

Opening doors in music and learning with young people outside the mainstream: Gloucestershire Music Makers' Key Changes programme: Case study: Nina¹



Brief description of the work

Key Changes is a [Youth Music](#)-funded music mentoring programme for young people aged 11-18 who are in challenging circumstances², and for whom music is the key to engagement and positive outcomes. Young people are referred by a range of organisations (a referral process is in place) and then take part in a programme of one-to-one music mentoring sessions, and occasional small group sessions.

Music mentoring uses music as “a common ground and shared interest to develop a relationship with a mentee in order to support them in making significant changes in knowledge, behaviour and thinking”. The aim of our programme is to help participants to discover their musical potential, develop their confidence and begin to explore the difference that music can make in their lives – in their personal and musical development.

Sessions include: rap writing, song writing, guitar, drums, vocals and keyboards. Some of the sessions are studio based and involve music production. Sessions take place in a variety of settings including several PRU's (Pupil Referral Units), both of our studio spaces (Sound Space, Cinderford and The Wired Room, Gloucester).

Our approach is designed to empower by listening, valuing creative ideas, encouraging independence and enabling participants to give and receive feedback. Improvisation and song writing are the key elements, drawing out the creativity of participants.

¹ All names have been changed to protect young people's identities.

² The referral process for this project has highlighted the need for Music Mentoring in the county and we are prioritising: Looked after young people; young people in Pupil Referral Units; Young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Behavioural difficulties, Learning difficulties and Physical disabilities. We also include other young people in other challenging circumstances.

Who's involved

The music mentors are: Mark Bick, Liz Terry, and Malaki Paterson: members of Gloucestershire Music Makers' core team who have extensive experience of working with vulnerable young people.

The Music Mentoring programme of work began in October 2012 and is part of the Music Inclusion Strategy³ of [Make Music Gloucestershire](#), the county's music education hub, which is led by Gloucestershire Music, the county's music education service.

It is funded by **Make Music Gloucestershire; Youth Music**, as part of its Music Mentoring programme (and links with the Hub's partnership with Swindon and Wiltshire ('SWAG') in a Musical Inclusion programme also funded by Youth Music); by commissioners of services including **Pupil Referral Services** and **Youth Support teams** and in some cases **individual parents**.

Case study: Nina

Nina is 16 years old and has been part of the Music Mentoring programme for four months. She is studying for the Silver Arts Award, and has now applied to a number of further education colleges to continue her studies and to specialise in music.

Her parents took her out of school to begin home educating her five months ago because she had become depressed, and was not coping with school in or out of lessons: *"I **couldn't concentrate** in lessons, **school doesn't suit me**. I was **distracted**, and I'd rather **get detention** than do the work because I just couldn't concentrate, I didn't want to do anything... It was a group of girls I was hanging around with, they weren't very nice. And I didn't want to be not very nice ..."*

According to Nina's father: *"It got to the stage where the school was having to send her home because she was so upset."*

Nina's father approached the home education authority and discussed Nina's interest in music – she had been playing guitar for around 10 months at the time (teaching herself by finding songs she liked on

YouTube). They referred her to the Music Mentoring programme.

A combination of being home educated, and being supported by her music mentor, has meant that Nina's wellbeing, ability to learn, attitude and aspirations have all improved:

*"My **concentration skills are better** now, and I'm **much happier**. I really enjoy it. I started a few months ago, and I go to the [music mentor's] studio around once a month, although now I'm doing my main Arts Award project it's more often."*

Nina's father says: *"Her **confidence has really transformed and she's grown**. She has **self-belief** now, she's more **interested in her schooling**. This has been great. He's [the mentor] given her pointers, helped her loads. She gets to do what she wants to do creatively, as well as learning the theory side – it works for Nina."*

"She seems to take his ideas on board and she didn't do that at school, not teachers ideas or ours as parents!"

*"This concert is such a big thing for her, she fell apart when she had to play at her interview for college, but everyone's said she seemed **really confident on stage** [in rehearsal]."*

Nina says: *"He helps me write songs, I've got some chords but I can never find words and the words that come out are really bad, but ... **he's helped my confidence a lot**. At (a performance in a pub), I was really shaky when performing, my voice was shaky. Once I've been at [the music leader]'s **it's opened me up** and helped me out a lot."*

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The project is now funded to August 2014, but demand for places is very high, so we do ask for part funding from referrers if possible to enable us to offer more places.

³ The aim of the Inclusion Strategy is to address gaps in music opportunities for young people in challenging circumstances who may miss out on music education, and to work with partners outside of music education to improve musical and non-musical outcomes for children and young people.