



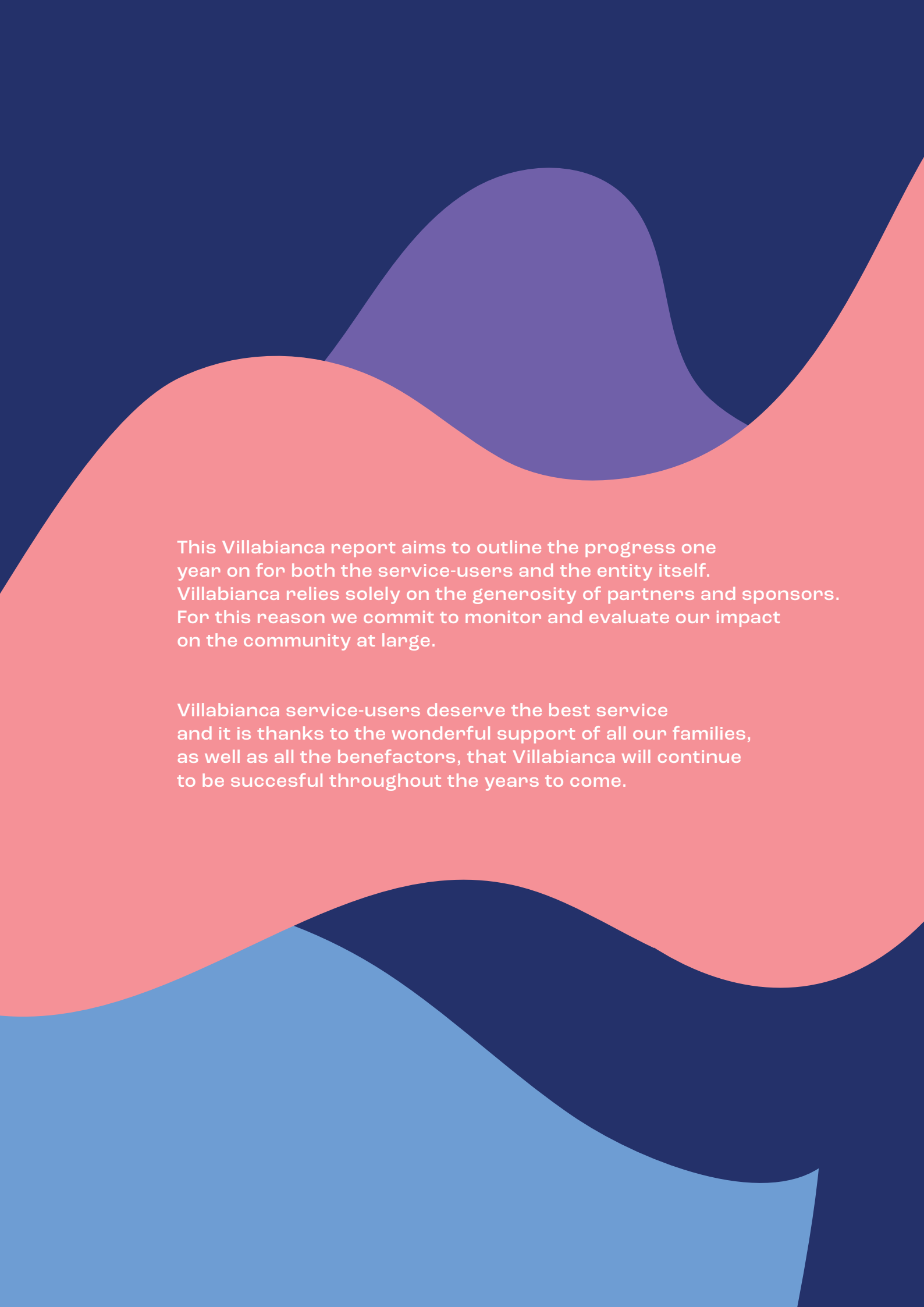
Annual Report

2021 - 2022

Villabianca - Centre for Music & the Arts
Giving Children and Young People with Disabilities
Free Access to the Arts



**The
Malta
Trust
Foundation**



This Villabianca report aims to outline the progress one year on for both the service-users and the entity itself. Villabianca relies solely on the generosity of partners and sponsors. For this reason we commit to monitor and evaluate our impact on the community at large.

Villabianca service-users deserve the best service and it is thanks to the wonderful support of all our families, as well as all the benefactors, that Villabianca will continue to be succesful throughout the years to come.

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Message

from Her Excellency Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca

I cannot find words to express my profound joy at seeing this dream come true. The founding of the Marquis di Villabianca - Centre for Music and the Arts, by The Malta Trust Foundation, is yet another remarkable initiative, which will provide opportunities for children and young people with disabilities.

