

16<sup>th</sup> November 2010  
Fife Dementia Learning Forum  
“Therapies in Dementia- Therapeutic Values in Music”



The Three Amigos- Connor, Anne and Tom



It was way back in March of this year that Buddy Beat played a star and energising part in an “Allied Health Professionals- Collaborating for Change” conference in Inchyra, Stirlingshire. One of the attendees that day was a Lynn Dorman, Head Occupational Therapist in Old Age Psychiatry in Fife. We seem to be getting more bookings now as our name spreads and Lynn thought we were “brilliant” and contacted Jeanette Allan to say just that and also to ask whether Buddy Beat would we care to attend an event that she is heavily involved in- The Fife Dementia Learning Forum or DLF for short. The DFL holds a forum every six weeks and is attended by staff in health, social work, voluntary and care settings as well as people with dementia and their carers. The forum would normally invite a speaker to present information and then the forum is opened up for discussion. The steering group behind the DLF had agreed upon a series of forums based on activities and the therapy of music, and that’s where we came in!

Things were put in place way back in March for this and everything was kind of put to bed for a while until Sandra Anderson, DLF Co-ordinator and Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth Local Management Unit Development Officer contacted Tom and Jane in the Autumn to get things rolling again. While Jane and Sandra worked out what would happen on the day, Tom busied himself with getting the gang to sign up and Hazel and Allan once again booked up the mini-bus. As well as Jane, who kindly and bravely announced she would be our driver for the day, there were 10 of The Buddy Beat happy to have another big day out and they were:-

Jane Bentley, Marion Bisland, Allan Borland, Hazel Borland, Tom Chalmers, Anne Dowie, Connor Muir, Jackie McDowall, Eileen McGrory, Christine Robertson and Noreen Young.

Jane picked up the bus early in the morning and met the group at Paisley’s The Lagoon Centre on a cold damp morning. Full of beans, everyone nabbed their seats and squashed their drums at the back beside Jane’s mountain of equipment and we set off just before 9am. The journey passed quietly with Eileen Swedger McGrory passing around the sweets and candy. The excitement of his first Big Buddy Beat Day Oot was clearly too much for Connor as he firstly dropped his cup of coffee all over the floor and then showered a packet of Smarties around his feet! Jane at one point cheekily asked if “Anyone would mind if she took a nap?” and once we had crossed into the Kingdom of Fife a road accident brought things to an elongated stand-still. Connor suggested a sing-song to pass the time and tried to get us singing “The Wheels on the Bus” which fell kind of flat. Christine sprung into voice and started singing “Somewhere over the Rainbow” which is probably where we were, sitting on a dual carriageway crawling along. Marion then tried “Hallelujah” and a few of us joined in but it soon became clear that everyone was more concerned about their filling bladders, with Noreen telling Connor to “tie a knot in it”. And so, we arrived some 30 minutes late at the Gilvenbank Hotel in Glenrothes. Sandra Anderson came out to meet us and looked relieved that we had finally arrived while the gang charged into the hotel to make use of the amenities. Then we unloaded the van and took our seats at a few tables sitting around the hall and this gave us a chance for a welcome cuppa.



*The Gilvenbank Hotel, Glenrothes*



*In the Red Corner- Noreen, Jackie and Eileen having a cuppa*

The Forum kicked off at 11.30 and Brian Biernat, Team Manger, Social Work Glenrothes was the Chair. He spoke a few words of welcome, and particularly those who were attending for the first time and also to Sandra Anderson for organising everything and then mentioned that part of the programme would be a band from Renfrewshire. We guessed that was us!

After a few minutes he moved us straight into the first part of the morning when Lynn Dorman spoke about the recent Dementia International Conference in London that she attended. The Forum was quite rightly very proud to have been nominated for a prestigious award at this conference for all their good work. Lynn went on to say that the message from the world delegates at the conference was a positive one and the by-word is “It’s now time for Dementia”, backing this up with the sobering and thoughtful facts that in 10 years time a projected 36 million people worldwide will have been diagnosed with Dementia, and that will rise to 66 million by 2030 and a staggering 115 million by 2050.



