MUSIC INTERVENTION AS A TOOL FOR WELL-BEING

A Pilot Project at a Family Group Home for Unaccompanied Minors

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ABSTRACT


This project-oriented thesis represents a record of a pilot project that was realized by social services students. Carried out in collaboration with unaccompanied minors and the family group home in southern Finland at which they reside, a music session was organized during which one unaccompanied minor participant took part. Centered on the arts-based method of music performance, the music session was used as an intervention tool in order to positively impact the subjective well-being of the unaccompanied minors.

Utilizing prior research from the field, the report presents background information on the plight of the target group, highlighting the challenges facing them. It also features definitions of the key concepts at the heart of this undertaking. Furthermore, the reader will find the process of the project described, including the planning, implementation, as well as the outcome. The impact of the music session appeared to support the belief that music can be beneficial to an individual’s well-being. Rounding off the report is a reflection of what was achieved within the conclusions.

As a result, this work intends to shed light on the challenges that this type of project may face at different phases. Additionally, it could serve as a blueprint and justification for the family group home to incorporate further arts-based activities in the future. It could also be used by other professionals in the field, working with different target groups, for similar purposes.

Keywords: unaccompanied minor, well-being, subjective well-being, music intervention, participatory approach
# CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................... 4
  1.1 Aim and objectives .................................................................................................................. 5

2 KEY CONCEPTS .......................................................................................................................... 7
  2.1 Unaccompanied minors .......................................................................................................... 7
  2.2 Asylum seeker or refugee? ...................................................................................................... 9
  2.3 Well-being ............................................................................................................................. 10
    2.3.1 Well-being of a child ..................................................................................................... 13

3 BACKGROUND AND NEED ...................................................................................................... 15
  3.1 Target group .......................................................................................................................... 15
  3.2 Need for the project ............................................................................................................... 16
  3.3 Short history of influx of unaccompanied minors ................................................................. 17
  3.4 Assessment of age .................................................................................................................. 17
  3.5 Challenges in the lives of unaccompanied minors ............................................................... 18

4 METHODS .................................................................................................................................. 21
  4.1 Arts-based tool ...................................................................................................................... 21
  4.2 Participatory approach .......................................................................................................... 24

5 ETHICS ....................................................................................................................................... 28

6 PROCESS DESCRIPTION ............................................................................................................ 30
  6.1 Planning ................................................................................................................................ 30
  6.2 Implementation ...................................................................................................................... 32
  6.3 Assessment ............................................................................................................................. 34
  6.4 Challenges ............................................................................................................................. 34

7 RESULTS .................................................................................................................................... 38

8 CONCLUSIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ....................................................... 40
  8.1 Conclusions ............................................................................................................................ 40
  8.2 Professional development ...................................................................................................... 42

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................... 44

APPENDICES ............................................................................................................................... 53
1 INTRODUCTION

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established to assist the masses of people within Europe at that time who had become displaced. Today, in 2018, the plight of those seeking asylum in European countries such as Finland continues, although their regions of origin extend well beyond Europe’s borders to the Middle East, Asia and Africa. (UNHCR 2018. About Us. History of UNHCR.) Record numbers of refugees have been leaving their lives and families behind to seek safety and a new start in Europe, which has caused much public debate and outcry from certain sections of society across European Union Member States.

Amongst the people coming to Europe from elsewhere in search of safety is a sometimes overlooked yet vulnerable sub-group: unaccompanied minors – children or young people below the legal age of adulthood, who have made the perilous journey without a mother or father, or some other guardian who is responsible for their care and well-being. In 2017, Finland received 142 new asylum applications from unaccompanied minors. That same year, 187 positive decisions were given - which means residence permits were granted to each applicant - while 21 were given negative decisions and 27 were either dismissed or the applications had expired. (Finnish Immigration Service 2018. Statistics. Applications/Decisions.)

The reasons for leaving home and embarking upon a solo journey to a new country are varied. Nevertheless, it is a prospect often fraught with uncertainty, fear, and hardship on an emotional and sometimes physical level. This can ultimately result in a decreased state of well-being. According to the European Migration Network’s (n.d.) study on unaccompanied minors, the reasons for them entering the EU might include family reunification, improved economic prosperity or opportunities, avoiding persecution or conflict, transitioning to another EU country, or being a victim of human trafficking. They might even be simply abandoning their lives at home for other reasons. In Finland,
authorities have recorded fleeing persecution, family reunification and trafficking as particular motives for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the country. (European Migration Network n.d., 5, 22.)

Before proceeding further, the authors would like to address a matter of terminology. In his study on this cohort, Björklund (2015) refers to unaccompanied refugee minors - URMs for short (Björklund 2015). Alternatively, the EU Council Directive 2001/55/EC refers only to unaccompanied minors, while the Finnish Immigration Service uses unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (EUR-Lex 2001; Finnish Immigration Service 2018). Since it would appear that there is no one standard, universally-used term or abbreviation, and because it is clear that these sources refer to the same group, we have elected to use simply unaccompanied minor, referred to hereafter in this thesis as UMs to denote several or a group, and UM to denote an individual minor.

Based upon the plight of this vulnerable group, a pilot project was conceived in collaboration with a UM and the family group home in southern Finland at which he resides, which is to be kept anonymous due to the matter of safeguarding the privacy of those involved. For clarity, a pilot project in our context is defined as an attempt to carry out an activity for the purpose of testing how it works for further use (Zbrodoff 2012).

1.1 Aim and objectives

Following the conception of this project, it was important to establish an aim and set of objectives that would serve to provide those involved with a clear direction of what was to be achieved. Whereas an aim can be viewed as the intended outcome or goal of a project, an objective is the necessary step that will serve to realize the achievement of that aim. Applying the S.M.A.R.T. method of setting objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timebound would help to facilitate this. (Martin 2002, 10.)

As such, the aim of this project was to achieve some measure of well-being amongst the UMs residing at a family group home. This would be achieved via three objectives: first,
to gain the UMs’ active participation in the project’s planning phase; second, to have the UMs’ active participation in the implementation phase, which comprises a music session in which we would play musical instruments together in a group; and third, to evaluate the outcome with them through a semi-structured interview and informal discussion.

This project-based thesis documents the planning and implementation of this pilot project. It will proceed to define the key concepts important in understanding the project’s premise, after which it will provide background information on UMs in Finland, describing various challenges facing them in their lives. Next, the arts-based tool of music will be discussed, briefly touching upon similar uses of arts-based methods in the field. Concluding chapters will then present the project’s process and results, conclusion, further discussion, ethical considerations, as well as the authors’ professional development summary.
2 KEY CONCEPTS

In this section, the key concepts that reflect our area of investigation will be presented and discussed.

2.1 Unaccompanied minors

According to EU Council Directive 2001/55/EC Article 2 (f), UMs are defined as

Third-country nationals or stateless persons below the age of eighteen, who arrive on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them whether by law or custom, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into care of such a person, or minors who are left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the Member States (EUR-Lex 2001).

This description of a UM certainly applies equally to Finland and its national context. Being a European Union Member State and a signatory of the United Nations’ 1951 Refugee Convention on which international protection (asylum) law is based, Finland is obligated to adhere to international and European values. It does so by shaping its national policies and legislation to reflect these values, as well as by acknowledging the various parties for whom the Convention was established, and upholding their human rights. (Finnish Refugee Advice Center n.d.).

