THE MUSIC WORKS

Impact Report 24/25

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Transforming young lives through music

2024–25 has been another year of growth and change for The Music Works.

We reached a total of **8,130** young people: **3,904** through schools, community, educational settings and studios and a further **4,226** through events.

There have been several highlights this year.

We experienced huge growth in our open-access programme, which reached a record **646** young people, marking an impressive **52%** increase in participation.

We opened our new state-of-the-art Forest Hub in Cinderford, providing young people in the Forest of Dean with a fully accessible, cutting-edge space to create music and connect.

We have also deepened our commitment to our youth voice work, creating a youth social action group that has been focused on social justice advocacy and embedding youth voice and youth-led decision-making throughout the Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire Music Hub's governance framework.

In October 2024, we were honoured to win the regional Health Equalities Award at the NHS Parliamentary Awards. It was a meaningful endorsement of the work we do to harness the power of music and transform the lives of young people facing health inequalities.

Finally, we spent time this year redeveloping our strategy framework, with our impact measurement tools now including artistic and leadership outcomes as well as wellbeing outcomes.

Our Work in Numbers

8130 young people reached

33.1%

with at least one challenging circumstance

470

young people with mental health challenges

823

disabled young people

378,276 people reached through our website and social media channels

80,213 people engaged with our content – 21% of our digital audience

1,472 new followers gained across social media channels

Community and Place

The Forest Hub

In the autumn of 2024, we opened the doors to our new inclusive music hub in Cinderford. Leased to us through Cinderford Town Council as part of the Forest of Dean's £20m Levelling Up investment in community facilities, we undertook a 12-month renovation and refurbishment of the building, equipping it with state-of-the-art music-making and recording facilities. During 2024/25 the hub has supported young people to create music, build their confidence and socialise with new friends

Open Access

Our open-access programme serves as a primary entry point for young people wishing to explore music-making. This year it experienced significant growth with a **52%** increase in participation reaching a record **646** young people. We also delivered **219** sessions across our Gloucester and Forest hubs, an **18%** increase from last year. The opening of the new Forest Hub was a major driver for this success, with the Drop Forest programme seeing a staggering **485%** increase in uptake.

Outreach

Our outreach work helps us to bring music-making opportunities to areas of rural deprivation and reach young people who ordinarily have limited access to music facilities and equipment. This year we delivered **129** outreach and Music Bus sessions, reaching **772** young people across our target communities.

With our approach shifting from a mobile only service to a multi-modal approach, we transitioned from simply delivering events to building sustainable relationships with partners and stakeholders.

Disability Programmes

We provide the most comprehensive inclusive music offer in the county with **823** disabled young people benefiting from **670** hours of targeted music intervention in 2024/25.

Our Mix & Mash Short Breaks programme offered **50** hours of respite for families of **26** young people with additional needs, and our digital reach also grew, with our Mix and Mash Radio programme averaging **218** monthly listens. We delivered **35** DJ Collective sessions reaching **47** adults with learning disabilities, providing them with a safe space to develop skills and share their love of music. In June 2024, our inclusive music festival INCFest showcased the talent of **104** disabled young people from **8** SEN/D schools to a captivated audience of over **200.**

Our mobile Mix & Mash outreach sessions delivered via our Music Bus proved popular too, providing **323** young people across the county with access to inclusive and accessible music-making opportunities.

Watch Adam's Story

> "This has done a full 360 on my life. I'm so happy I can express myself through music and creative arts.

Youth Voice

This year saw us lay the foundation for a new, comprehensive approach to youth development with a new youth voice strategy and more opportunities for young people to use their voice and advocate for change. This is still rooted in our youth engagement ladder, providing pathways within the organisation for young people to sit on our Youth Advisory Group or become a young trustee. Our new Youth Social Action group - supported by Children in Need, provides a safe space for ethnically diverse young people to share the systemic barriers they face and work on activities that advocate for social justice.

Our wider youth voice work is embedded throughout both our programmes and governance, serving as a key entry point for young people embarking on their youth engagement journey and offering clear progression and leadership development pathways.

> "Being involved in The Music Works helped me realise what my purpose was.

