

## Can playing in an Indonesian percussion orchestra help people who've been unemployed for years to build confidence and get more work-ready?

Surrey, Sussex and Berkshire District Jobcentre Plus piloted an extraordinary programme this October with 20 long-term unemployed clients, 78% of whom considered themselves to have a disability or health condition. The group learnt to play an Indonesian tuned-percussion orchestra (called a Gamelan) from scratch, culminating in a live performance and production of a professionally-produced CD at the end of the week. 75% of participants completed the full course.

This Flexible-Support-Funded pilot tackled a stubborn problem in the Hastings area; that despite unemployment rates falling, many long-term unemployed people remain far from the labour market. The programme was delivered by national charity Good Vibrations, whose patron is Bill Bailey. JCP's District Provision Manager, who went to the end-of-project performance, said: ***"It was a very positive visit, with much evidence shown by participants of distance travelled towards the labour market."***

Through learning to play Gamelan as a group, participants developed transferable skills, which will help them socially-participate more confidently; 88% of completers developed team-working skills and 71% developed communication skills. Most participants said they now feel more comfortable in group settings. A Work Coach commented: ***"The improvement in confidence is amazing. One guy never talked to anyone, except his wife before, and the way he spoke to the audience was incredible."***

Participants became more motivated and open to change by the end of the course: ***"My new thing since Gamelan is to say yes. I have fibromyalgia and myalgic encephalitis, which cause chronic pain and a host of other symptoms. I get anxious travelling further than my local town, experiencing new things and meeting new people. The Gamelan course allowed me to overcome my fears. It helped me feel good about my abilities, instead of feeling useless. Since then I plan to do a Reiki course and have re-joined the local library, both of which are enormous steps for me."***

One man said the course helped him a lot; ***"I've been looking for positives – I've had a lot of tragedies recently."*** 76% of completers said it improved their well-being, and 74% their resilience, which suggests the experience will support people to handle everyday challenges and set-backs better.

Last week's Spending Review, showed the Government is focused on supporting people with disabilities and health conditions who have been unemployed for a long time, to return to, and remain in, work. It is introducing a new Work and Health Programme and a real terms increase in funding to support this area of work. Good Vibrations' Gamelan programme has real potential to support this agenda nationwide, and has the added benefit of helping claimants to trust JCP more - ***"I was anti-Jobcentre, but now I'm pleased with it."***

For further information, please contact:

JCP District Provision Manager, Martin Smith [martin.smith8@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:martin.smith8@dpw.gsi.gov.uk) or Relationship Manager, Marc Smith [marc.smith@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:marc.smith@dpw.gsi.gov.uk) with questions about what they believe was an extremely successful pilot scheme.

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Notes to editors:

1. National charity Good Vibrations [www.good-vibrations.org.uk](http://www.good-vibrations.org.uk) was set up in 2008. It has supported c. 5000 individuals in prisons, secure hospitals, detention centres, and community settings across the UK, including helping 213 people to gain qualifications.
2. One of Good Vibrations' patrons, comedian and musician, Bill Bailey, said of Good Vibrations: *"I think it's a fascinating and worthwhile project ... It is relatively easy to start playing and get pleasing results, so I can see how it could provide a sense of achievement."*
3. See [what-others-say](#) for highlights of research on Good Vibrations' work from:
  - *Musical Learning and Desistance From Crime: The Case of a Good Vibrations' Javanese Gamelan Project with Young Offenders*, Institute of Education (2014)
  - *Continuing Positive Change in Prison and the Community: An Analysis of the Long Term Impact of the Good Vibrations Project*, Birmingham City University (2010)
  - *Promoting Positive Change – Assessing the Long-term Psychological, emotional and Behavioural Effects of the Good Vibrations Gamelan in Prisons Project*, Birmingham City University (2008)
  - *All Together Now - An Evaluation of The Therapeutic Benefits of Good Vibrations*, Cambridge University (2007)
  - *Breaking Down Walls – The Good Vibrations Project in Prison*, Birmingham City University (2006)
4. Three more independent external evaluations are being published in December 2015:
  - On how Good Vibrations' percussion programmes improve motivation to change, and treatment readiness in convicted sexual offenders (Nottingham Trent University)
  - On Good Vibrations' impact with women in prison (Bath Spa University)
  - On Good Vibrations' impact with older people in prison (University of Worcester)
5. NOMS endorsed Good Vibrations as an "Effective Regime Intervention" for High Security Prisons in 2010.
6. Lincoln Prison Governor, Peter Wright, said:
 

*"I am struck over and over again at the mutual respect found between artists working on a work of art. That's why it's so effective and important as a transformative experience for all of these. I've met many people where music has made a big difference or change in their lives. Each one of the Good Vibrations courses I've seen have been wonderful."*