To further define what is meant by a minor with respect to age classification in the Finnish context – and for the purposes of this project – the Finnish Child Protection Act (A 417/2007) Chapter 1 Section 6 can be referred to. It states that a child is an individual below the age of eighteen, whereas a youth is considered to be someone between the ages of eighteen and twenty. (A 417/2007.) As is the case with the target group involved in this project, being between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, they clearly fall within
the scope of what can justifiably be termed UM. What is also significant in respect to the Finnish Child Protection Act is that it applies equally to all children (including UMs), as well as their respective families, if any. As such, the same rights that Finnish children have, such as a right to education and healthcare, among others, are provided for in the Act. (National Institute for Health and Welfare 2018. Työprosessit. Turvapaikanhakijat lastensuojelun asiakkaina.)

With this in mind, it is also important to note that each UM comes from a unique background. While some may indeed hail from the same region or country, and do certainly share the same basic needs, there may still be differences which set them apart from one another. Björklund (2015) supports this by stating that they are a heterogeneous cohort; although sharing a status as UMs, they are unique as individuals due to their ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as their creed. (Dottridge et al. 2013.)

In terms of the UMs’ right to services, these comprise, among others, the right to interpreter services; the right to provision of healthcare; the right to have a legally appointed adult representative who will assist them in matters pertaining to their rights, which includes being present for judicial hearings; the right to subsistence care and accommodation – either at a reception center for children or at a family group home; and the right to a social worker handling their case and safeguarding the UM’s right to be heard. UMs who have been granted residence permits have the right to an integration plan. Also, until the age of twenty one, or until his/her parents arrive in Finland, the UM is eligible for further support measures by the municipality. For UMs who are victims of human trafficking, the additional right to targeted assistance and protection are provided for. Regarding the financial responsibility for the UM’s subsistence and the payment of the aforementioned services, it is the duty of the respective municipality until the UM turns twenty one. (National Institute for Health and Welfare 2018. Työprosessit. Turvapaikanhakijat lastensuojelun asiakkaina.)

Perhaps the most immediate need for the UM upon arriving to Finland is to have accommodation and their basic needs attended to. A group home, or family group home
as it is also known, is a form of accommodation meant for under sixteen-year-olds, but in which over sixteens can also reside. Supported housing units are primarily intended for sixteen to seventeen-year-olds (Finnish Immigration Service 2018. Permits and citizenship. Asylum in Finland). As was the case with this project, the setting was a group home where thirteen UMs reside, ranging in age from fifteen to seventeen. Of these thirteen it was hoped that at least several would take part in the project, the aim being to have some measure of positive impact upon their well-being.

Since those in our project are here seeking asylum, they have been granted a temporary residence permit (A classification residence permit), the validity of which is four years. Following this, an extended residence permit could be applied for which is also valid for four years. However, by the time they come of age by turning eighteen, the State will re-examine their application at which time, depending on the circumstances of their case, there is a possibility they might not be granted permanent residence or asylum. Of course, in the event that the grounds for them being granted asylum indefinitely are met, they will be issued with a P classification residence permit. (Finnish Immigration Service 2018. Permits and citizenship. Asylum in Finland.)

2.2 Asylum seeker or refugee?

In the case of our target group, is important to clarify another key bit of terminology which has been mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, and which will serve to describe their circumstances in as clear as light as possible. Amnesty International defines an asylum seeker as an individual who is looking to obtain international protection in a country other than their own. However, the terms asylum seeker and refugee are often used interchangeably by some, and yet they differ in one respect: an asylum seeker is someone still in the process of being officially recognized as a refugee. (Amnesty International 2018. What we do. Refugees, Asylum seekers and Migrants.)

In Article 1A of the UNHCR’s 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, which extends international protection to all peoples everywhere, the term refugee is defined as someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a
well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UNHCR 2018. About us. The 1951 Refugee Convention, 14). To know how this definition relates to the Finnish context, we can look at Finland’s Aliens Act (A 301/2004) Chapter 1 Section 3 (11), which classifies a refugee as being an individual who fulfills the criteria laid out in the UNHCR Refugee Convention (A 301/2004).

In light of these definitions, it could be argued that the UMIs in our project are representative of both descriptions. However, the Finnish Ministry of the Interior makes the distinction clearer by stipulating that refugees are asylum seekers who have been granted asylum and, as stated previously, those who have not yet been granted asylum are still considered asylum seekers (Ministry of the Interior n.d. Migration. Refugees and Asylum seekers). Only once they have been officially granted the right to remain in the receiving country and are eligible for the related rights can they be considered refugees. The correct use of these terms is especially important when it comes to the legalities surrounding their rights and status. However, the general population may still mix up the two without ever fully comprehending the difference.

At the family group home where our project took place, the staff of professionals tend to favor the terms refugee and immigrant when referring to their service users. Based upon this it can be reasoned that, for the duration that the UMIs have been issued with residence permits, they can be considered refugees as per the definitions discussed earlier.

2.3 Well-being

One of the core key concepts of this project is well-being, specifically subjective well-being. Before focusing on the latter, a definition of the former is necessary to gain a general understanding. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), which describes well-being as being linked to mental health, it is a state in which a person is
aware of their own capabilities, can successfully contribute to their lives and their communities, and has the ability to manage life’s everyday stresses. It further adds that, for some, it may mean experiencing feelings of happiness, while for others it may mean having good physical health. Also, the WHO cite outside factors such as having access to job opportunities or housing as potential determinants of one’s well-being. (World Health Organization 2018. Programmes and projects. Mental health.)

Amongst some, quality of life is a further way to consider well-being. Earlier means of evaluating it – such as that carried out by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - have tended to look at objective markers like economic prosperity, standard of living, and access to and availability of public services, while the individual opinions and feelings of populations had not been given much thought. However, subsequent studies examining subjective well-being have yielded valuable information about different peoples’ emotional states. This has offered new opportunities for positive interventions, so much so that the OECD subsequently acknowledged that subjective well-being is an important factor. (Stone & Mackie 2013, 1-2.)

However, to consider such objective markers as economic prosperity in the context of this pilot project would be a decidedly vast and unrealistic undertaking. For this reason, subjective well-being was singled out in an effort to simplify a complex subject and narrow our focus. Miao, Koo and Oishi (2013), referring to Diener (1984) and Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith (1999), describe subjective well-being as a combination of affective and cognitive elements: the former being an ability to manage negative and positive sentiments, while the latter concerns a person’s appraisal of their life (Miao, Koo & Oishi 2013, 208).

In their work on examining well-being and happiness, David, Boniwell and Ayers (2013) clarify this by describing subjective well-being as the psychological aspect of the broader concept of well-being; it deals with what we feel and think about our lives. They also refer to the so-called positive psychology approach in research and client work, which tends to give prominence to the capacity of an individual to achieve things, as well as
determinants that give meaning to life. (David, Boniwell & Ayers 2013, 20, 32.) Based on the preceding paragraph’s description, these can be seen as recognizable features of subjective well-being: when a person can derive a sense of meaning or satisfaction through what they do or are exposed to.

