With a population facing significant engagement challenges we’ve seen: **40% of participants re-engaging with education, work or voluntary placements**, with **220% ‘in-year’ savings** for family and services (independently assessed) and **significant population level improvements in measured well-being** (independently assessed). Achieved by **taking 66% of participant’s to within two points, at or above the UK national well-being average**

Impact report 2018/19

# Foreword

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FOREWORD

This year Natwest Bank ranked Noise Solution in the top one hundred performing social enterprises in the UK (Natwest SE100), in part due to our seamless use of digital tools to increase our outcomes while simultaneously capturing and evaluating the impact of the Organisation. It’s great to be recognised, but it’s also important to reflect on why what we do works?

Noise Solution was set up as a reaction to many years of experience of working in statutory services, where I felt ‘something wasn’t right. My hunch was that the ‘something’ was how services often focus on the problems in people’s lives rather than elevate and promote people’s strengths, especially to the people important to them.

Noise Solution decided to do just that with a music mentoring program that truly gives choice to the people we work with. More importantly, our use of technology allows people to safely share stories of them being successful with the people they value. What started as a passive way to capture evidence of our mentoring sessions quickly became an active agent in changing how participants feel about themselves. These ‘stories’ create a sense of celebration and recognition around each participant that families and key workers can equally contribute and benefit from.

At Noise Solution we consistently see people achieving transformational changes in how they feel about themselves and what they feel they can achieve. Their levels of motivation improve and the ripples for them and their families can be huge. Increasing motivation, it turns out, is the key to our success. I asked the question “why does what we do work?” and the answer is because we’re enabling people to be motivated to be in control of improving their lives.

We’re not fixing people, we’re creating the conditions within which they often choose to flourish.

Simon Glenister, CEO
What do we do?

Let's imagine a young person. They are between 11 and 25 and their life is on a seriously negative trajectory. Maybe they haven’t been to school for months, possibly years, they’re involved with mental health services for depression or anxiety, or involved with youth offending services. Those services might be focusing on the problems and behaviours, but by doing so they can unintentionally amplify the negative labels that can create further barriers to engagement. The young person feels too left behind to bother, lacking in trust in those who say they want to help. The implications for their life chances are poor. Equally, the strain on family and tax payers are substantially increased.

For context, we’ve worked with around 600 of these young people in the last few years. We estimate this to currently be just 3% of young people in these situations across our current delivery area of the East of England.

After a referral, Noise Solution pairs this young person with a musician/producer for 10 weeks. Within the weekly sessions, they decide what music they want to make (whatever it might be). The young person starts to discover that they can be good at something. Within the sessions, the music they make is captured in a personalised digital story. This story is embellished with rich video reflection from them about how they feel about the process ( spoiler alert! It is often surprised, proud and excited). Weekly, this story is digitally shared safely with their family and professional key workers who can comment in the same way they would on social media. The young person and their community begin to co-create a ‘new’ positive narrative around that young person. The young person can ‘see’ themselves being successful and ‘see’ others recognising that success. This changes how they feel about themselves and also what they feel they can potentially achieve. They start to think about what else they could do - their level of motivation has changed.

Headline outcomes over the last year

Using this approach a population facing significant engagement challenges, mental health challenges etc we’ve seen: 40% of participants re-engaging with education, work or voluntary placements, with 220% ‘in-year’ savings for family and services (independently assessed) and significant population level improvements in measured well-being (independently assessed), achieved by taking 66% of participants to within two points, at or above the UK national well-being average (using a validated NHS scale)\(^1\). We think that’s worth shouting about.

\(^1\) Findings from a years worth of Noise Solution data, working with population’s often specifically referred because of lack of engagement
The evidence base

Our methodology and application of technology arise from our own £100k investment in research and development over the last 5 years. We’ve acted on evidence identifying psychological needs which have to be supported to increase engagement and well-being (more of which later). We know that if these psychological needs are met that well-being increases. Importantly, improvements in well-being are equally well-evidenced to impact positively on health, education, social and engagement outcomes. In other words, the evidence tells us that all the things we’re trying to achieve with young people follow, not when we tell them what to do, but when we change how they feel about themselves. Our intervention and the technology we employ within it are designed with these goals in mind. If you are interested in a deeper dive of the theoretical and practical underpinnings of our work, Simon Glenister MEd (CEO, Noise Solution) recently completed a two-year Research Masters at Cambridge University and has published about Noise Solution’s work and the evidence base. You can read more here.

