

Opening doors in music, in learning and in life with young people outside the mainstream: Gloucestershire Music Makers' work in Hospital Education

Case study: A turning point for Michael through music



Brief description of the work

Gloucestershire Music Makers (GlosMM) have been running small group and one-to-one music mentoring sessions for young people who are being supported during a period of ill-health, by Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service (GHES)¹. The aim is to engage young people and build their confidence in learning and in life. Malaki Patterson (pictured, right) is the musician who has been working with the Service.

Who's involved

This programme began in November 2012, and is part of the **Music Inclusion Strategy of [Make Music Gloucestershire](#), the county's music education hub**. It is paid for by Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service with additional funding from [Youth Music](#) as part of their Musical Inclusion module. The aim of the 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. Read more [here](#).

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¹ GHES provides education on hospital premises and through an outreach team, for young people who are not able to attend mainstream school as a result of physical, mental or emotional ill health. It helps them to continue their education during short or long-term ill-health, and to have a smooth transition back to school afterwards. It provides learning in small groups or one-to-one, tailored to their needs.

About Michael

Michael (not his real name) is a 15 year-old who was referred to hospital education in 2012 because he had stopped attending school as a result of an anxiety disorder. He was painfully shy – saying he was ‘afraid’ to meet people – and his behaviour had become more and more extreme. He was unable to leave the house, experienced extreme mood swings, and was unpredictable. Struggling with day-to-day life, he couldn’t see a future for himself, and his parents didn’t know what to do to help him.

GHES started to support Michael and family, including home visits from tutors, but it soon became clear that he was struggling to engage in the academic classes.

Meeting Malaki



Music was the one thing that Michael did who an interest in. He’d started working towards a BTEC in Music with one of his home tutors – but he was still not fully engaging with it. One of his tutors had seen Malaki at work with other students and suggested to Michael that he might like to try a session – but he would need to go into the GHES ‘classroom’.

This was a big step for Michael, but with a lot of encouragement, and having heard about Malaki’s work, and just how much other young people like him had benefited - Michael agreed to meet Malaki, in early September 2013.

Malaki says: “He was very shy, and found it hard to talk to me. I just tried to get him to talk about the music he listens to, to try to get him to speak as much as possible and feel relaxed with me.”

Malaki found that Michael had taught himself to play guitar, and that he wrote songs and sang at home. He’d been too shy to tell anyone about his music in mainstream school and couldn’t play if he knew anyone else was in within hearing distance, even his parents.

He discovered that Michael had a deep knowledge and interest in music, and so encouraged him to talk about different music genres he liked, and the different aspects of each artist’s music that influenced him. Michael told Malaki that he had tried to record his music but it didn’t sound good – he was struggling with poor quality equipment and lack of skills and was frustrated by not getting a good result.

The next steps

Malaki talked to Michael about ways that he could improve his recording and add other instruments and effects to the sound, using software called Logic. By end of session, Michael was keen to continue, and he and Malaki agreed what they might do for next session.

“I didn’t put too much of a plan in place then, or in the next few sessions. Although my role as a music mentor is to help young people to progress, and to achieve musical and personal goals, I like to be flexible particularly at first, so the young person can lead the sessions where they want them to go.”

“Sometimes they might want me to help them with instrumental skills, or sometimes it might be more creative, song-writing ... or as in Michael’s case, he wanted to focus on getting his technical skills right for recording his music and adding other parts like keyboard and drums. Because he’s very creative and writes new songs all the time, he was frustrated that he had nowhere to put them, so that’s been our goal.”

Two months on

Both parents and GHES staff agree that Malaki’s work has been a turning point for Michael.

Both have been astounded by the change in his attitude. Emma Stevenson, Senior Support Worker at GHES, said: “After just one session, the change in him was amazing. His parents reported back immediately, saying it was the first time for a very long time that they’d seen him so positive. He was enthusiastic and animated, actually talking about the session and looking forward to the next. Most importantly, there’s been a change in how he sees himself.”

Previously, simply getting out of the house was a huge achievement, but his Mum has reported that he is a 'different person', coming home after sessions happy, talkative and more sociable. He's been agreeing in each session the tasks that he'll work on at home, and then achieving all he's set out to do.

He's entered, and played live in front of an audience, as part of a competition in Brighton: *"When he first came to me, there was no way he'd play his music in front of someone" says Malaki. "It's still not easy for him, but I've seen that progression. I was concerned when he first mentioned the competition, about what effect it would have if he didn't get through. Even his attitude to getting eliminated was positive."*

He is now attending Malaki's group sessions, as well as other GHES classes. *"He's back in the classroom, and he's definitely more confident," says Malaki.*

He's hoping to volunteer in a recording studio. Malaki has been so impressed with his progress that he has arranged this volunteering opportunity for him: *"We talked about how we needed to decide when's the right time for him to do it. He's really been mature and said he'll let me know when he thinks the time's right."*