Another take on well-being is offered by Vernon (2014). Borrowing an idea from another scholar, he views well-being as two-fold: that which is lower flourishing and higher flourishing. Lower flourishing denotes the well-being in everyday life, related to such things as having positive social relationships, partaking in enjoyable free-time activities, and having a way of contributing to society such as through studies or employment. Higher flourishing denotes well-being related to aspects of one’s life that are far larger considerations, such as faith, personal ethics, and the pondering of human existence. (Vernon 2014, 6.) As such, the former definition of lower flourishing would appear to characterize the area of well-being that our project intended to address.

In Finland, the National Institute for Health and Welfare (Terveyden ja Hyvinvoinninlaitos – THL) is tasked with monitoring and developing means of promoting health and well-being amongst the population. One of their focus areas has been to examine well-being as it relates to immigrants – which includes refugees as a particular group. Various factors uncovered as impacting upon the state of an immigrant’s well-being and health include their cultural background, purpose for leaving their home country, age, and duration of time in Finland. They also identify factors that contribute in a positive way to well-being, such as a subjective view of their standard of living in Finland, having familial or community ties and support, having a positive view of the Finnish service system, and making the right life choices for themselves. (National Institute for Health and Welfare 2018. Topics. Immigrants and Multiculturalism.)

Therefore, as can be understood based on the views presented here, subjective well-being would appear to give weight to the personal thoughts and feelings that we as people experience in our lives. While it can be argued that to experience or have a sense of well-being in its totality comprises a great deal more, it is reasonable to suggest – or
even state - that a vital component to well-being is subjective in nature; how we feel and what we think about our lives, what we do in them, matters.

2.3.1 Well-being of a child

Bringing the focus back to our target group of UMs in Finland, who are essentially children, well-being in their context can be conceptualized in different dimensions. Examples include health, safety, social inclusion, material security, education and the child’s satisfaction. However, the definition of a child’s well-being is still being debated and does not have a clear or obvious meaning. It is also emphasized that all of these elements of the child’s well-being are important. For example, if the parents are providing a wealthy life for the child while the child has mental health issues, it does not mean that the well-being of the child is being looked after. All of the aspects have to be taken into consideration in order to provide a healthy life (Schweiger & Graf 2016, 2.)

As a cornerstone of human rights in Finland, legislation that safeguards a child’s entitlement is of paramount importance. Their care, education, accessibility to leisure time activities and opinion on matters concerning them are just some of the core concerns provided for on a legislative level. As stated in the Finnish Child Protection Act (A 417/2007) Chapter 3 Section 12, the municipalities have a duty to create a plan which deals with how they advance the well-being of children and young people in the community. This plan includes such considerations as the necessary resources available, specific services, and activities that advance well-being and act as a preventive measure to potential problems. Chapter 1 Section 4 of the Act deals with the principles of child welfare. Of importance are protecting the child’s right and access to positive relationships with others, tenderness, nurturing, and understanding. It also highlights the importance of affording them emotional and physical autonomy, as well as a feeling of responsibility in their lives. (A 417/2007.)

Children facing difficult life situations such as trauma due to war or separation from family, among other reasons, are in need of special care and attention. However, numerous factors can affect how well children are able to manage through such
difficulties. Amongst these are the state of their families and lives, as well as their gender, age, and feeling of belonging to a community. By intervening and helping them return to daily activities, their capacity to manage through hardship can be strengthened. (Terlonge, Rasmussen & Ager 2012, 6.)

Terlonge, Rasmussen and Ager (2012) highlight three areas which relate to a child’s well-being: skills and knowledge, emotional well-being, and social well-being. The first comprises positive communication amongst peers, good judgement, and conflict resolution skills. The second area comprises a feeling of self-worth, agency, and future expectation. The third, social well-being, comprises feeling part of a community and having interpersonal skills. They also describe some key factors threatening a child’s well-being. Among these are family conflict; domestic violence, emotional or sexual abuse; human trafficking; the negative state of a parent’s health or well-being; unfair emotional burden placed on the child; separation from family; and physical injury. (Terlonge, Rasmussen & Ager 2012, 9, 20-21.)

Amongst the UMs at the family group home, who can also be termed as adolescents due to their respective age group, indicators of diminished well-being have been shown to include a proclivity toward social reclusiveness and annoyance. A tendency to rebel or act aggressively is also common, as is risk-taking or becoming involved in unsafe activities. (Terlonge, Rasmussen & Ager 2012, 26.)

As such, it is vital that professionals take stock of a UM’s mental and emotional state soon after his/her arrival. At the initial stages where a social worker is involved, the psychosocial interview model (psykososiaalinen haastattelumalli) is utilized in establishing the needs of the UM, which includes an establishment of their state of well-being (Alanko, Marttinen & Mustonen 2011, 27-28). This is done so that the UM can receive the necessary specialized care, thereby helping to mitigate any negative effects.
3 BACKGROUND AND NEED

This section will describe the project’s target group in more detail, including a brief history of UMs, justification for the need of such a project, and how their being classified as children is determined.

3.1 Target group

When arriving to Finland the UMs are placed in a reception center for only underage unaccompanied asylum seekers, where they wait for decisions on their residence permit applications. After having received a positive decision, a UM is placed in a family group home where they will live until they turn 18 and can find an apartment of their own. As stated by Suokonautio and Rantala (2014), a UM who has been granted a residence permit after seeking international protection is provided with care and nurture at a family group home, and can be under the support system until they turn twenty one, or get a guardian in Finland. (Suokonautio & Rantala 2014, 15.)

The family group home consists of thirteen UMs from different parts of the world, such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Iraq. Some live in a single person room, while others have a roommate with whom they share accommodation. Common spaces include a kitchen and a living room, and the workers have a hand in preparing the UMs’ daily meals. However, the UMs also have an opportunity to cook their own meals if they so desire.

The main services the UMs are provided with at the family group home are psycho-social support through a responsible counselor, a responsible social worker, and a representative. Some of the UMs can also have appointments with a psychologist. This is because some of the UMs have had traumatic experiences on their way to Finland, and possibly even in their home country. As such, this service is crucial for them. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2017.) In addition, they all have only temporary residence permits, which is why they are under a lot of stress not
knowing whether they are going to be granted continuous permits. If these permits are not granted, they are deported back to their home country. (Turvapaikanhakijat 2018.)

According to statistics, there were 3,014 UMAs that arrived in Finland seeking for asylum in 2015. In 2016 the number decreased to only 287 UM asylum seekers, after which there has been less than 200 UM asylum seekers in 2017-2018. The statistics also show that only 1,846 of the refugees that arrived in Finland during 2015-2018 have received a residence permit (Finnish Immigrant Services 2018.).

3.2 Need for the project

Björklund states that UMs have traumatic experiences leading to their mental health issues, such as facing violence in their home country, sexual assault, trafficking, and neglect. Many of these experiences occurred during their journey. Moreover, because of the often lengthy and uncertain asylum process, the negative effects of these experiences often persist, wreaking havoc on them. For this reason, the UMs are extremely vulnerable and the space for meeting social care professionals is limited. (Björklund 2015, 17.) Due to their precarious situation and finite support available, engaging activities can have positive impacts on their mental health. Therefore, based upon the previous discussions, about the key issues that UMs face in their lives, it is reasonable to understand why their well-being would be negatively impacted, and for what reasons, and why they would require measures to help improve their emotional functioning.