The centre is a safe haven and an amazing opportunity, for the many talented children and young people with disabilities, who previously found many doors closed to them in the arts and education sectors. Villabianca is the very first centre of its kind on the Maltese islands.

I believe that every person, no matter their life circumstance or ability, should have equitable opportunities to live life at its best; to develop their full potential to the best of their individual ability; to be empowered to build skills and confidence, and to flourish in their talents.

Villabianca was inspired by the Equality and Music Group of the Malta Down's Syndrome Association and encouraged by Prof. Adv. Emmanuele F.M. Emanuele di Villabianca, Barone di Culcasi and initially supported by Terzo Pilastro Internazionale.

Finally, on behalf of the children and young people we serve, I would like to thank the Board of Administrators of the Malta Trust Foundation, Prof. Adv. Emmanuele F.M. Emanuele di Villabianca, Barone de Culcasi, Fondazione Terzo Pilastro Internazionale, Members of the Maltese Business Community, Dr Francina and Mr Maurice Abela, and the team at The Malta Trust Foundation for their unrelenting enthusiasm towards serving children and young people.



I strongly believe that all children should have access to music and the arts, through which they can express their artistic and creative experience; develop communication and self-expression, and which can ultimately lead to a strong sense of fulfilment, whether musical or otherwise.

Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca

Former President of Malta

President of Eurochild
 Founder & Chair of The Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society
 Founder & Chair of The Malta Trust Foundation
 Founder & Chair of The Emanuele Cancer Research Foundation Malta
 President of Fondazzjoni Nazareth

The Malta Trust Foundation

The Malta Trust Foundation was established by Her Excellency, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca in 2015, with the goal of developing initiatives that support children, young people, and communities that are facing challenges or are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

The Foundation brings together academics, psychosocial professionals, the business community, and civil society organisations with the aim of delivering a tangible impact in gaps within existing services. The Foundation stresses on the importance of not duplicating current services and support, which are already being offered by other entities. The Foundation seeks to support vulnerable communities through initiatives that are both educational and empowering in aiding individuals reach their full potential, with an emphasis on projects of a psychosocial nature.

TINY TESTIMONIAL

“AFTER ATTENDING
VILLABIANCA,
MY SON IS NOW
MORE ACCEPTING OF
OTHER ENVIRONMENTS
LIKE SPORTS, AND
HE’S MORE SOCIABLE TOO.”



The Marquis di Villabianca Premises

Named after one of its founding benefactors, the Marquis di Villabianca premises are situated in Santa Venera. Pianist Dr Fransina Abela and her husband Maurice have generously offered their villa formerly known as 'Fransina Abela Brincat Piano School' to house this (new) Centre for Music and the Arts. The premises were used as a piano school, led and managed by Dr Abela herself, an accomplished pianist and piano teacher.

'With this new project, music will be brought into the lives of those who so rarely have access to it, allowing for the School's prior philosophy of "making music accessible to all", to remain alive by helping children and young people reach their aspirations, whatever these may be, as has happened in the past with ex alumni who are today acclaimed locally and abroad.' In this way, Fransina Abela Brincat Piano School will, through Villabianca, continue its musical legacy.

We thank Mr Alfred Debono and his incredible team who worked tirelessly to renovate the premises and ensured that all the necessary adaptations to the space were in place for the opening of the premises in November 2021. We are grateful for the deep commitment shown throughout the initial months until this present day.



TINY TESTIMONIAL

"TRULY PROFESSIONAL TUTORS WITH A REAL KNOW-HOW ON HOW TO INTERACT WITH OUR CHILD AND INVOLVE HIM. BEAUTIFUL, WELL-KEPT, AND WELL-EQUIPPED PREMISES, OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCE."

Message

from Rosetta Debattista

When I was asked to join The Malta Trust Foundation in designing and leading this centre, I was immediately keen to establish three strong pillars: first and foremost, that of providing solid & professional music services to children and young people with disabilities; reaching out to different local entities that would greatly benefit from our expertise through outreach programmes; and finally but equally as important, that of ensuring that Maltese-based practitioners become more creative and competent when working with children and young people with disabilities through increased training opportunities.

I am proud to say that within one year since the initial conversations and plans, we have laid the foundations for the three pillars at Villabianca. It is thanks to H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca that all this became a reality, thanks to her vision, her willingness to listen to the public's realities and of course, her drive alongside the whole team at The Malta Trust Foundation, who worked solidly to employ the Villabianca team, acquire all resources, and prepare the premises specifically to our requirements.