Next on the agenda was a talk from Fiona Crow, a Music Therapist at Strachan Care Home in Edinburgh. Fiona explained that she was starting a new position with the Occupational Therapy Department at Queen Margaret’s Hospital in Edinburgh but would talk about her work with dementia patients over the last couple of years. Fiona told us that the only place to study to become a Musical Therapist in Scotland is at the Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh and the course takes two years to complete, adding that at the moment there are around 50 Music Therapists in Scotland either fully trained or still completing their training.

Fiona then went on to explain how using Musical Therapy benefits Dementia patients, highlighting the improved quality of life, emotional well being, sense of identity, improved memory, improved health and increased verbal recall. Fiona holds musical therapy groups as part of her work with Dementia patients but stressed that the majority of her work is on a one to one basis. She also spoke of a Dementia patient who just walked into her office one day, sat down and began drumming. Fiona was surprised and joined in and this lead to the two of them meeting once a week to play drums. This man’s family and carers had no idea he loved drumming simply because he had never been asked or given the chance. Fiona then showed us a series of 6 short filmed sequences entitled “Margaret”. Margaret was in the last stages of Alzheimer’s and was unable to communicate with her family and Fiona had worked with her for several months. The film was made with the permission of Margaret’s family. The first film showed Margaret “locked-in” to her condition but she managed to connect with the drum and echoed what Fiona was playing. As we moved through the sequences you could hear a pin drop in the room. At one point

Margaret seemed to definitely smile at the music and in another she opened her eyes and turned her head when Fiona played the flute. These films were quite astonishing to witness and there could not have been a single person there who was unaffected. Fiona then went on to say that Margaret's husband was amazed when he saw how his wife was connecting through the music. Fiona's segment was then finished with a healthy Question and Answer session with contributions from our own Connor, Eileen and Marion. We then broke for lunch and after a quick bun-fight we began to set out our seats and drums and organised a myriad of percussion on a long table to the side of the 80 delegate seats.



*Anne and Connor chilling before Showtime!*



The plan had been for Jane to give a talk and then that would be followed by Buddy Beat for the final half hour, but Jane wanted a more interactive experience and decided to break down her talk with activity. Brian Biernat formally introduced Jane who herself said a few opening words while some of the gang busied themselves delivering Boomwhackers to the expectant 80. Once everyone was armed Jane set about showing each colour their particular beat and you could see the confused faces lighten up once the beat came out.



*"I'm going to show you something that will blow away any cobwebs..."*

Setting things off with Buddy Beat supplying a gentle background beat, Jane led the Boomwhacker Gang, showing them how to stop on a count of four, how to find the space between the other colours and how to follow instructions when switching between colours. Jane whipped everyone into action and the room bristled with music and the smiles on the faces said it all. It was such a good atmosphere and the sound felt chilled and beautiful. Moving from there Jane kept the Boomwhackers playing and then split

the attendees in half and proceeded to switch between sections, getting faster and quicker and everyone was totally in the zone and going for gold when Jane gave the count of 4 and we finished on a heart-beat and the only sound was the tinkle of a tea-spoon as someone accidentally hit their cup and saucer on the final beat! Marvellous! Then Jane announced that we would gather the Boomwhackers back in and we laughed as a collective moan came from the delegates. It seemed as though they wanted to keep playing for the remainder of the afternoon!

To pacify the gathering Jane quickly shouted that their music making had not come to an end and would return again later. Jane began her talk with hand-clapping and the delegates immediately responded to her call. Talking about inclusion and sharing, Jane referred to the “Big Lie” that “only a few are musicians” where in fact everyone has in innate ability to create a beat, whether it is with just your fingers or feet, or with an instrument such as a drum. Many people who have not created music or played an instrument have certain expectations such as expecting failure and fearing exposure.



This can be overcome in group activities by “teaching without teaching” and the main goals of such groups are relationships and participation. Jane explained that her work is not about music education, performance or music therapy but the effects of her group work show increased musical skill, encourage interaction, promotes social inclusion, releases stress and helps focus peoples’ minds.