Since they are impacted by the aforementioned issues, the music session aims at offering a moment of mental respite for the UMs in the family group home, giving them a chance to focus their minds on something more pleasant. Art has been proved to be beneficial for refugees before, which is evident in an article concerning a young refugee woman, who has been using art to fill a void in herself. Through making art and carrying out exhibitions, she claims to have found meaning in her life (Russell-Kraft 2017.) Another article describes how a few hours of playing music each week offers refugees a chance to get a mental rest and, for a moment, not think about the struggles
they are going through. Through music they are able to unwind and enjoy the moment together with others (Revive-UK 2016.)

3.3 Short history of influx of unaccompanied minors

In the 21st century the amount of asylum seekers in Finland differed between 1,500 and 6,000 applicants. 2015 was the year during which Finland had a record amount of asylum seekers, up to 32,476 altogether. The reason for the high number is the refugee crisis that existed in the world at that time. It was the biggest crisis of refugees since the Second World War. There are many different reasons behind the refugees’ flight, some of which are war, persecution or unsafety. Most of the refugees end up in the areas nearby their home country, but a part of them also seek for asylum in Europe. The country in which they finally settle can depend on their route of flight, or because of information they have about a particular country. (Ministry of the Interior n.d. Turvapaikanhakijat ja pakolaiset. Maahanmuutto.)

3.4 Assessment of age

Of equal importance to knowing basic facts about a person who is entering a country under the auspices of international protection, such as their name and country of origin, is for immigration authorities to establish the age of each individual. This is necessary because if the individual is in fact a child, it would determine the need for child protection services to be involved, for example. Moreover, it would demand that the Finnish immigration authorities expedite the minor’s application, as national law dictates. In Finland, establishing age typically occurs based upon a consultation of any documentation or identification which the UM has in his/her possession, or verbally.

However, if the Finnish immigration authorities have a good basis for suspecting that the age disclosed is false, a forensic age assessment might need to be carried out. Having this assessment performed is dependent upon either the UM, a legal guardian, or a
representative of theirs providing written approval. In the event that approval is not given, the authorities will handle the UM’s case as if they were an adult. (Finnish Immigration Service 2018. Permits and citizenship. Asylum in Finland.) In practical terms, establishing the age of a UM in Finland consists of one-to-one interviews, an investigation of their documents, dental age estimation, and assessing their skeletal state (European Migration Network n.d., 50).

3.5 Challenges in the lives of unaccompanied minors

As migrants, crossing international borders and encountering new cultures while making passage through multiple countries is an ordeal of immense proportions for UMs. They have had to adapt to a new society and environment, while at the same time experiencing losses, disruption to familiar life patterns, and being exposed to new challenges in Finland. According to O Te Whakaaro Nui (2010), the settlement outcomes of refugees depends on how well they are able to maintain their own traditions and language. (O Te Whakaaro Nui 2010, 19.)

The UMs often have trouble sleeping at night because they think about their families back home, wondering where they are and how they are doing, especially if they do not have any contact with them. It does not make it any easier for them that they follow the news from their home country, or see reports of refugees having drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. These are things that go through their minds daily. In addition, if they have contact with their families, they can feel obligated towards them, which is why they often want to work more than study in order to be able to send money back home. Additionally, the knowledge that family reunification is unlikely to happen anytime soon, if at all, does not alleviate their worry. (Lähteenmäki 2016.)

In 2010, the terms of family reunification were constricted along with the new changes of the Aliens Act. Three years later, only one UM was able to accomplish family reunification. Nowadays, in order to carry out family reunification, the family members
have to request for a clearing of the family ties from the Finnish embassy, and they are advised to acquire biometric identifications. (Suokonautio & Rantala 2014, 23.)

The challenges in family reunification that often appears, especially for Somalis, are lack of official documents, which are required during the process. However, they need to pay for getting the documents. Applications for family reunification are most common in the cases of Somali and Afghan families, who typically do not have any documents either. For this reason, the process can even last up to nine months or more.

According to the Aliens Act, the person applying for family reunification must be underage to be able to perform the request successfully. For clarifications in family reunification processes, they can carry out DNA-tests and interviews within the family to get proof about the family ties. (Suokonautio & Rantala 2014, 23.)

Lähteenmäki (2016) states that it is often presumed that the traumas UMs have are caused by the experiences in their home country, or what they experienced during their trip. Although, many of their traumas can also be caused during the reception phase. For instance, violation towards their privacy by making an age test or the police investigating their mobile phone, death of a close relative, changes of placings or other UMs’ mental symptoms or reactions to receival of negative decisions can affect someone’s mentality when they already are fragile. For this reason, studying or practicing a hobby can provide a good opportunity for the UMs to feel included and have a feeling of accomplishment. (Lähteenmäki 2016.)

UMs experience traumatic events and loss in addition to the stressors of exile, which makes their adaptation to a new environment and life very complicated. A refugee experience of migration and the stress that comes with it usually outweighs an individual’s coping capacities that generally are natural. However, UMs commonly have less difficulties to adjust to a new environment and society compared to adults, although they are more at risk of developing mental health issues. The UMs can possibly fall behind in learning, cognitive development, and identity
development because of the lack of secure and safe feeling that are a necessary foundation at their age. (Hamilton & Moore 2003, 12.)

In addition to the aforementioned challenges, the UMs can often face discrimination in Finland. According to an article by Save the Children (2015), the racism that is targeted at minors is often underestimated (Save the Children 2015). Saarinen (2015) adds to this discussion reporting about a group of asylum seekers arriving in Lahti by bus, who were attacked by an aggressive crowd throwing torches and shouting outrageous things at the asylum seekers (Saarinen 2015). The fact that the UMs are going through puberty can also have an effect on their sensitivity.

Challenges in the UMs’ lives is also brought by the fact that usually they are admitted with a temporary residence permit for either one or four years. This does not give them security or a safe feeling, but instead can set off restlessness, fear, and is a barrier for a successful integration. (Sauranen 2017.) After the permit has expired, they might still be at risk of being deported.
4 METHODS

This section will present the primary methods involved in the project’s planning and implementation phases.

4.1 Arts-based tool

One of the primary methods employed in the implementation of this project is the arts-based tool that is music, which took the form of music performance. It is necessary to stress yet again that music therapy, in a strict sense of its meaning, is not what was carried out. Rather, using music for its therapeutic qualities as an intervention tool is what this undertaking set out to achieve. Nevertheless, to have a better understanding of this intention, a brief consideration of what music therapy is would be appropriate. On this very subject, Lathom-Radocy (2016) defines music therapy as an intervention having set goals in terms of outcome based upon careful consideration of the participant’s needs and abilities. It is a scenario in which music activities such as playing instruments or listening to music, to name a few, are specifically assigned in order to impact positively upon the participant’s feelings, state of health, or thinking. (Lathom-Radocy 2016, 5.)

MacDonald (2013) further adds to this discussion by stating that the focus of music interventions in a music therapy context is to provide the patient or participant with some advantage in respect to their emotional or physical well-being. Upon reflection, there are clear similarities between our music intervention and these descriptions of music therapy: the utilization of music, playing a musical instrument, and striving to achieve some measure of positive impact upon the participant’s well-being. The differences, on the other hand, are that we are not qualified music therapists, nor did we employ specific uses of music for the sole purpose of targeting the particular needs of the participant. Furthermore, like with music therapy, our aim was not to help the participant improve their musical skill. (MacDonald 2013, 2.)
Due to what has just been covered, music was used in this project for UMs because of its potential benefits as an intervention tool or method. While other arts-based methods or approaches may have just as well been applied, music was singled out due to the workers at the family group home disclosing that a number of UMs residing there were musically inclined, and had shown some interest in engaging in a music-based activity. As such, the workers at the home had been thinking of arranging something that would satisfy that wish, but a lack of resources and time had so far prevented this from being put into action.

