

Case Study HMP Peterborough

On the 19-23rd October 2015, national charity, Good Vibrations ran a week-long Gamelan project with 24 women at HMP Peterborough. Participants had heard about the course on the wings through a Good Vibrations pre-visit, and hoped to get the following types of things out of the course:



- A certificate
- A new experience
- Better understanding of music
- Better team-working skills
- A qualification
- Self-discovery
- Relaxation
- Appreciation for different cultures

Two facilitators supported the group to learn to play the Gamelan; which is an Indonesian orchestra of drums, gongs and metallophones. They facilitated participants (some who had no previous musical experience) in composing and improvising their own music and taught them traditional pieces.

“Spoke to my husband. He had no idea what I was talking about so I explained what Gamelan was. He said, ‘do you know that’s a really good experience you’ve had?’ He was right.”

A participant

At the end of a week the group put on an informal concert, attended by 28 people. The audience, comprised of officers, guests and inmates, were smiling, foot-tapping and clapping, and you could hear influences of bhangra, salsa and reggae in the music. Participants received completion certificates, and were given professionally-produced CDs of their work. A participant told us:

“We all improved over the week and the performance came together. I’m proud the audience joined in and we pulled together like a band or a community.”

As well as making music Laurence and Kieran focused on facilitating the women to experiment, reflect and problem-solve throughout the week. They were in control of the creative output and the way they worked as a group to achieve the end result they wanted.

“The teachers believe in us, that is why we could achieve so much.”

A participant

75% of participants completed the project and gained a Level 1 Team-Working Qualification from Open College Network. One of the women said:

“As an experience, I can’t fault it. The way we were eased in on the first day and supported was fantastic. We watched out for each other. I’ll continue playing Gamelan.”

This was a very diverse group of woman with 81% being non-White British. All were aged 18 – 54 with 39% of them being 34 or under. 50% of them considered themselves to have a disability (mental illness, physical disability or learning disability). A participants told us:

“Did us all good – breaking boundaries – all nationalities.”

This project would not have been possible without funding from Arts Council England, Big Lottery Fund and Youth Music, and leadership and support from HMP Peterborough's Head of Learning, Skills and Employment, Wayne Peters, and it's Education Manager, Will Graham. Will told us:

"I'm blown away by it. The benefit to people in here is incredible. The benefit I've seen for people who don't have a lot of confidence, like Paula - who is usually really emotional, up and down and always leaving education classes is amazing. The fact she was leading, saying thank you was incredible. It's given her such confidence. And the others.

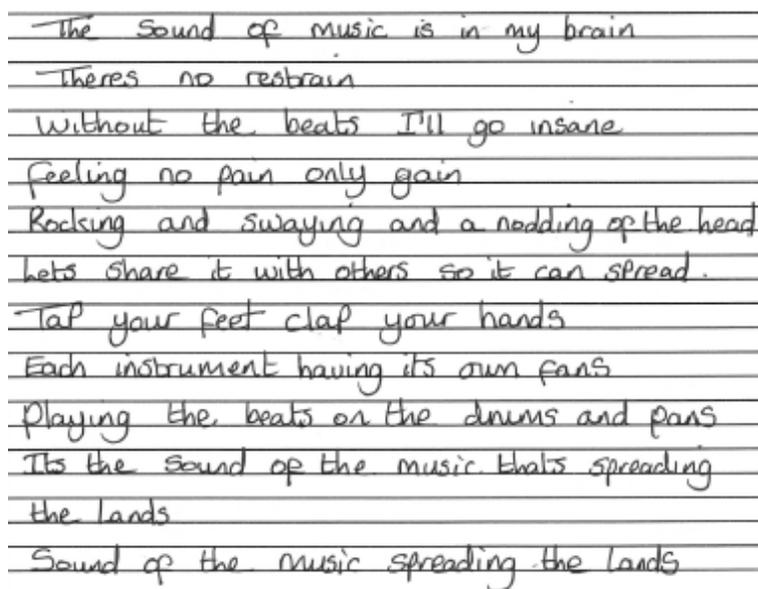
I was a sceptic, but the benefits at the end. It's so different what you see from the person at the start to the person at the end. This was a hugely diverse group – Spanish, Romanian, Polish, Indian, African, Russian. To get them, to buy into working as a group like this, in a custodial setting, is amazing – different ages, different types of crimes, different religions; they usually stick together like glue, but now they've bonded."

You can hear the improvisation, which Paula conducted the group in, here: soundcloud.com/goodvibrations-org/conducted-improvisation

100% of participants who completed the course saw an improvement in the following transferable life and work skills and attributes:

- how they communicate;
- their enjoyment of learning;
- their resilience;
- their motivation levels;
- their listening skills; and
- their patience.

With over 79% of them saying these had got much better through the project. One woman said:



The sound of music is in my brain
There's no restrain
Without the beats I'll go insane
Feeling no pain only gain
Rocking and swaying and a nodding of the head
Let's share it with others so it can spread.
Tap your feet clap your hands
Each instrument having its own fans
Playing the beats on the drums and pans
It's the sound of the music that's spreading
the lands
Sound of the music spreading the lands

"I have learned team work skills and patience. When I get released I want to help volunteer with part of this project to help others in the community."

94% of completing participants saw an improvement in their creativity, problem-solving ability, well-being and concentration. 90% got better at team-working, 88% became more confident and willing to take on responsibility, and 77% were really proud of their achievements. A participant said:

"I felt supported by other team members, which inspired me and gave me confidence."

Participants also created spoken word pieces on the course, which you can hear at: <https://soundcloud.com/goodvibrations-org/gamelan-and-spoken-word>. Good Vibrations is sharing their work through audio exhibitions across the country to give prisoners a voice.

18 participants signed up to our Keep in Touch programme, so that we can support them with progression opportunities when they are released. When we asked the women if there is anything they would take from the project they said:

“Yeah, it’s summitt I’ll never forget ... I feel amazing after the course ...It gave me inspiration ... It has helped me to relax ... I shall observe patience more ... I’ve learnt that working as a team achieves the goal you want to achieve”

We’ve used false names and photos from other projects to protect the identity of participants.

Supporting Data