I am committed to ensuring that Villabianca continues to provide services of the highest standards whilst expanding its work to reach those on our waiting list. Villabianca was overwhelmed with the demand for this creative, artistic, and therapeutic method of work and it will be thanks to the ongoing support of our sponsors that this valuable service can continue to be offered, free of charge, to so many. I thank all our partners on behalf of all who attend or work at Villabianca. Thank you for making this the reality that it is!



Some of our children and young people are learning to play, others are learning through play - music has the power to effect positive change in more ways than one. Villabianca is a big step in this direction.

Rosetta Debattista
Villabianca Creative Consultant

Meet the Villabianca Team



Rosetta Debattista

Creative Consultant

"These months will remain imprinted in my mind for years to come... investing all of myself with TMTF to ensure that we sow the seeds for a service that has been missing for so long. I believe that there is a good time for everything and with no reservations whatsoever, I can say that the right timing brought together the most wonderful team that is co-creating on a daily basis with all our children and young people."



Stephanie Curmi

Head of Services

"Villabianca has exposed me to the wide array of human ability. It is so meaningful to be able to work in a place where everyone is respected, cherished, and appreciated for who they are. As a musician myself, I am thrilled to see many children and young people embrace music in its many shapes and forms - each individual with their unique rhythm for life."



Cynthia Bonnici*

Family Support Worker

"The sense of pride and joy I get from merely being associated with Villabianca is indescribable. Being a parent of a young woman with ASD myself this place represents so much more than a place of work... a safe space where youngsters and their families have valuable support."



Miguel Rosales*

Outreach Coordinator

"Villabianca is a project which speaks (and sings!) for itself, and I am delighted to have been entrusted to be part of this project, on both a musical and sociological level."

* Part-Time basis

** Malta School of Music Employee



Christine Smith

Music Therapist

“The experience I have had during my first year at Villabianca has been unimaginably meaningful and wonderful. I am so grateful for this opportunity and for the team, colleagues, clients, and families I have had the privilege to work with this year.”



Joanna Giacomotto**

Visiting Strings Specialist

“It’s a joy and honour being part of this dynamic team and amazing to be working with individuals who each give a unique, though complementary, input to the great learning experiences and so much more, that is happening at Villabianca.”



Katie Bycroft

Music Therapist

“My journey to this wonderful job in Malta has spanned a career in England over many years and I am immensely proud now to be par of Villabianca - a very special place full of warmth, integrity & most importantly the music that our young people bring as they dance through the door.”



Jess Rymer

Creative Music Practitioner

“Villabianca: An ideal setting to work with many wonderful children and young people to discover and expand what music can offer them, and a space to use my music as a creative, enriching and fulfilling means of communication in a specialised and supportive team!”



Jack Barker

Music Therapist

“Villabianca is a wonderfully unique environment, in which I am able to work creatively and collaboratively - always with the support of an outstanding team of therapists and practitioners.”



Arianne Spiteri Cremona*

Creative Music Practitioner

“Working at Villabianca and forming part of a wonderful team of creative professionals is a real honour as it allows me to build meaningful relationships with our service users, support them to discover more of themselves through music, and accompany them on their musical journey.”

Our Year in Review

Villabianca provides a space for music making that is creative and therapeutically informed, alongside opportunities for adapted learning. These services offer opportunities to children, young people, and communities that have restricted access to the Arts.

Villabianca is founded on the belief that creative artistic experiences can help individuals open pathways of communication and self-expression, imparting a strong sense of empowerment and promoting self-determination, thereby facilitating the individual's active participation in society.

Our Pillars:

Services

Outreach

Training

Services

At Villabianca, we opened our doors to children & young people in November 2021. We create individually-tailored pathways of adapted music learning and music therapy for children and young people with disabilities. The premises have been built and equipped with state-of-the-art soundproofing, inventories, & instruments for the benefit of all who use our services.

At the moment, we are running at full capacity offering sessions to 120 service-users over a six-day week at our premises in Santa Venera.

We have 104 applicants currently on the waiting list.

Villabianca set itself up with a solid foundation of operational procedures to meet the ethical & professional standards our service-users and their families deserve. Villabianca continues to provide these services free of charge.

TINY TESTIMONIAL

“THE HIGHLIGHT OF HIS WEEK IS HIS SESSION AT VILLABIANCA. WE HAVE SEEN OVERALL IMPROVEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM SINCE HE HAS STARTED ATTENDING VILLABIANCA.”

Outreach

Our Outreach Programme fosters musical exchange and provide quality musical programmes through professional support within diverse community contexts.

As part of The Malta Trust Foundation's agreement with Aġenzija Sapport, we are working with more children and young people who make use of their services in different day centres, including Mtarfa, Fleur-de-Lys, and Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq.

We are also in constant collaboration with the Malta School of Music to ensure that this educational pathway can be accessible to children and young people with disabilities, wherever possible.