For many years now, arts-based methods have been reported to be effective in therapeutic and rehabilitation interventions with different groups of people. One particular example has been its use in work with older adults suffering from dementia. In an article published in the academic journal Dementia, Särkämö (2017) reports that engaging in musical activity not only motivates, but also activates neurochemical systems which control cognitive functioning and feelings in a person. He further states that intervention methods employing music holds great interest for professionals in the field as a way of fostering psychological well-being and cognitive functioning. Särkämö can also help in clarifying the manner of our particular project’s use of music, which can be viewed as a music-based intervention and not as music therapy, since the latter can only be provided by a qualified music therapist, which neither of us are. (Särkämö 2017, 3.) Despite this distinction, however, it could be said that a music-based intervention can still possess therapeutic or healing qualities.

In Finland, similar interventions using music for the benefit of asylum seekers include a project which took place in Helsinki in 2016. A joint venture between Helsinki’s Live Music Association (Elävän musiikin yhdistys – ELMU), Cultural Center Caisa, the construction firm Skanska, and Helsinki’s reception centers, the aim was to open the popular Nosturi live music venue to asylum seeker musicians as a rehearsal space for a limited time. This provided them an opportunity to play music, network with professional Finnish musicians, and culminated in the staging of two concerts. (Miikkulainen 2016.) In understanding some of the life challenges asylum seekers face,
as discussed earlier, it is not difficult to see the positive implications of such a project. In 2011, another project in which music was used as a tool for the benefit of immigrant children took place. Named the Musical Adventure Project, its aim was to help the immigrant children’s integration into Finland by engaging them in musical activities. (Rautiainen 2011.) While neither of these appeared to specifically target well-being, both attempted to make their target groups feel a part of the wider community or society by including them. This in itself is an aspect of well-being, as discussed in Sections 2.3 and 2.3.1.

In terms of the effectiveness of music intervention, Baker and Jones (2006) found that, amongst refugee youth, music therapy had been shown to lessen hostility, general behavioral problems, as well as hyperactivity (Kerkkänen & Säävälä, 52). The Finnish Mental Hub (Mielenterveystalo) – a national online source for information related to mental well-being – states the importance of being involved in meaningful activities. Whether it be hobbies such as music or theater, simply listening to music or playing an instrument, engaging in these or other activities is greatly encouraged. (Mielenterveystalo n.d.)

Even the physiological effects of performing music have been studied, with the implications making a strong case for its positive impact upon well-being. Since physical effort is needed while playing an instrument or singing, an increase in heart rate variability (HRV) – the difference in time between each beat of the heart – has been shown to occur. This in turn affects the vagus nerve, which is a crucial part of the parasympathetic nervous system used by our bodies to heal after experiencing stresses. Simply stated, this would mean that by performing music an individual could increase their body’s ability to heal, and therefore enhance their sense of well-being. (Clift & Camic 2016, 68.) As can be imagined, the findings of such studies hold much promise in terms of new possibilities of helping patients and service users in their respective rehabilitations.

The idea of well-being and having a positive mind in any particular moment has its own term called “flow”. Flow moments could also be likened to being “in the zone”. This can
be understood to mean that when an individual is engaged in an activity that is enjoyable and poses an above-average challenge, they are stimulated and feel a sense of well-being. It is believed that during these flow moments people are so focused that they forget their worries, and it is also said that flow is often associated with artistic activity. (Radcliffe 2013, 24.) The UMs may have never experienced it before, hence they may be unaware that it exists and how much of a positive impact it can have on their well-being. It is hoped that as a result of engaging in this project the UMs will get to experience this flow moment.

4.2 Participatory approach

A key design feature of this project was the intention for it to be participatory in nature. This means that the UMs were invited and encouraged to collaborate with us, with them ultimately deciding upon what we would do. One could argue that this approach somewhat resembles consultative participation, by which we as adults merely counseled the UMs (Lockowandt 2013, 3). However, it was our intention to provide them with as much of a say in determining what was done as possible, creating opportunity for their interest and motivation to flourish. Bearing in mind that the basic parameters were for them to utilize musical instruments, meetings were held with the would-be participants to discuss some of the possibilities of what we would do in practice. Among the possibilities were to play music in an improvised way, such as a jam session, or to cover a known piece of music familiar and of interest to them. At times they seemed somewhat hesitant in sharing ideas, or simply struggled to offer any. Nonetheless, we encouraged them in their ideas, put them at ease by stressing they were not expected to do it all alone, and that we would support them throughout.

The work of another academic in the field can offer a better understanding of this approach in relation to our project. In an early study on the participation of children in community development and research projects, among other things, Hart (1992) discusses the Ladder of Participation diagram, which depicts an eight-rung ladder
describing the degrees of children’s participation, as well as the ways in which their participation can be prevented from being realized.


Divided accordingly, the lowest 3 rungs denote 1. Manipulation; 2. Decoration; and 3. Tokenism. The top four rungs denote 4. Assigned but informed; 5. Consulted and informed; 6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children; 7. Child-initiated and directed; and 8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults. Manipulation is described as a situation in which children are asked to take part in some activity by adults under false pretenses. For example, children are asked to paint pictures of something meaningful to them, after which adults will link those paintings to some other meaning or unrelated theme. Decoration would be a scenario in which children are simply used as window dressing to draw attention to whatever cause or activity is in question, and have no part in the decision-making process. The third rung is Tokenism, which is described as a situation where children are given a false voice, effectively being used as a symbolic gesture and nothing more. (Hart 1992, 8-10.)

On the higher rungs of the Ladder of Participation diagram, we next have Assigned but informed. Although better than the latter examples showing how participation is
hampered, this type of participation effectively sees the children being informed about the activity or project, yet being allocated a particular role within it. Consulted and informed represents a scenario in which adults have full ownership of a project, but children’s viewpoints are given weight and they fully comprehend the tasks involved. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children would appear to represent the first truly participatory approach since, although instigated by adults, the children have equal ownership and say in the project. On the other hand, Child-initiated and directed describes a project or activity which is solely owned and carried out by children with no adult input. At the highest rung is Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults, which describes children seeking advice or input from adults, but who otherwise manage the project. (Hart 1992, 11-14.)

By considering these descriptions of participation in the context of our pilot project, one can already discount the three options comprising non-participation, since the UMs’ participation is clearly an important aspect. This leaves the five degrees of participation described earlier. Bearing in mind that the only set parameters for the project were that musical instruments and some form of musical activity would take place, the UMs were free to decide precisely what would be done, with us acting in a supportive capacity. As such, it would appear that Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children is a likely representation for the degree of participation that was achieved in this project. It could be argued that this is because the initial idea was primarily thought of by us, while the activity itself, as well as the time and date on which it would occur, were decided upon by the participants.