Watch Maheen's Story

Targeted Programmes

Creative Health: Harnessing the power of music to improve young people's health, wellbeing and progression

Key Changes

This year our music mentoring for mental health programme delivered **1,001** sessions to **175** young people, with **147** receiving one-to-one support and **35** accessing group mentoring. Guided by young people's interests and grounded in self-determination theory, the programme uses music as a vehicle to build confidence, foster connections and develop skills. It produced significant positive shifts in participant wellbeing this year, with low wellbeing decreasing from **50%** to **27%** and high wellbeing increasing from **2%** to **15%**.

> "Music is always something I go to when I'm feeling down. It both connects you with so many amazing people and gives you an outlet to express yourself without any judgement.

Watch Josie's story

Xpres! and Transitions

As part of the Gloucestershire Creative Health Consortium, our Xpres! Programme delivered **9** monthly sessions to **45** young people with long-term health conditions. Our Transitions programme supported **87** pupils across **12** schools, helping them navigate anxiety around the move from primary to secondary school. Data from the Transitions programme showed that **43%** of participants had a significant increase in their wellbeing score. The proportion of young people reporting high wellbeing increased from **14%** to **21%** after attending.

> "I feel so much more confident in myself and doing all of this makes me feel less anxious about the future." Transitions programme participant

Health inequalities

With many young people struggling to engage in and access the health and support services they need, the NHS recommissioned our work to address health inequalities affecting young people in Gloucester, through music interventions.

Through a combination of one-to-one mentoring, small groups, drop-in sessions, community outreach and holiday programmes, we engaged **1,214** young people across **2,598** sessions.

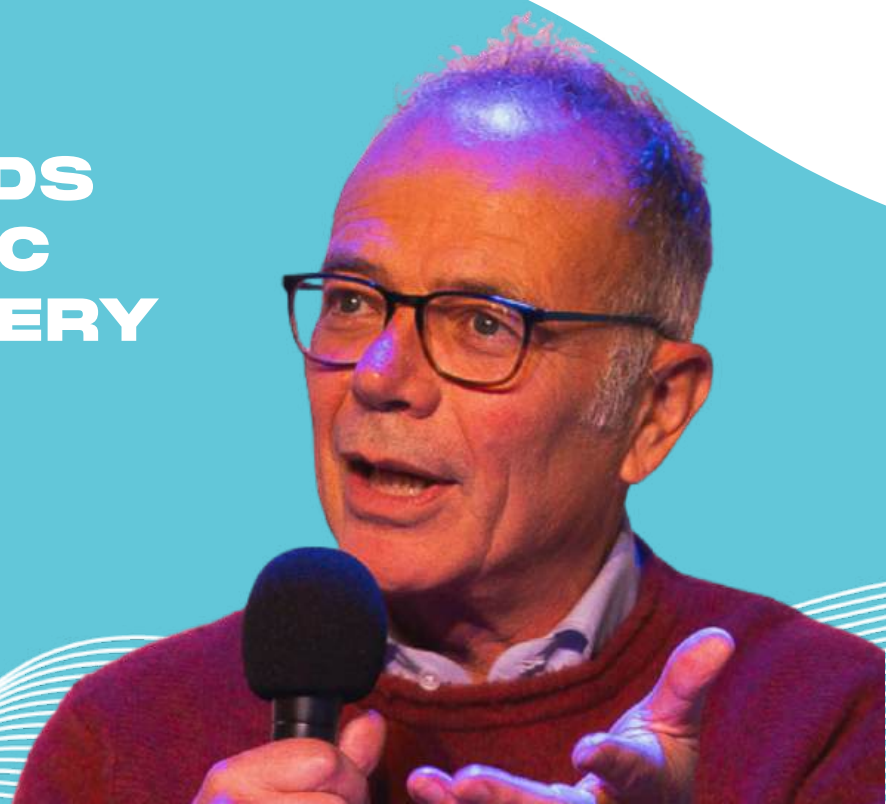
The percentage of participants reporting low mental well-being decreased by **50%** from **32%** to **16%** after attending programmes.

The percentage of participants reporting high mental well-being increased by **33%** from **15%** to **20%** after attending programmes.

> Life changing, in some ways life saving.