Jane then spoke about the work she does with Singing for The Brain at Paisley’s Royal Alexandria Hospital where every Tuesday night people with dementia and their carers gather together for an hours’ singing and she spoke about the therapeutic benefits of singing. She referred to the dementia patients as like “Watering a garden of wilted flowers” and how great it was to watch these people grow and how their brains seem to unlock forgotten songs from the past. Jane stressed to everyone that “When you are in the music, you are in the music” to show how people get wrapped up in the enjoyment of it all and lose their worries for a short while. By way of example Jane left everyone in a song that starts with the line “A Ford Escort, a Ford Escort and a Mini, mini, mini” which also includes driving motions and the song then leads on to “A Ferrari” which you have to sing in a higher pitched zoom fashion and she had everyone singing and doing the actions. Then she split the room in half once again and started one section off and then started the other section a little later which meant both halves were singing different verses at the same time. The lyrics will never win an Ivor Novello Award but it was beautiful to listen to and it all went down very well indeed. Giggles and smiles all around!

It was time for the Forum to get active once again and Jane invited everyone to visit The Percussion Table and select whatever took their fancy, exclaiming “Don’t be Shy!” to which Allan retorted “Give it a Try!” The stampede crossed the floor and after a few hectic minutes everyone managed to settle back into their chairs, looking excited and eager!

With such a variety of instruments in the room it was only fair that Jane gave a demonstration and she worked through shakers, frogs (a loud “awe!” erupted), drums, tambourines and not forgetting the solo triangle.



*The Demo Queen*



Jane also spoke about her work at Glasgow's Gartnavel Royal Hospital where Music Together tries to involve patients, staff and visitors in singing and often they can move around the hospital as opposed to sitting and waiting for people to join in. Taking the music to the people, as it were. Jane spoke about how she uses "Drum Stories" and proceeded to tell a story of Frank and his love Irene and the story meandered along and every so often Jane would lead the words into a song title such as "Singing in The Rain" which gave the delegates the chance to play and sing at the same time. We ventured through a good half dozen songs and this demonstrated how easy it is to get a group singing and how using old songs such as that can help unlock and free minds that would otherwise have remained closed. Great fun!



*Eileen- "This is just great!"*

With the clock now ticking Jane began to wind things off. Firstly she demonstrated how to have a musical conversation with Eileen and then asked Jackie to give a beat which the Forum duly repeated several times. Jane hoped that she had given someone food for thought and urged anyone to contact her by email for further information. Brian Biernat took to the floor once again and asked everyone to show their appreciation and we received a terrific round of applause. That was the end of the Forum and as people began to get ready to leave we performed "Funky Lunch" and again we heard a great round of applause.



*Marion- "I just love our Big Days Out!"*



As we packed up several people came up to us and gave us really positive feedback which was lovely to hear. Christine announced that we had some of our frogs for sale and surprisingly Hazel and Allan did rather well on the till.

As we headed back long the motorway to Paisley, the group were in high spirits and chatted about the day's events. Several found Fiona Crow's talk very informative and found the film of Margaret very powerful. Jane's talk had also gone down well and it was interesting for The Buddy Beat to hear about the kind of good work she gets up to when she is not drumming with us.

The hotel packed up the unused food and presented a tucker box to the group and on the way home and The Buffet Hoovers made sure no morsel was left behind. The group had a sing song too and some of that left Marion and Tom gob-smacked. Well, how else could you react to a group of adults singing the theme tunes to Bob the Builder and The Teletubbies! Jane got us safely back to Paisley just around 5pm and the group would like to say a huge "Thank-you!" for being our driver for the day.

Lastly, Forum Co-ordinator Sandra Anderson sent Tom a great email -

"Hi Tom

It was great to meet you too yesterday along with Jane and The Buddy Beat. I have just had a quick skim over the evaluation forms this morning and feedback is excellent, everyone really enjoyed the day. I am so glad The Buddy Beat enjoyed themselves too after having travelled such a long distance. I am glad you got something out of the forum too - that's what we hope all our attendees will get. Once again, thanks very much for attending yesterday and making our final forum of 2010 a great success.

Kind regards

Sandra"

And Jane also received feedback;

"Hi Jane, I was at the dementia learning forum this week and greatly enjoyed the session with your colleagues in Buddy Beat. And please pass on to the group, what a great session it was, thanks,-Julie Smith, Senior Nurse, Older Peoples Services, Cameron Hospital, Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth CHP."

So, another Buddy Beat day out, and once again like no other and was enjoyed by everyone. We learned a few things, had a laugh or three and had fun! What more could you ask for?



*Nobody can deny that Noreen isn't a tower of strength to her Buddy Beat friends*

Words and pictures (with a bit of help from Noreen and Connor) by Tom Chalmers