Of course, by employing a participatory approach, it is natural that the principles of participatory research would be visible in this project. For example, they were evident in the way the target group – the UMs – were invited to collaborate on the planning and design of the implementation part of the project, which followed the building up of trust between all parties involved. Also, having the UMs collaborate and using music – which the interested participants were already keen on exploring further – utilized their strengths and abilities rather than exploited any weakness. Furthermore, by inviting them to join us in deciding upon the precise activity, we avoided any risk of them feeling
forced to engage in something that held no interest. In addition, throughout the process it was stressed that participation was completely voluntary, and a written consent form was duly presented to the participants. It was hoped that signing it would not only establish transparency and demonstrate a consideration of the ethical aspects of carrying out such a project, but would also serve as a gesture of commitment and ownership by all parties. (Arene n.d.)
5 ETHICS

In this chapter, the ethical considerations important to the process will be described. These include the necessary permits to carry out the project, as well as matters concerning confidentiality and privacy.

A crucial aspect that demanded careful consideration during this project was the topic of ethics. In research, ethics relates to issues such as anonymity, privacy, and the rights of those participating in the study. It requires that the research team are transparent in their work and conduct themselves with moral rectitude throughout the entire process, and that no action be taken that might cause harm to any parties involved. (Centre for Social Justice and Community Action 2012, 6.) A key aspect of this relates to the handling and protection of sensitive information, such as names and home addresses (Arene n.d.).

Thus, careful attention was paid to safeguarding the name of the family group home and the participating UMs. Any discussion that occurred between the authors in a public or semi-public space carefully avoided any details that might reveal the locations or identities of those involved in this project. Moreover, the UMs and their representatives would need to be informed that no personal information would be made public at any time. Not only is this an adherence to ethical principles, but this is also vital in establishing trust and encouraging a willingness to be involved.

Before proceeding with the implementation phase, a research and cooperation agreement was signed between the authors and the family group home. Following this, a research permit would need to be applied for and granted by the municipality in which the family group home is located. Signed consent forms from the UMs and their representatives would also need to be obtained and kept locked in a secure location until they could be destroyed. A key detail in the consent forms should highlight the voluntary nature of participating, and that the UMs would have the right to forgo taking
part at any time. Also, the audio recording of the interview and evaluation discussion at the conclusion of the implementation phase would need to be summarily transcribed, and both files would need to be deleted following the writing of this thesis. (Arene n.d.)
6 PROCESS DESCRIPTION

This section will present details related to the planning and implementation of the project, as well as the type of assessment used in evaluating the project and how it will be carried out. In addition, the challenges encountered in carrying out the project will be reflected upon.

6.1 Planning

At the start of this project we contacted our working life partner, with whom we set up a meeting to discuss the details of our idea and establish how we might collaborate on it. We pitched our concept to them, after which we shared ideas to further develop it. We then discussed how to inform the UMs and generate their interest in the project. Gaining the support of and collaborating with the stakeholders is imperative as it helps the project advance (Martin 2002, 46). Since one of us has been working in the family group home, there was already some familiarity between us and the UMs. The fact that there was an existing relationship with the UMs also can have added to their trust towards us, due to which we thought it might have been easier for them to participate in this project.

At the end of the meeting we signed an agreement with the working life partner which allowed us to carry out the pilot project. Before proceeding to the next step, it was imperative that we apply for a research permit from the municipality in which the family group home is located. This required the filling in of the research application form and attaching our project plan, as well as the UMs’ representative’s consent (Appendix 2), which we obtained via secure email after explaining the nature of the project to them. At the time of submitting our permit application, we had received consent from only three representatives. Since it was not known how long we may have to wait before being granted the permit, it had to be submitted early enough so that we could maintain our thesis schedule. However, if more representatives had given their consent after
Once a project proposal has been agreed upon with the partners involved, planning can then begin (Martin 2002, 62). After securing the agreement with the working life partner, we were able to start considering the best way to move forward with the implementation and preparations needed for it. At this stage we also thought it would be a good idea to meet with the UMs to carry out an introduction about the project, and for us to get to know who the music session is going to be implemented with.

These interactions with the UMs represented our marketing of the project. During the meeting with the participants we asked the UMs to give their permission to take part in the project and allow us to interview them and record the interview (Appendix 3). Before finishing the meeting, the UMs appeared keen on playing songs they like, so we encouraged them to make a selection of compositions that they would like to play during the musical session.

Throughout this phase of the process we had occasional meetings with each other, at which time a work plan schedule describing each of the project’s key tasks was made. This helped us visualize and complete each step of the work plan (Appendix 4). At every meeting, we discussed what had been done so far and which tasks were yet to be completed, by who, how and when.

Since this project was carried out by two persons, documentation was essential in order to share the knowledge and information, allowing for easy access to the information whenever. For this reason, we made a shared file in a secure online storage location for all the documents. Accordingly, John Rakos states that

> Communication is a critical aspect of any project. Inevitably, projects generate a great deal of documentation that must be accessible to the project team (Rakos, et al. 2015, 265).

As is stated in a book on project management sustainability, the amount of different aspects considered in the planning phase will affect the implementation (Silvius et al.
This includes risk assessment, additional plans for possible changes and other
preventions. We had considered the fact that if during the music session a participant
would not care to proceed for any reason, they are free to interrupt and leave if they
want. This was also made clear to the UMs during the meeting of introduction. In case
this would have happened, we would have taken the participant out of the room and
proceeded in the best way possible in that situation.

As for other possible changes, we had in mind that in case we would not get any
participants at all, we would have proceeded by making a product oriented thesis
instead of a project oriented one. This means we would have designed the music session
as a plan which the family group home could choose to implement as an activity at a
later time. This relates to the matter of a contingency plan; having an alternative course
of action in case of any permutation to the original plan (Martin 2002, 57-58). However,
this topic will be dealt with in more detail in Section 6.4.

As for the practicalities of the implementation, in addition to the instruments that were
already at the venue, we planned to bring our own acoustic guitar, Middle Eastern
drums, and bass guitar. For transportation, we were going to use a car of our own to
transport the instruments to the premises.

The evaluation of the music session was planned to be conducted right after the session
itself. We made questions for the evaluation, regarding the feeling before and after the
session and the changes that the session has made, if any. The answers of the questions
were then to be recorded.

6.2 Implementation

Implementation is the stage of a project when planning finally becomes practice (Martin
2002, 95). The music session was implemented with one UM at a venue that was
reserved for us. Since this location has close connections to the family group home, the
availability and reservation of it was possible without issue. Initially, about five UMs
expressed interest in taking part, which is the number we had deemed as most ideal for
a pilot project such as this. However, in the final days leading up to the music session, this had dropped to two. These two UMs had then signed the consent forms and been involved in planning discussions with us, but on the actual day of implementation, only one remained.

Instruments furnished at the location and utilized during the session included two acoustic guitars, drums, a keyboard, and a piano. In addition, some light refreshments were on offer during the session, which was expected to last between three to four hours.

We started out the music session by asking the UM if he had thought about any songs to cover, as earlier discussed during the planning phase. He said he did not. The UM had told us before about his skill on the guitar, and so we asked him to play us a song that he likes to play the most. After the UM chose the song, he played a little bit of it and we could see his skills. We then suggested covering a song by Ed Sheeran, which the UM also knew and agreed to. We carried this out by showing the chords of the song to him, which he was able to read, and one of us played the song on the piano together with the him. In addition, since we had two acoustic guitars in use, one of us played the guitar together with the UM. We then tried playing the song together to create a uniting sound.