Progression and transparency

Overall, Noise Solution sees about 71% completion and 88% attendance amongst its population of prolific non-attenders, school phobics and those facing challenges around depression and anxiety. We also see 80% continue with their music making. What is often created is a window of opportunity within which other organisations and individuals around a participant can re-engage with each other. We find we act as a catalyst for change in behaviours and engagement after Noise Solution. That progression is important to us. We actively identify participant’s preferred progression routes within sessions and communicate them to supporting professionals through weekly Session Reports. Increases in motivation combined with communication with professionals are what’s driving that 40% re-engagement with education, training and employment figure.

We’re very clear on our need to be transparent about our impacts. Much of our data can only be drawn from those who have completed a set of sessions, as it relies on receiving start and end data. Clearly those who don’t complete don’t provide end data. Some of the 29% of those who don’t complete are made up of those who Noise Solution has not managed to engage with, but also those who move out of area or those who move on to other things before they have completed.
Self Determination Theory

As mentioned previously, every Noise Solution session is informed by Self Determination Theory (SDT). This theory is a fantastically well-evidenced framework for understanding how to intentionally impact on motivation and well-being. SDT states that ‘carrot and stick’ approaches where we try to ‘control’ people at best result in a short term gain in compliance that is rarely sustained. But, if we impact on people’s own motivation we see much more meaningful changes where the desire to do things differently is internalised and therefore much more likely to be sustained. Below is an outline of the three needs identified within SDT as being vital for well-being to flourish, and an explanation of how we’ve used them to inform Noise Solution’s intervention.

**Autonomy** - feeling agency, acting in accordance with one’s goals and values. Autonomy is supported within the 1 ‘2’ 1 mentoring relationship as participants choose what is made, how it is made, what is captured and who it is shared with.

**Competence** - feeling able and effective. This is fostered within the sessions where music technology enables ‘quick wins’ that sound authentic, without stumbling against the barriers created by traditional notation-based approaches to creating music.

**Relatedness** - Feeling connected to those around you, a sense of belonging. This resides within the digital platform as participants share a record of their success that the important people in their life interact with, challenging negatively held labels for all. Click the video above to see a brief explanation of SDT.
The Noise Solution platform

Organisations can struggle with digital tools, often because digital solutions tend to be retrofitted to existing services. Noise Solution’s digital platform fits seamlessly into our work because digital has been at our core for the last 10 years. Our platform does all the usual things you’d expect of a business system and so much more. It performs the role of our social media platform, data capture, analysis, and reporting tool. More importantly, it is a central pillar in actively improving our outcomes.

The Noise Solution Digital stories allow us to capture moments of success within sessions, in a format that mirrors everyday social media experiences. The platform fulfils a vital role in our theory of change by capturing and sharing participant’s digital stories, projecting success into the homes and offices of families and professionals whose comments are valued by the participant. As a by-product, the platform also collects rich co-produced stories that evidence autonomy, competence and relatedness occurring for every participant. The platform also allows us to see who isn’t engaging. We can use this functionality to flag and automatically prompt and encourage people, based on criteria we define, to drive up engagement and outcomes.

Online questionnaires within the platform mean we can collect, analyse and report on NHS well-being data (SWEMWBS). We can split this data in any number of ways (e.g. age banding, gender, location, referring organisation). In this way, we have a flexible live visualisation of how, as an organisation, we are changing levels of well-being. Automatic built-in analysis looks for statistical significance and range of change in well-being, providing meaningful data for commissioners. We can then illuminate this well-being data by drilling down to individual digital stories. All of this means we can move from just passively collecting data to data management where we can understand where we are most effective and where we are not.

The more work we do the more story and number data evidence we automatically collect and analyse, building our case further. The ability to report on both these streams of data, at the touch of a button, solves so many of the third sector’s problems around meaningful impact capture and reporting. We are able to report without worrying about the resource that organisations normally have to commit to achieving this depth of analysis because it happens automatically as an intentional part of the process. Stories and numbers in equal quantity and in any combination is easy and available at the touch of a button.
The numbers in a little more depth

As mentioned, Noise Solution measures its impact on well-being using the Shortened Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS). This scale was developed by Warwick and Edinburgh Universities and the NHS. This questionnaire has been adopted widely across services within the UK, being used by the UK government, local authorities and Ipsos Mori, amongst others. Within the platform the questionnaires are collected and analysed automatically for statistical significance and range of change of well-being. Results are then automatically compared against a large national databank (60,000 plus respondents, UK wide) of similar well-being data. This means we have a trusted national benchmark with a national average figure of well-being with which to assess our impact performance against, and we haven’t had to make up a scale to suit our own needs.

The results

These 2018/19 results compare a year of pre and post scores, where participants have used the SWEMWBS questionnaire to subjectively rate their level of well-being. Post Noise Solution, the tables show a clear shift with a 28% decrease in low well-being (half the original figure) and a 15% increase in high well-being.

