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# Sing to Connect: Culturally Responsive Care

Initiative Type

Service Improvement

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Deliver

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<https://test.clinicalexcelsence.qld.gov.au/improvement-exchange/sing-connect-culturally-responsive-care>

## Summary

Sing to Connect is a unique initiative that links music and midwifery to support perinatal mental health and wellbeing of new mothers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Bringing together our CALD community of birthing mothers and families isolated by language barriers and other challenges related to refugee status, alongside the added challenge of COVID-19

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restrictions, Sing to Connect foregrounds social connections and community wellbeing. By introducing music and songs in native languages into the antenatal care provision, alongside midwifery care, the potential of arts in forging friendships was leveraged into the healthcare model. The outcomes included assisting the mothers with combating isolation, fostering connections, health literacy and community engagement. We created a space for wellness through song, dance, story sharing, laughter, trust and connection. A key outcome for midwifery practice was that the program led to greater engagement of the mothers in health care and improved mental health outcomes, alongside deeper and more connected relationships with health care providers. This was brought about by the creative and immersive nature of the project. This project, which is emerging as a new approach to connection from non-pharmacological care, unfolded between May 2020 and February 2021.

### Key dates

Oct 2020

Nov 2021

### Implementation sites

Logan Access Gateway

### Partnerships

Griffith University, Metro South HHS, Access Gateway, Logan City Council

## Key Contacts

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## **Aim**

The overall aim of the program is to leverage the potential of music, stories, and songs for cultural wellbeing of CALD mothers in the context of antenatal and postnatal care and education. Sing to connect is an ongoing research and community program with encouraging preliminary outcomes. The program aimed at enhancing wellbeing for pregnant women and new mothers through singing. It also aims to promote community-based and person-centred approaches to care as well as health literacy through songwriting.

## **Benefits**

The program benefits CALD mothers and midwifery practitioners. Singing as a way of psychosocial wellbeing is a proven tool today for forging social connections and unlocking emotional wellbeing. Both these benefits played out across various parameters in this program.

## **Background**

Literature testifies to the fact that poor health outcomes during antenatal and postnatal periods may cause chronic disease with long term ramifications for the individual, family and health system. In addition to the benefits of singing for communities, the pressing needs for social inclusion in multicultural populations in Australia dictates the timeliness of community engagement programs and sign to connect was no exception.

## **Solutions Implemented**

- music workshops woven into antenatal care sessions
- health messages enfolded into songwriting for greater engagement, memory and retention of key messages
- singing and story-sharing as a way to connect to culture and create friendships
- teaching each other songs to improve self-efficacy and confidence in the community.

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## Evaluation and Results

The results yielded positive outcomes for both mothers and midwives. The evaluation was undertaken across the key parameters of retention of participants, enthusiasm and sharing in each of the 12 workshops, and expression of interest levels in future programs. The results showed an increase in uptake on antenatal solutions, improved mood and wellbeing, increased friendships, and improved trust-building and relationships with midwives. It also showed that the women turned to their cultures as the bedrock. Everything else flowed from that – music, language, mothering, attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, and hopes.

The women felt “connected” to each other, their baby, the place, their midwives, and their bodies, through the singing.

They also felt connected with “spirituality” through the rite of singing and “healing”.

## Lessons Learnt

Some of the learnings were:

- co-design is effective for interdisciplinary interventions such as these
- culture is central to identity and this is important to health care in a community setting
- technology access needs to be managed and mediated for effective communication in these contexts.

## References

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- Harrison, K., Jacobsen, K., & Sunderland, N. (2019). New Skies Above: Sense-bound and place-based songwriting as a trauma response for asylum seekers and refugees. *Journal of Applied Arts & Health*, 10(2), 147-167.
- Lenette, C., & Sunderland, N. (2016). “Will there be music for us?” Mapping the health and well-being potential of participatory music practice with asylum seekers and refugees across contexts of conflict and refuge. *Arts & Health*, 8(1), 32-49.
- Vougioukalou, S., Dow, R., Bradshaw, L., & Pallant, T. (2019). Wellbeing and integration through community music: The role of improvisation in a music group of refugees, asylum seekers and local community members. *Contemporary Music Review*, 38(5), 533-548.

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## **Further Reading**

[www.sing2connect.com](http://www.sing2connect.com)

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