At one point, the UM asked to learn a more advanced technique on how to play the guitar, which we then started practicing. He also showed interest towards the piano and told us that he would like to learn how to play it. After hearing this, we gave him a sheet of piano chords which we had printed out earlier and brought to the music session.

At the conclusion of the session, we told the UM that we would hope to get feedback from him about the activity and project, for which we had already prepared semi-structured interview questions. Although we informed him that he need not answer any question that makes him feel uncomfortable, he was very open to answering them. We also stressed that he should not hesitate to be honest, and that any negative feedback
would be constructive and therefore beneficial. We then carried out the semi-structured interview by asking the UM questions, and in doing so we also evaluated the project.

6.3 Assessment

Different types of project assessment exist, such as that which evaluates the outcomes (Martin 2002, 156). Boulmetis and Dutwin (2011) also describe project evaluation or assessment in various ways, such as by collecting and analyzing data collected during the project. Nonetheless, they stress that any definition depends largely upon the purpose of the assessment itself. This in turn addresses the aim of a project, the question of which is, what was to be achieved? Perhaps a description most pertinent to our project involves consideration of the project objectives, which ultimately impact the outcome or aim of the project. Therefore, since the project aim was to achieve some measure of positive well-being in regard to the UMs, it would seem logical that the outcome is what should be assessed. (Boulmetis & Dutwin 2011, 4-6.)

Due to the participatory nature of the project, and as Martin (2002) describes project outcome assessments as involving the key stakeholders, the parties involved in this evaluation will include the authors (two social services students) and one participant. At a later time, a discussion with the manager at the family group home will take place. (Martin 2002, 156.) The assessment of the outcome will occur after the implementation phase, at the conclusion of the music session, facilitated by a semi-structured interview and informal discussion, as mentioned earlier. This interview and discussion would be recorded.

6.4 Challenges

An important consideration in any project are the challenges that may impede its progress or threaten its design (Martin 2002, 52-53). Even though anticipating potential
issues and taking steps to avoid them is good practice in managing a project, it would be incredibly fortuitous to not encounter any challenges whatsoever.

At the start of this project, we needed to get permission from the UMs’ representatives in order to involve them in the project. However, after sending the representatives an email, it was difficult to get an answer from most of them, even after a second email. At this point it was felt that, if we don’t get an answer or permission, we will go ahead and make the thesis as a plan on implementing a music session for the family group home. Eventually, we received answers from three representatives. Considering that we only had permissions for some of the UMs, it limited us from involving all of those residing at the family group home.

While we did receive consent from three representatives, there were more who may have been willing to give us permission. Seeking consent via email communication appeared to be the most appropriate method, since it was felt that telephone communication may feel bothersome to them, or like an invasion of privacy. Of course, the deciding factor would be the UMs themselves, and whether or not they would wish to take part.

A challenge we considered early on had to do with language ability. Music itself is widely referred to as an international language, and one that transcends cultures. Nevertheless, in order to plan the music session in collaboration with the UMs, it was imperative that a common spoken language exist for us to use. This was essential so that they would not be left out of any part of the design. Fortunately, one of the authors can speak a language native to some of the UMs, and both authors can speak English and Finnish. Furthermore, we found that the UMs themselves can speak some Finnish and English well enough to be engaged, and therefore comprehend the purpose of the project. Had this not been the case we would have needed to plan and budget for an interpreter to be involved.

Another challenge anticipated was getting the UMs interested and involved - those that we had permission to include. For this reason, we tried to consider different ways of
providing them with all the information regarding the project which, as mentioned before, we decided to do by meeting them in person before the music session. However, we did not manage to get more than two UMs to participate in the actual planning meeting, and subsequently only one of them took part in the music session. At this stage of the project, the challenges were to get the UMs’ attendance for the meeting, and getting the ones who did attend the meeting to show up at the music session.

The issue of dwindling interest and low participation in the project was a challenge encountered as the project life cycle progressed. Although a limited participant number was anticipated as a potential risk, the one person turn out was somewhat of a surprise. This may have been a result of promotional efforts. Since it was easy for us to access the family group home and UMs, a more formal promotional campaign using posters and the like was deemed unnecessary. However, this might have made a difference, since it would have enabled the UMs to take in the information at their convenience. Also, as a visual tool hanging up at a prime location inside the family group home premises, it could have served as a useful reminder for the UMs. As it was, all they had were verbal reminders from us or staff working at the family group home.

Additionally, the low participation or interest may have been due to this target group’s traumatic experiences, discussed in an earlier section. A result of this may have been a suspicion of the project. Even though unlikely, since one of the authors was familiar to them, and the project idea was described as clearly as possible, some deep-rooted fear may have been a factor.

Also, because it was clearly a music activity involving instruments, some UMs might have felt some degree of performance anxiety, also known as stage fright. Common to those suffering from social anxiety disorder, performance anxiety relates to the individual’s fear of failure or ridicule, and is based on their own evaluation of their skill (Cuncic 2018). As such, we could have clarified that no one would be expected to perform alone or be proficient, although the latter was thought to have been clear since the session was designed to be low-threshold in nature. Activities used to help lessen feelings of anxiety could have also been used in an ice-breaker session prior to the music session.
An additional challenge was finding a common date with the UM’s for both the first meeting with them, as well as for the music session. For this reason, one participant who would have otherwise been interested to take part was unable to make either of these two meetings. It is also understandable that the UM’s would prioritize their own interests, such meeting friends, rather than taking part in something that may feel like being outside of their comfort zone.

Alderson and Goodey (1996) suggest that challenges to participation are not a result of children’s lack of ability or understanding, but because of the roles adults assign to them (Malone & Hartung 2010, 26). In trying to mitigate this risk, it was all the more necessary that we design the pilot project as a participatory one, as discussed in Section 4.2. To some degree, our roles and the UMs’ roles were necessarily different and already established: we are social services students with a purpose, and they are potential participants. However, beyond this point we did our best to give them opportunities to decide what they wanted to do.
7 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the pilot project, based upon assessment of the outcome. In order to achieve this, our objectives were to gain the active participation of the minors in the planning and implementation phases, as well as the evaluation stage.

The first objective tackled was gaining the UMs’ active participation in the planning phase of the project. As mentioned earlier, it was carried out at the family group home; a safe and familiar space to them. The promotion of the activity occurred on multiple occasions, through discussions with the UMs at the family group home. By this stage in the process it was felt that we were already familiar enough to them to gain their fullest interest and trust. However, while initial interest seemed forthcoming, as the implementation phase grew near it appeared that only two participants were ready to commit fully, while one individual was still vacillating. While this was a lower turn out than what was originally hoped for at the project’s conceptualization phase, it was better than no turn out at all.

The second objective was to gain the UMs’ active participation in the implementation phase – which involved taking part in the musical session. Although it had been made clear to them that involvement in the project was voluntary, and the risk of their non-participation had been considered, the low turnout on the day was nevertheless surprising. Of the two participants who had taken part in the planning stage and had signed the consent forms, only one showed up to the session. A staff member at the family group home had contacted us just prior to the UM’s arrival and announced that our second participant would not be joining after all. The third potential participant who was still giving indications of attending did not turn up either. Nevertheless, it was decided that the session would go ahead as planned.
As the third objective and a conclusion of our session, during which we engaged in musical performance for a period of three hours, we sat down and conducted a semi-structured interview with the participant (Appendix 1). This part of the objectives would ultimately reveal whether or not the aim of the project was achieved.

