

### **13. DCDP Case Study: Faith in Community Dundee: Lochee Music Group by Ross Middlemiss, Intern**

"I started my *Time to Shine* internship with Faith in Community Dundee back in January 2016. Faith in the Community Dundee (FiCD) works alongside and supports faith communities that are actively engaged in tackling poverty in its many forms. Poverty is often thought of as 'going without food', but can be more broadly defined as the 'lack of means to participate in a full, dignified life within their own communities'. As a result, FiCD has participated in several projects focused on tackling issues 'beyond food'; one of these is the Lochee Music Group.

On the second day of my internship, my colleague Danny took me along to the Lochee drop-in cafe to introduce me to the volunteers, visitors and staff from other services who regularly attend to provide other kinds of support. Within ten minutes, I was involved in a discussion between Catrina Boal (Dundee Healthy Living Initiative) and Louise Davis (Lochee Parish Church), a community nurse and community support worker, respectively. The discussion was a result of something that had happened moments before: a visitor to the cafe had walked over to the upright piano located in the corner of the hall, and started playing a beautiful piece of music. Everyone in the cafe stopped talking for a moment to listen, and then applauded afterwards.

No one expected this, and more importantly, no one expected that level of musical competency to emerge from the quiet guy that had been sitting idly at a table. Such talents are often hidden and obscured until an opportunity is presented to showcase them, but the change in this guy's sense of place in the world was immediately noticeable. Catrina and Louise immediately got their thinking caps on, and within the context of their own roles, thought about how some sort of music group could support those in recovery from substance misuse and mental health issues, and support those re-entering the community after a prison sentence. Louise pointed out that the church had lots of equipment from a music group, which was sitting unused in a cupboard.

This is the point at which Danny introduced me, somewhat erroneously, as 'musician'. Louise showed me the equipment they had amassed, and my jaw hit the floor. This was good stuff, sitting in a cupboard not being used – well, that's no use, is it?

Around four months later, on a sunny Wednesday morning in early May, we launched the Lochee Music Group. Louise, Catrina and I had met regularly in the intervening time, and we considered issues such as when the group would run, how long it would run for, how we would fund it, who could participate. I re-strung guitars; we brought in a local volunteer from the Lochee Community Pop-Up Shop to PAT-test the equipment. Incidentally, Lochee is a microcosm of everything I love about Dundee; everyone knows someone who knows how to do this or that, and local people often throw their weight behind community initiatives.

The Pop-Up Shop helped by promoting the group by leafleting people who came through the doors; the community knew who would enjoy this project the most.

We had one visitor on the first session, which was to be expected, but with the continuing enthusiastic promotion at the Pop-Up shop down the road the numbers soon increased. Five people came along on the second week, including an artist who was happy to sit by and sketch musicians playing away as they jammed. Now, we have a core group of six to eight people that come along every week; some weeks, we'll see anywhere between ten to fifteen people through the door. Ultimately, though, this has never been a numbers game.

As a collective, we have reflected on what the group means to people. There is plenty of data and research around these days to show that music is directly beneficial to those with poor mental health. As one woman said: 'I love this group and I love to sing; it makes me feel good and forget all my worries'. Providing a musical focus in a safe environment without fear of judgement or reproach has been the central focus of the group; we can see the confidence grow in our musicians.

Another participant commented: 'people need this; there's nothing like this in Lochee. I don't go near pubs anymore, so I never get to meet other people who play music'. For a lot of people in recovery, and those on home detention curfews, going to pubs and clubs just isn't possible. The group exists

as a response to that, and it's all come about due to a quiet guy having a blast on a piano in a busy community café!

In September 2016, we were awarded funding by the Sheila Tennant Co-Design Award to sustain the group through to the end of August 2017. This has allowed us to buy a drum kit, provide refreshments and cover overheads for the hall, as well as providing us with a creative budget to edge our musicians towards recording and performing live.

In terms of my own input as 'a musician', there are days when I will help steer the group into a jam session, and then there are the days when I don't need to do that – those are the best days. We want our musicians to take the reins and run with it. We, as workers, are merely facilitators – we provide the space, the means and an ear to listen with. Many of our musicians are providing invaluable peer support, and who are we to think we know better than that?

The Lochee Music Group is, somewhat accidentally, an example of Asset Based Community Development, which is a methodology upheld by Faith in Community Dundee. Rather than focusing on community needs, we have responded to skills and gifts, and looked to find ways to support people to share these gifts with others. It's the truest example of community empowerment, as it focuses on what is strong in a community as opposed to the deficiencies."

**Faith in Community Dundee**  
**November 2016**