Training

Especially since Villabianca is a new initiative on the island, internal training has been (and continues to be) essential in order to respond to and accommodate the needs of the local context. Villabianca has collaborated with a number of local and foreign entities to receive professional training in a number of different areas of expertise, including:

- Sounds of Intent (via Dr Adam Ockelford of the University of Roehampton)
- Chiltern Music Therapy
- Musiikkikeskus Resonaari - Special Music Centre Resonaari, Finland
- ARC Research & Consultancy
- Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) Malta
- Pastoral Formation Institute (Safeguarding of Children)
- Sexuality & Disability - Dr Claire Azzopardi Lane
- European Music Therapy Conference 2022
- Ableton Certified Training
- JobsPlus (First Aid Training)
- Civil Protection Department (Fire Safety Training)

Villabianca offers training opportunities, mentoring and supervision for arts practitioners, educators, and carers. Villabianca supports and/or supervises different programmes and entities such as Opening Doors, Paulo Freire Institute, tal-Ibwar Youths, Resource Centres, Building Memories, and others.

Already in these early months, Villabianca has participated in several lectures, webinars, and workshops promoting the role of the arts and the work of Villabianca within this sector.

Villabianca is also collaborating with different examination boards to provide adapted assessment structures to service-users with strong musical aptitudes, thereby expanding the musical certification currently on offer.

Training (cont'd)

Villabianca is proud to be collaborating with the University of West England in Bristol to provide accredited training leading to an M.A. in Music Therapeutic Studies. Villabianca's two Creative Music Practitioners will be enrolling in September 2022 to receive a bespoke and blended training programme jointly offered by UWE and Villabianca. This is very exciting for Malta as the first arts therapy M.A. will become locally available to musicians interested in this field.



Polaroid 1 OPENING BOXES OF INSTRUMENTS



Polaroid 2 OUR PLANETS ARRIVED!



Polaroid 3 TRYING OUT RESOURCES



Polaroid 4 THE TMTF MEN AT WORK - THANK YOU!



Polaroid 5 SETTING UP EACH ROOM



Polaroid 6 SIGNING OUR COLLABORATION WITH MALTA SCHOOL OF MUSIC



Story: John

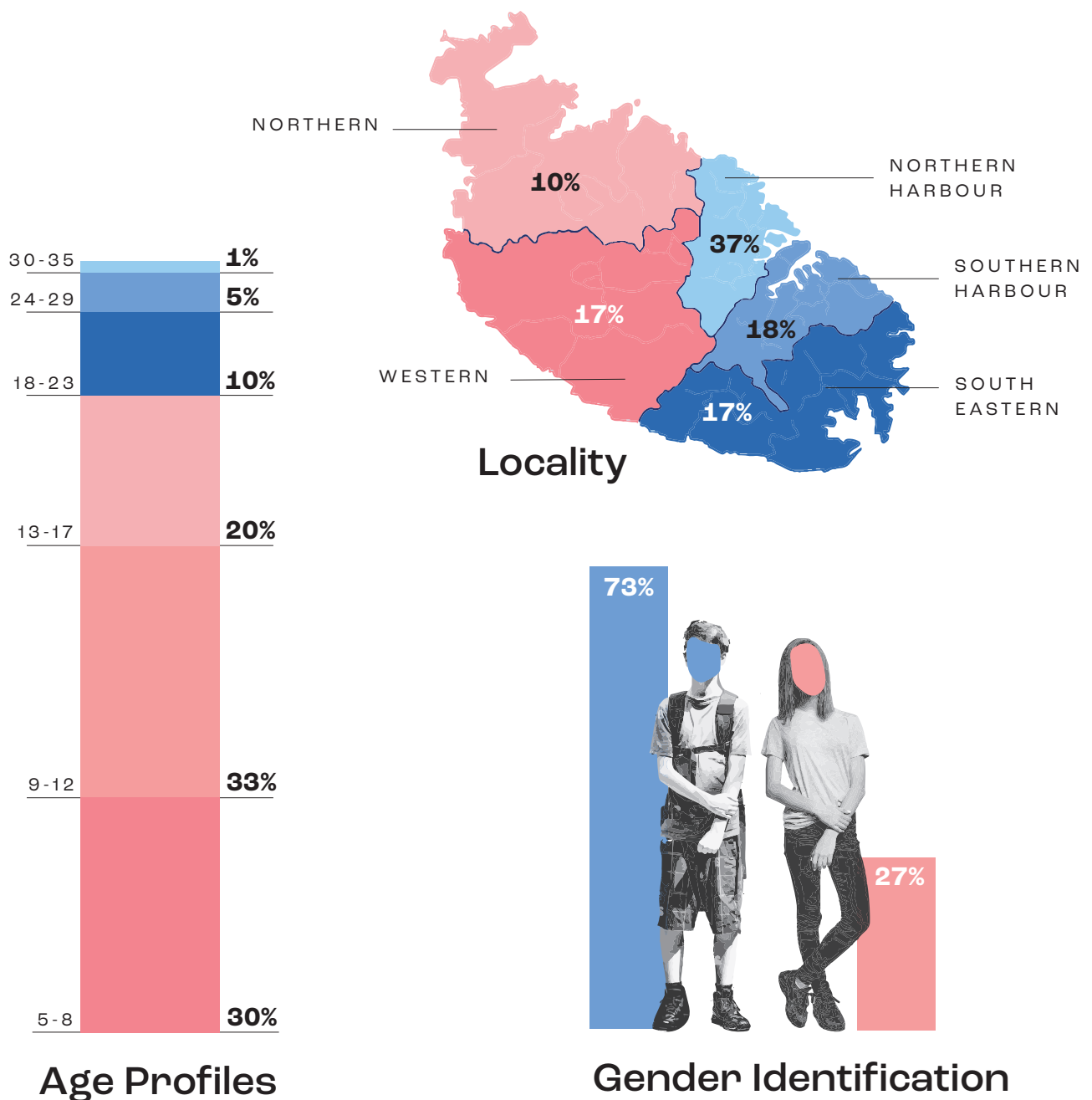
John (not his real name) is a 17 year old young man on the autism spectrum. John struggles with communication, which is really difficult when facing the universal challenges of transitioning to young adulthood. Our practitioner began working with John in November, when Villabianca opened its doors. He was referred to the service by his Mum in the hope that sessions could support John in his communication and enhance his self-esteem.

