for years. At sessions we used EMDR, a psychotherapy technique. Doing that was intense and exhausting as it gave me flashbacks and body memories that I had blocked out but I learned to deal with them and understand them in a safe environment.

### Where I am now

Over the last four years Jeanette has been of great support and influence to me. I've learned how to understand my feelings, thoughts and emotions safely and also how to interpret them, which has made me mentally stronger. As you can see, I am now a healthy weight and a much stronger person. I have been hospital free and not cut myself for over 2 years which I'm really proud of, and know will be ongoing. I know how to control situations and thoughts so 'Wee Anne' can feel safe and loved. I've become whole. I've also been back to apologise to that tree! I can make decisions independently and with confidence. This gave me the strength to confront my abuser - he is no longer a threat to me. His apology and regret have put a closure to the deep fears and feelings I once had.

I now have a good social network through joining Buddy Beat, a drumming workshop which is great fun. It has given me much more confidence and contributed to my recovery. From this I have joined a drama group and participate in social groups run by RAMH. I have regular contact with close friends which is important to me.

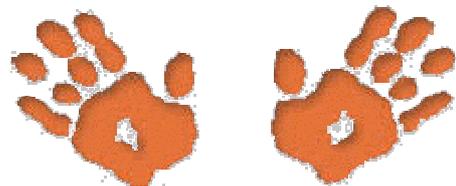
In the last five years I've been in a much more loving, stable relationship with my now fiancée Steven who has brought to the relationship his daughter and parents who I look upon as my own family.

It has been a long, worthwhile journey and without Jeanette's help and companionship I may not have made it. I still go to RAMH one day a week. I know now I can carry on independently.

I'm pleased I'm here to tell you my story.

Thank you for listening.

Anne D



The Buddy Beat meet every Thursday morning in Paisley, for more information please contact:

Jane Bentley through her website at:  
<http://www.art-beat.info/pages/home.html>

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