



Opening doors in music, in learning and in life with young people outside the mainstream: **Hospital Education**

Case study: A turning point for Michael through music



Brief description of the work

The Music Works has 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 **Inclusion Strategy of Make Music Gloucestershire, the county's music education hub**. It is paid for by



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.

Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service and occasionally supported by additional funding. 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 non-music partners to **improve musical and non-musical outcomes** for children and young people.

Find out more: www.themusicworks.org.uk www.makemusicgloucestershire.org.uk

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. One of his tutors had seen Malaki at work with other students and suggested Michael 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 just how much other young people like him had benefited - Michael agreed to meet Malaki.

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 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 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 had 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 he could improve his recording and add other instruments and effects, using Logic software. By end of session, Michael was keen to continue, and he and Malaki agreed what they’d do next.

“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. 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, 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 long time that they’d seen him so*

positive. He was enthusiastic and animated, 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: "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.

It's having an impact on other subjects and his future aspirations: Emma says: *He's doing better in other subjects, and is now, 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. GHES currently contribute £30 an hour, or £720 for a 12-week term of two hour sessions, and the balance (around £240 per term) is covered by grant funding. We've booked 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?

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

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used musicians who have understandably seen their role as to exhibit their musical skills, and then pass them on. But 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, spends time getting to know them, finding out about their interests 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."

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.”

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, welfare benefits, loss of tax revenue from earning and 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.

² See: **Move on Up – an evaluation of youth music mentoring**, Youth Music

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**