Initial sessions offered John musical instruments to explore. This was an intense experience for John and it became clear that he would need some time to get comfortable in the space without music. John was keen to bring his interests into the session and time was spent drawing, discussing and creating sound FX for trains, aeroplanes, or characters from films. After some time John expressed an interest in the electronic music equipment at Villabianca and began experimenting with synthesisers and loops.

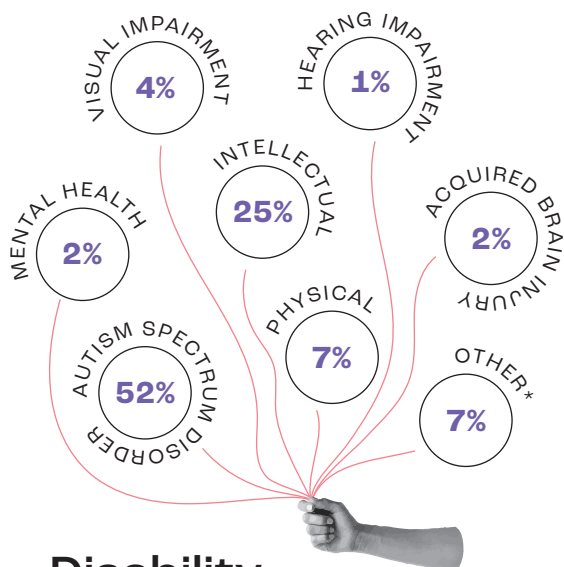
Feeling heard in these initial interactions supported John so that he became comfortable at Villabianca; upon trusting the space and building a relationship with consistent boundaries he became freer to explore what session could offer him. It has been a privilege to watch John's confidence grow, he now enters Villabianca and salutes hello and goodbye to members of the team before and after his session. In his sessions John explores instruments and creates music freely, communicates expressively, and engages confidently throughout his sessions. It has also been fantastic to see John take his music outside of Villabianca and play in a drumming group with his peers and his family, expanding both his musical and social circles!

Survey

As part of The Malta Trust Foundation's dedication towards research and development, Villabianca released a survey dedicated to all service-users in early June 2022. Through this brief study, Villabianca can better understand its current reach within the local population, as well as analyse the service provided to its service-users throughout the year.



Villabianca is all about the children, young people and their families. We believe that a holistic approach is paramount in our relationships with the people attending the centre. A total of 92 anonymous responses were received, with data pertaining to service-user demographics, quantitative data, as well as comments and written feedback.