National average pre and post well-being scores

When start and end scores are compared against the national average SWEMWBS score (drawn from a sample size of 60,000 people plus, across the UK) we see a significant increase toward that national average.
Statistical Significance

Compared against the national average SWEMWBS sample we see 66% of participants at, above, or within a meaningful range of the national well-being average, but how much of that is chance? Statistical significance is a measure of confidence that change is due to something other than chance. It is arrived at by comparing two sets of data (start and end scores in this case) and the result is represented by something called a P figure (probability). After analysis, any number under P.05 is deemed statistically significant and therefore any element of results being arrived at by chance has been disproved. Our statistical analysis, replicated independently, shows a high level of statistical significance with a P figure of P.0002. This number data demonstrates to commissioners that there is a very high confidence that Noise Solution can impact on well-being amongst ‘hard to reach’ populations, with non-health professional staff acting as a catalyst for change, within a relatively short intervention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean start</th>
<th>Mean end</th>
<th>P-value</th>
<th>% confidence</th>
<th>Statistically significant?</th>
<th>Range effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.19</td>
<td>23.64</td>
<td>p&lt;0.0002</td>
<td>&gt;99.98%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>.50 or more - Large effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We’ve also had external people look at our claims, data and findings independently. In 2016 The Social Investment Consultancy, funded by the Cabinet Office, carried out a year-long external evaluation of Noise Solution. The evaluation found that Noise Solution was "highly statistically significant in positively impacting on well-being amongst its population... with a medium to high impact on well-being change". We’ve seen this level of results remain consistent within the platform as the number of participants completing increases.

Social Return On Investment

Whilst the number data above tells a compelling story of maintaining quality as we scale, when it is combined with the story data from the Digital Story we clearly see significant shifts in well-being leading to improvements in engagement and social outcomes. What might that mean financially? We highlighted a 220% saving to family and services at the start of this document. Here is how that figure was arrived at.

Noise Solution is currently working with a team of five Health Economists from Costello Medical in Cambridge to understand and apply well evidenced financial predictions for the wider outcomes of Noise Solution. A six month Social Return On Investment study has been conducted. From the outset the research has been very clearly defined with strict instruction to not over claim impact, and only claim what can be realistically referenced. This is a reaction on our part to what we perceive to be a bias in SROI data that often poorly reflect realistic claims of savings made, normally in a desire to impress funders. We want to be entirely transparent and present a short-term realistic picture. Even with that caveat, the return figure for the data we have given the SROI team shows a 220% return for every pound spent on Noise Solution interventions (£1 = £2.20 return). Our intention is to build this type of cost saving prediction into the platform. We aim to have touch button report-ability for qualitative stories, quantitative well-being data and cost saving predictions for service Qualitative Evidence.
Below are examples of feedback from family and their Digital Stories that we have linked to the three Self Determination Theory needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Through our work, we see the Digital Story aspect being used as a space within which individuals and services can connect or re-connect in new ways with the participant being the centre of and controlling the conversation.

**Autonomy examples - putting the participant at the centre**

The examples on this page illustrate participants autonomy being supported and the results that occur when this is the focus. Participants choose what is created, how it is created, what is captured and who their digital story is shared with. This approach develops self-directed learning and progression, building a sense of agency. Click the video to the left to see a parent’s thoughts on the process.

“Different to other music activities as in music lessons she’s told what to do. These sessions are more led by [PARTICIPANT] and what she wants to do.” - Mum.

“Noise Solution engages him and [PARTICIPANT] feels that he can make his own choices and he’s doing things that he enjoys and he is learning new skills. Other people engaging with him has been brilliant too as [PARTICIPANT] finds it hard to communicate in general.” - Mum

“Consistency. You’ve worked on her agenda. Inclusive. Subject matter has been focused. Confidence has improved from lots of things, Home, College, Performing, and Noise Solution together. I’d say that the E-portfolio/Blog helped swing her acceptance to college. Support in learning and activities has helped. Subject matter has helped a great deal.” - Professional.
Competence - developing skills and the ability to learn

The Noise Solution pedagogy facilitates quick wins and builds on these small successes iteratively. All the musical software we use is freeware, meaning participants are free and able to continue to use these skills between sessions and into the future. By creating success and sharing it with people the participant has identified as important to them, we are allowing the participant to redefine their sense of self. These examples show the facilitation of quick wins being built up to create transformational changes. We can see that a supportive but challenging environment gives participants the internal motivation to keep pushing themselves and to try and learn new things. Click the video, to the right, to see a participant’s thoughts about the process.