It's having an impact on his other subjects and his future aspirations: Emma says: *"It's having an impact on all areas – he's doing better in other subjects, and is now planning his future, looking at a career in music production and what colleges he could go to. Before, he wasn't thinking about tomorrow, let alone a future."*

Workers on the team attribute the change to Malaki's work: Emma says: *I'd definitely say that Malaki has made the difference - and the other teachers agree.."*

The work is not only effective, it's cost-effective too: Emma says: *"It's very good value for money. GHES currently contribute £30 an hour, or £720 for a 12-week term of weekly two hour sessions, and the balance (around £240 per term) is covered by the Youth Music funding. We've booked one or two sessions with other providers that are far more than that - one charged £200 for 2 hours. And because Malaki will work with small groups, makes it even better value for money. He's made a big difference to a lot of young people."*

What makes the difference?



Photos are not necessarily of young people involved in this programme

Emma has seen the same effect happen with many other students that Malaki has worked with in the last year. She believes that the impact of this work is down to a combination of personal qualities as well as a particular approach to working with young people which includes:

Respect for the learner, and between learner and teacher: *"Straight away, there is a mutual respect between Malaki and the young people he works with. He's such a positive person, and the pupils think he's cool, so he draws things out of them - yet he manages to keep a distance and have authority."*

Letting young people lead their learning, putting their creative ideas at the heart of the work: *"We've used musicians who have understandably seen their role as to exhibit their musical skills, and then pass them on, but it doesn't have the same effect. What Malaki is doing is different. It's not therapy but it's therapeutic, and they're developing their own ideas, developing new skills, and learning new things, driven by Malaki's enthusiasm and belief in what they can do."*

Personalised learning: *"He's very interested in them as people, and spends time with a young person first, getting to know them, finding out about them and their interest in music. He'll keep going until he finds something he can work on. He can draw something out of them even if they don't feel they're musical, he personalises everything. And he can do this with a group too which is incredible."*

Willingness to adapt to young people's needs: *"It's not just about objectives and outcomes. He puts the young people's needs first and varies his way of working as the need arises."*

"They always come away smiling and they've always learned things. He's not just a musician, but a highly skilled teacher."

Further insights into the approach

Engaging young people in something they're interested in is certainly a good starting point, but there is far more to the work than this.

It is part of a wider, highly skilled approach to music learning, sometimes described as 'musical inclusion' or an aspect of 'community music' work. Its principles are based around active and creative participation in music, equality of opportunity and the importance of social as well as musical outcomes.

Key organisations involved in supporting and developing practitioners are [Sound Sense](#), the community music association, and [Youth Music](#), the national children's charity.

One-to-one music mentoring –the initial method used with Michael – has developed out of these approaches and has been the subject of recent funded programmes and research.

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.

For more information see: **Move on Up – an evaluation of youth music mentoring**
<http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/resources/research/move>

The cost – and saving

Michael has received eight sessions so far: a minimum of ten sessions are recommended, at a total cost of £800. This can be all it takes for a young person to begin to change the way they feel and learn. Yet the potential cost-saving can be massive.

Where a young person is at risk of exclusion or offending, a recent report has suggested that a mentee who was fully helped might save society something over £51,000.²

In the case of a young person avoiding residential care, the savings could be as much as £2,965 per week³.

Calculating these costs is complex, potentially taking into account the cost of crime, health and social services as well as welfare benefits, loss of tax revenue from earning and

² See: **Move on Up – an evaluation of youth music mentoring**
<http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/resources/research/move>
and also <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/resources/blogs/simon-glenister/rather-how-much-you-cost-how-about-how-much-you-save>

³ See page 74 **Unit costs of health and social care**, University of Kent, 2011 <http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/uc/uc2011/uc2011.pdf>.

See also <http://bit.ly/1gMpJXu> for calculations of **the costs of failing to provide support for 16-25 year olds**

spending, and of future earnings.

What is clear however, is that for a small investment, we can contribute significantly to helping a young person re-engage with learning and with life.

About our programme

We have a team of musicians who are achieving similar results with young people across the County. 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.

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. Sessions include: rap writing, song writing, guitar, drums, vocals and keyboards, music production, violin, accordion and more. They take place in a variety of youth/social care settings as well as our studio spaces (Sound Space, Cinderford and The Wired Room, Gloucester).

This programme is specific to the Hospital Education and Pupil Referral Services, but we also have an open mentoring programme in place, called **Key Changes**, for young people aged 11 to 18, in challenging circumstances, which includes Looked After Children and those struggling to engage with formal education. Young people can be referred direct, programmes are developed to meet their individual needs. Referrers are usually expected to contribute to the costs.

Could we help the young people you work with to re-engage in learning and in life?



Contact us:

Mark Bick, CEO, Gloucestershire Music Makers

Tel: 01594 836418 Mob: 07815 459468

Email: mark@glosmm.org.uk Web: www.glosmm.org.uk

OR for Key Changes: Malaki Patterson

mno_productions@hotmail.co.uk