Based on the responses of the participant, it appeared that before the session he did not feel especially nervous, whereas by the end of the session he said he felt very motivated, to the extent that he would even want to learn how to play the piano.

When asked about his everyday use of music, and his thoughts about it being healing in some way, he said he would listen to music to put himself in a good mood, such as before school or throughout his day, and that music was very important to him. He even compared it to medicine. This was reinforced by his response when asked if he is able to think of other things when experiencing moments of stress, to which he said always, adding that this was the function of music.

Since it was important to also consider any potential negative impacts that music could have upon the subjective well-being of the UM, we discussed whether or not exposure to a particular song or piece of music could affect him in a negative way. He stated that, while it might recall a bad memory, it would not affect his emotional state in a similarly negative way. Rather, he would yet again turn to music - albeit a different song - in an attempt to counter any negative recall experienced.

Also discussed was what the participant enjoyed most about the session, which he said was engaging in the activity as a group.

Concerning the matter of developing the project for the future, the participant was asked whether he had any comments or suggestions to make regarding changes or improvements. He suggested that the session could have occurred more than once and that, had a song been selected beforehand, he could have better prepared for the day.
8 CONCLUSIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section will present the authors’ concluding thoughts regarding the project, including implications for the family group home and community at large. Finally, the authors’ professional development will be presented.

8.1 Conclusions

Although the participant turn out for the pilot project was less than originally anticipated, it was still felt that this particular venture managed to yield promising results for the future. For starters, the participating UM’s responses appeared to indicate not only a positive development in his subjective well-being, as evidenced by his motivation for continuing to play music and learn a new musical instrument, but by the effects music has on him as described through his use of music on a daily basis.

In addition, a ripple effect of the project seemed to spark an awareness in the UM of music’s potential as a healing tool in regards to an individual’s well-being. Furthermore, the participating UM’s feeling that engaging in the session together as a group was the most enjoyable aspect would suggest that the same or similar type of creative participatory session would be desirable in the future.

This has demonstrated to the family group home that music can and does have a positive impact upon the UMs. Perhaps with a little more planning and preparedness, as well as different marketing campaign efforts, such a session can be more productive. What could have also been done differently would have been to decide on the songs beforehand in order to make the best use of the session, rather than use that time to look for convenient songs to play. It would also be good to check if the songs are suitable or convenient to play with the instruments that are available. However, it can also be fun and no less beneficial to be spontaneous and try new things, but to have a main idea of what is going to be done is important. Additional interest in taking part was shown by
another UM residing at the family group home following the session. Coupled with the participating UM’s expressed interest for more sessions, this reinforces the notion that a regular or semi-regular music activity would be desirable.

What we uncovered while carrying out this pilot project is that it does not really require a vast amount of resources, simply a willingness and option to carry out the activity. Instruments could also be obtained through requests for donations from outside entities, in the event that none or too few are available. Doing this would not necessarily require a substantial investment, if any.

As social services students with a focus on community development work, it was also important to consider the link of such a project to that area of interest. Forde and Lynch (2015) describe communities as not simply geographical concepts, but also as existing between and amongst groups of people. They describe community development as relating to grassroots-type work in which those community members – such as marginalized groups of people – take an active role in efforts to combat the problems affecting them. (Forde & Lynch 2015, 5, 8).

With these descriptions in mind, it is clear to see that the UMs at the heart of this project comprise a community. Not only is this because of their shared status as UMs, but it can also be attributed to their shared experience as newcomers to Finland, as well as them living in the same family group home. For the reasons this particular group is considered an especially vulnerable cohort, it was our intention to intervene and get their active participation in the project. In this way, we were applying a community development work approach: getting the community members themselves involved in order to bring about some kind of positive change. (Forde & Lynch 2015, 9.)

Additionally, the wider implications of positively impacting their well-being extend to Finnish society. In the event that the UMs receive positive decisions regarding their residence applications, they will be able to go on to be contributors to society here. As such, looking after their well-being is essential. Finding new methods of helping them accomplish that can only be a good thing in both the short and long term. With the
results of this pilot project, it is hoped that the family group home – and potentially other groups – can understand the benefits that arts-based tools hold. If so, perhaps more arts-based activities will take root as a means of increasing well-being amongst vulnerable groups. A copy of this thesis will be given to the family group home that acted as a working life partner, and possibly they can use the information and experience we have written about in order to produce such activity for the UMs.

8.2 Professional development

During this project we have learned the importance of making a workplan. Planning does not only keep the tasks on track, but it can also work as documentation to remember what has been done before. A project can last so long that in the end one might forget the small things that was done in the beginning. In addition to this, we understood through this experience, how important it is to have a backup plan, in case there are changes in the initial plan. One must be flexible and find solutions for when things do not go as planned, and it is also important to not be discouraged when facing adversity. When an obstacle is confronted, you just need to carry on despite that and continue moving forward in another way instead.

As for managing a project we found that we enjoy doing teamwork, to share ideas and concerns with a partner. It also gives you the joy to share the achievements from the work with others.

Since we had very limited project management experience prior to this, and none before enrolling in the study programme at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, taking on the responsibility of realizing such an endeavor was a necessary part of our professional development. It provided us with an understanding of what a lot of work in this field entails, since project work is a common feature of this sector. Although working in a team or group was already a familiar part of our work history, this experience felt as if it crystalized what team work is truly about: mutual respect, trust, support, sharing of
responsibility, accountability, and a capacity to truly listen and compromise. It has also taught us to accept things beyond our control, but with that, an ability to reflect.

In addition to this, the experience of collaborating with the UMs and learning far more about their circumstances felt like an affirmation of why we decided to pursue a career in the social services field: because of a genuine concern about the human condition and the plight of those at a disadvantage in our societies. Understanding more about vulnerable groups such as UMs has expanded our knowledge base and provided us with more belief in our abilities as future professionals.

Our exposure to academic literature on the topics related to this study went deeper than they had previously, and in researching other arts-based tools or intervention approaches helped us to envision ways in which we might introduce similar approaches in our future work. Being artistically inclined people and witnessing the result of this pilot project, it is an inspiring prospect that we could combine these two areas of interest and effect positive change.
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13.06.2018


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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

How would you describe your state of mind before the session?
How would you describe your state of mind after the session?
What did you like most about the session?
What did you like least about it?
How would you describe playing music alone compared to playing music with others?
Has this inspired or motivated you to continue playing music?
What suggestions do you have (if any) on how to improve this?
What thoughts do you have about music being healing?
How do you use music in your daily life?
Would you say that music is very important to you?
Is there ever a time when you listen to a song that makes you feel bad?
Appendix 2
EDUSTAJALLE


Olen saanut riittävästi tietoa tutkimuksesta ja tiedän että edustattavallani nuorella on koska tahansa tutkimuksen kulun aikana oikeus, syytä ilmoittamatta, keskeyttää osallistumisensa.

Paikka ja aika _________________
Allekirjoitus _________________
Nimenselvennys _________________
Appendix 3

NUORELLE


Olen saanut riittävästi tietoa tutkimuksesta ja tiedän että minulla on koska tahansa tutkimuksen kulun aikana oikeus, syytä ilmoittamatta, keskeyttää osallistumisensa.

Paikka ja aika __________________
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Appendix 4

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Objective 2 & 3: Day of implementation (including evaluation and final discussion)