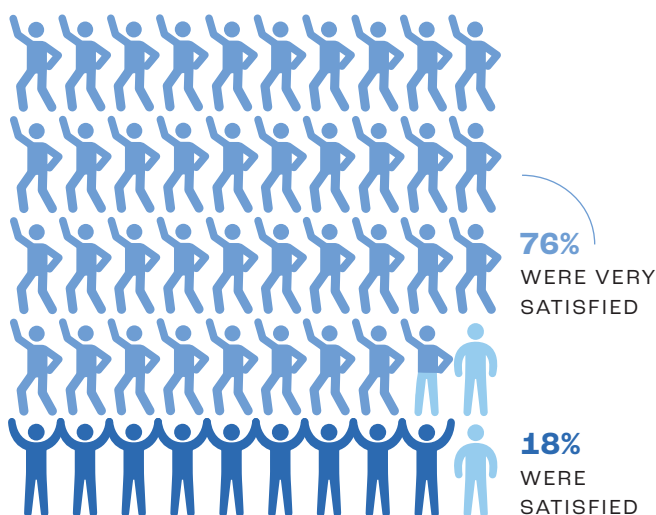
Disability

* OTHER DISABILITIES INCLUDE DOWNS SYNDROME, PRADER WILLI SYNDROME, ADHD, CEREBRAL PALSY & SELECTIVE MUTISM

91%
OF SERVICE USERS RESPOND TO VILLABIANCA WITH **Delight**

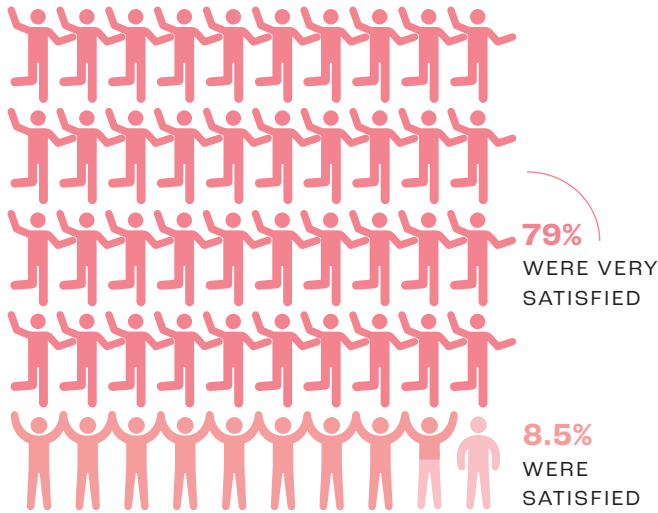


89%
OF SERVICE USERS WERE **Very Satisfied** WITH THE FRIENDLINESS & APPROACHABILITY OF VILLABIANCA STAFF MEMBERS



WHEN ASKED TO RATE THE COMMUNICATION WITH AND EFFICIENCY OF MUSIC THERAPISTS & CREATIVE MUSIC PRACTITIONERS

Survey



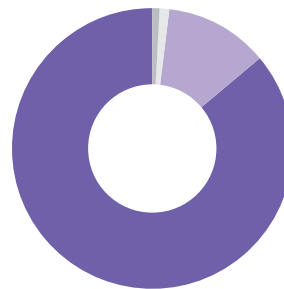
WHEN ASKED TO RATE THE COMMUNICATION WITH & EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

97% OF SERVICE USERS WERE **Satisfied or Very Satisfied** WITH THEIR OVERALL EXPERIENCE AT VILLABIANCA

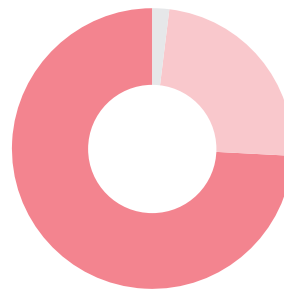


General Insights

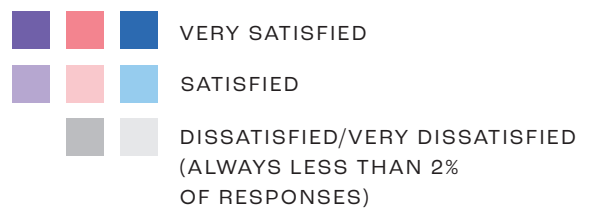
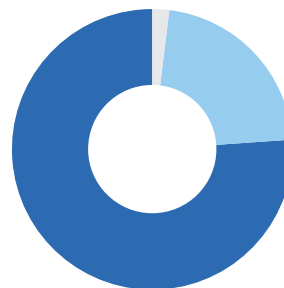
OVERALL CLEANLINESS