“Noise Solution has been totally life changing for our son. This bespoke service has absolutely brought out the very best in him, building his confidence, and carving a pathway for the future. The bespoke quality is the perfectly calibrated and judged guidance on exactly the right approach to bring out the best in the student.” Parent

Finally managed to get on to watch the videos. Your confidence is shining through, we are so impressed by all the effort that you are putting in. I know you are loving these sessions, we can see how much you are learning and are able to express yourself. Keep it up 😊

start of week 1: I don't want you to take a photo of my face because people will see it on the blog. And I don't like my voice either.

week 10: I'm going to stand here where 50 people will all be staring at me. You can take all the photos you want. And I'm going to sing to everyone because I want them to hear my amazing singing voice. And I will absolutely NAIL IT!! 😊
Relatedness - feeling connected to those around you

The Noise Solution digital platform provides a safe, neutral online space within which the participant is in control. Through this space the participant can use their successes to redefine their sense of self and build or re-build relationships with those around them.

“Sharing the videos was really important to me. My mum was surprised but happy to be able to see where I am at. Those videos are a much better measure of my mental well-being than me coming home from work and not unloading the dishwasher!” Participant

“The use of the blog in the ECHP plan was instrumental in individualised learning being provided by school - as they could see how successful it was. The small change in well-being can be attributed to the fact that a lot of things in the education realm went wrong drastically in this time but Noise Solution (and therapy) was attributed as the thing that kept [PARTICIPANT] afloat - with something to look forward to.” Mum

Future Developments

Noise Solution has ambitious plans to grow nationally. We are already being asked to input into strategic conversations around service design at local, national and international levels. We are part of systemic service redesign conversations with Suffolk County Council and Suffolk CCGs. We are taking part in all party parliamentary round table discussions about Arts and Health and Social Prescribing led by Matt Hancock MP, and we’ve recently been invited to consult with Texas State University on our approach to mentoring and technology to design a social work platform.

We believe that everything is in place now for significant scale. We have a proven business model which has seen the organisation be financially self-sustaining (other than a small forecast deficit in the 17/18 financial year due to investment in the platform). We have a robust, evidence-based delivery model and theory of change and we have systems and processes which have been designed to scale.
The organisation has the potential to scale in two ways:

**Growth of the music mentoring intervention:** Predominantly developed for 1:1 settings, we are now testing small group work provision with a view to learning how this effects the well-being impacts we see in our 1:1 provision. Group work also serves as a route into and route out of our 1:1 provision, which could help embed impacts over the longer term.

**Development of the digital platform:** We are interested to take the digital platform from its current beta stage and develop it into a platform which is able to be used by multiple organisations to capture, share, measure and report on impacts. We are actively looking to raise other funds to further develop the platform. There are exciting possibilities around using A.I to extract and analyse textual information from the rich video reflection's that happen in each session - to look for where those three psychological needs are and are not occurring, to help us drive up results further.

**Funders and partners**
We’d like to sincerely thank all the funder's, partner's, staff and participant's who have all contributed to us achieving the results demonstrated within these pages.
A last bit of feedback

Alongside the qualitative feedback above, we also received this feedback which we think deserves a special mention. We’ll leave the report to close with these words and a thank you to our partners and funders.

“Noise Solution is undoubtedly one of the best interventions I have ever used within my time as SENDCo. Using music as an avenue to engage learners who are struggling for various reasons has had major impact on our students who have been involved in this programme.

The referral process is simple and quick and is online; this is extremely beneficial for staff as it does not require huge amounts of paperwork.

Once accepted, the student is allocated a tutor and an online platform is established where the student, tutor and other chosen individuals can comment on the sessions. The online platform is highly accessible and resembles social media platforms so it is immediately engaging for the students. Students and tutors post video reflections, comments and showcase the work which has been completed. It is so pleasing to see how our students are engaged with the process and see their enjoyment with the programme.

The tutors are amazing. They have excellent interpersonal skills and have succeeded in engaging with some of our more challenging students where other interventions have failed. Their approach is not like other interventions within this area where students can be bombarded with questions and feel uncomfortable. They are flexible and work closely with school staff to ensure that students have the best possible experience.

The impact is evident. We have had students whose attendance was a major issue and who were struggling to even complete a full week. Their attendance has improved immensely. For example, we had a student whose attendance was just over 40% and now has attendance hitting 60% and rising. He had not completed a full week since 10th September but since starting this intervention, he has been completing full weeks. We have had students who have posed challenges in terms of behaviour and have seen a massive decrease in the behavioural incidents which have been logged.

I would unreservedly recommend Noise Solution to any establishment working with young people.”

School SENDCo