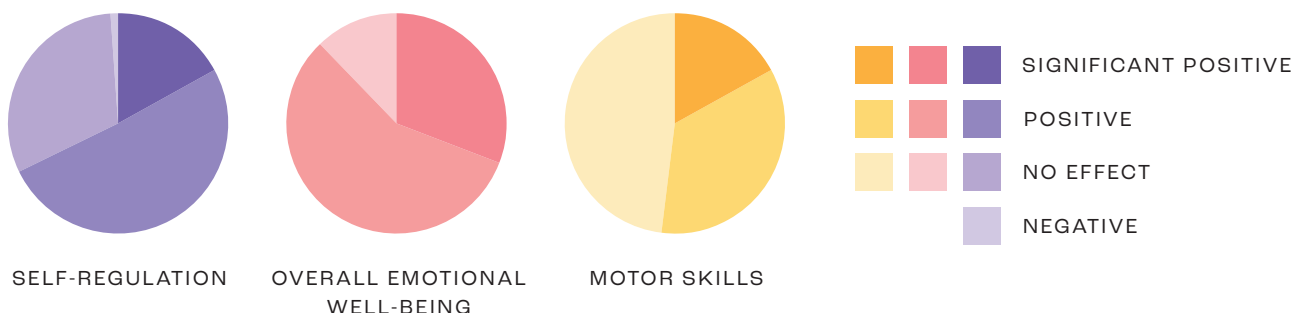
SCHEDULING OF SESSIONS



DROP-OFF & PICK-UP POLICIES



Well-Being

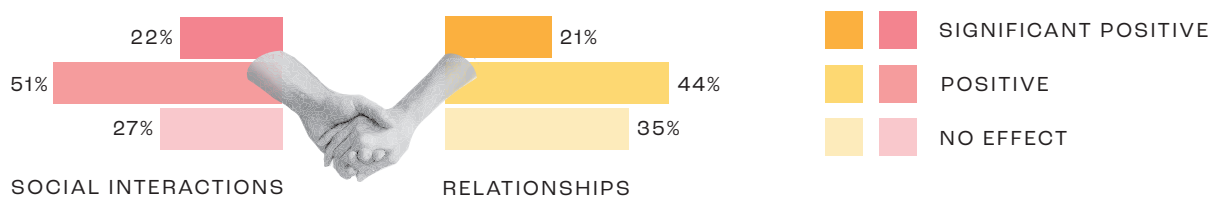


75%

NOTED A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE OR POSITIVE EFFECT IN THE SERVICE USER'S

Creativity

Social Impact



86%

NOTED A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE OR POSITIVE EFFECT IN THE SERVICE USER'S

Knowledge & Understanding of Music



89%

NOTED A SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE OR POSITIVE EFFECT IN THE SERVICE USER'S

General Appreciation of Music

100%

OF SERVICE USERS WOULD RECOMMEND VILLABIANCA TO OTHER FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.

Story: Linda

Linda (not her real name) is a six year old girl who has Global Developmental Delay. A lack of balance means that she is unable to walk unaided and she tends to neglect the left side of her body. She can sit with ease and only sometimes needs support from her mum, who joins Linda in the music therapy sessions.

Linda has been coming weekly to Villabianca for eight months and both the music therapist and Linda's mum have observed development in Linda's motivation, movements and motor skills since starting to attend music therapy sessions. Linda is a very musical girl and likes singing. The music itself encourages Linda to move and use her body in ways she may not have done if encouraged only by verbal instructions. The music therapy is 'person led' and much of the communication between the music therapist and Linda happens through the music and play.

This aspect of music therapy gives Linda the freedom to explore her own motivation to play, sing, and move, and when she does this, the music therapist attunes to Linda's music, responds, and acknowledges her. The feeling of acknowledgement and the connection through music then motivates Linda to play more. When an instrument is placed on Linda's left side, she might play spontaneously to keep the music and connection alive. Within the creative musical play, Linda is able to follow what her body instinctively and intrinsically wants to do, motivated by the music, the rhythm, and the enjoyment Linda feels when she plays music.

The sessions include both known songs and improvised music. The songs have formed a framework for the sessions and have given Linda the sense of familiarity and safety needed to trust the musical relationship with the music therapist enough to develop further. The improvised music then allows for exploration and freedom to try new things. There is no evaluation or judgement in improvised playing. Hence, as well as the physical dimension of the therapy, the therapeutic environment also provides a safe and comfortable space for Linda to develop socially and emotionally. This can help to support Linda's wellbeing, confidence, and self-esteem, as well as help expand her ability to focus and attend.

Looking Ahead

So much has been achieved in a short space of time, therefore it is crucial that the Villabianca services are consolidated and strengthened so that they remain professional and of true value.

Already it is clear that the premises and the current human resources are insufficient to meet the growing demand seen through our ever-increasing waiting list, both those directly applying through our Villabianca portal, as well as through Aġenzija Sapport. Funding permitting, Villabianca strives to ensure that no one is left out. Each opportunity lost due to lack of provision is in fact a disservice to society.

Our goal is to continue building healthy networks with different entities that provide services to children and young people, including the Malta School of Music, and other wonderful initiatives in the cultural sphere. Villabianca does not work in isolation but believes that it is through these networks that children and young people with disabilities can truly thrive. We are all in it together.

The collaboration with the University of West England has been serendipitous! This is the start of something that can have such an impact on Maltese society thanks to the opportunity for training locally. Villabianca intends to first focus on its internal practitioners, but in future will be able to offer this training to many more.

Goals for 2022-2023:

1. Continue to maintain the professional standards achieved throughout this year for all our service-users
2. Continue to increase capacity for children and young people with disabilities through expanding the team of practitioners and rooms to host sessions
3. Continue to align our networks with local and foreign entities, key services, and NGOs so as to reach more people through music
4. Find meaningful ways to foster a sense of community with the families of our service-users through events and activities
5. Provide opportunities to the Villabianca service-users through music performance and participation
6. Increase awareness of Villabianca as a centre and the children and young people it represents.

The Malta Trust Foundation Team

The Malta Trust Foundation

H.E. Marie-Louise Coleino Preca - **Founder & Chair of The Malta Trust Foundation**
Mr Carmel Briffa - **Treasurer**
Ms Sarah Bondin - **Director**
Ms Elaine Balzan - **Director: Coordination Children's Projects**
Mr Alfred Debono - **Premises Coordinator**
Mr Aldo Grech - **Gardener & General Maintenance**
Mr Melvin Farrugia - **Communications Coordinator**

The Malta Trust Foundation: Board of Administrators

H.E. Marie-Louise Coleino Preca - **Chair**
Mr Winston Zahna
Mr Alfred Pisani
Mr Alfred Fabri
Mr Michael Bianchi
Dr Fransina Abela
Mr Charles Borg
Profs. Josann Cutajar
Profs. Peter Mayo
Ms Anne Mckenna
Mr Carmel Briffa - **Treasurer**
Ms Sarah Bondin - **Secretary**

Villabianca Steering Committee

Mr Ivan Calleja - **Chair**
Dr Fransina Abela - **Member of the Board of Administrators**
Ms Rosetta Debattista - **Villabianca Creative Consultant**
Ms Cynthia Bonnici - **Villabianca Family Support Worker**
Ms Alishia Xuereb Jones - **Malta Autism Parents Association**
Mr Omar Farrugia - **Malta Autism Parents Association**
Ms Marilena Imbroll - **ADVICE**
Ms Joeanna Xerri - **Down Syndrome Association Malta**
Ms Amy Camilleri Zahra - **University of Malta**
Ms Marthese Mugliette - **Malta Federation of Persons with Disability**



Partners & Sponsors



FONDAZIONE TERZO PILASTRO
INTERNAZIONALE



"MY SON, I FEEL, FINDS AFFINITY WITH THE MUSIC THERAPIST. HE CAN EXPRESS HIMSELF AND IS UNDERSTOOD.

HE IS GIVEN FREEDOM TO USE HIS ABILITIES AND DESIRES, WHILST MAKING USE OF THE INSTRUMENTS AND HIS VOICE.

THIS BOND IS AMAZING AND MY SON EVEN MENTIONS HIS THERAPIST DURING THE WEEK AND LOOKS FORWARD TO THE SESSIONS AT VILLABIANCA, EVERY TIME."

"MY SON NOW PLAYS SPONTANEOUSLY AT HOME AND LOOKS UP MUSIC TECHNIQUES ON YOUTUBE AND TEACHES HIMSELF TOO."

"I'LL QUOTE MY DAUGHTER: 'MAMA I DON'T JUST LIKE VILLABIANCA, I LOVE IT! I WANT TO LIVE AT VILLABIANCA!'"

"THE BEST THERAPY THAT WAS EVER INTRODUCED TO MY SON!"

"OUR CHILD MENTIONS THE WEEKLY SESSION EVERY WEEKEND WHEN HE IS PREPARING HIS WEEK. HE LOOKS FORWARD TO IT AND WE CAN SEE THE LOVE FOR MUSIC IN HIM IS GROWING. IT IS NICE TO SEE HIM APPRECIATING A SONG ON THE RADIO AND SINGING WITH IT AND ALSO DANCING TO A SONG AND LAUGHING WHILE DOING SO... AND WHEN HE IS THERE HE IS BEING EXPOSED TO ALL THESE FUN THINGS."

"HE HAS ALWAYS LOVED MUSIC, HOWEVER WE HAVE SINCE SEEN AN INCREASE IN HIM TRYING TO PLAY OR SING ALONG TO SONGS. HE ALSO DRUMS ON OBJECTS NOW.

"I HAVE NEVER SEEN SUCH A POSITIVE ATTITUDE IN MY SON COMPARED TO THE OTHER ACTIVITIES HE CARRIES OUT."

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK, THIS IS SUCH A BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE THAT YOU ARE GIVING TO OUR CHILDREN. THANK YOU!



Thank you for your support!





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