Watch Ellie's Story

> **THERE NEEDS TO BE A MUSIC WORKS IN EVERY COUNTY**
>
> **- Dr Simon Opher MP**



Breaking the cycle of youth violence and criminality

The Music Works has pioneered a three-tiered approach to youth violence prevention, which uses music as a powerful tool for engagement and transformation.

Tackling antisocial behaviour

Our primary prevention and early engagement initiatives focus on the use of our mobile, state-of-the-art Music Bus to address anti-social behaviour in disadvantaged communities across Gloucestershire. Our goal is to engage young people with positive opportunities and help them develop skills, collaborate and experiment with music while connecting with families and peers. This year we delivered **5** ten-week music programmes, and **9** one-day sessions and events, working with **263** young people.

Helping young people re–engage

Our secondary prevention work focuses largely on alternative provision schools that support young people who have been excluded from mainstream education and who typically present with higher levels of social, emotional and mental health needs. By delivering innovative, youth-led music education our music leaders help young people develop their music skills, self-belief and attainment levels. This year we delivered **167** sessions to **156** young people across **3** schools, with several KS4 students achieving Bronze and Silver Arts Awards.

Making it

Tertiary prevention is our six-month 'Making It' programme for young offenders, comprised of intensive one-to-one mentoring and progression pathways within The Music Works, leading into education, employment and the creative industries. This year, we engaged **19** young people in one-to-one sessions and **42** through group work. A total of **135** sessions were delivered, focused on building confidence, self-esteem and resilience and enabling young people to build sustainable and productive relationships with trusted adults in a safe, creative space. Of the 2024/25 cohort, **85%** had not reoffended by the end of the year.

> "The Music Works has given me a chance to show me that I can stand out from the rest.

Watch Ty's Story

Education

The Music Works works across Gloucestershire in school settings providing a range of music provision including:

Music technology

Our whole-class iPad technology classes serve as a fun and accessible way of getting pupils engaged in making music, often for the first time. Our sessions were hugely successful this year, running at full capacity with schools keen to sign up and embrace innovative music-making opportunities. We delivered **228** sessions and engaged **318** young people, providing them with creative autonomy and helping them develop their musical skills, knowledge and confidence.

Teacher training

This year, we worked with music leads from **35** schools across the county through our targeted teacher training, aimed at building confidence and enthusiasm for music delivery. This work helps us to build educators' knowledge around wider musical learning experiences, disseminate best practice and drive systemic change.

> "It was a fabulous day – it gave me a wealth of ideas and reignited my spark

> "Thanks so much for such valuable training, lots of practical ideas – I've come away feeling re-energised!

SEN/D schools

This year we delivered **160** sessions to **157** disabled young people across **6** schools, providing inclusive music-making opportunities for young people who face some of the greatest barriers to high quality creative provision.

Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire Music Hub (GSW)

As a partner in the GSW Music Hub's leadership team, we play a key role in modelling and advocating for an inclusive and youth-led approach to music education across the region. Central to this is a piece of research we carried out on inclusive music education in schools as well as our work to embed youth voice into the GSW Music Hub's governance framework. This latter piece of work focuses on involving young people at every level of decision-making through youth advisory positions, young people on the board and a young co-chair role. One young person, Mackenzie Edmonson (originating directly from our programmes) now sits on the GSW board and is using this platform to advocate for music as a tool for mental health support, demonstrating how our participants are becoming leaders capable of driving meaningful change.

Creative Careers

Upsurge

Our year-long Upsurge programme provides passionate young creatives with the mentoring, knowledge, skills and connections they need to break into the music industry. During 2024/25, we supported **40** young people through our programme: **19** artists, **7** creatives and **14** sound engineers. We also continue to support **75** Upsurge alumni, as part of our wider creative community.

Some of our artists enjoyed tremendous success this year, with one signing with a record label, another securing an artist-in-residence spot at a leading entertainment venue in Stroud and two artists securing funding to continue with their artist development journey.

Creative Futures

Our two-day networking conference and songwriting camp, delivered in partnership with Warner Chapell Music and BBC Introducing aims to inspire, educate and unlock the potential of the next generation of young creatives. In November 2024, the event brought together **15** industry professionals and provided **95** attendees with the skills, real-world insight and networking opportunities needed to make it in the music industry.

Masterclasses

Our masterclasses offer aspiring young artists and creatives the opportunity to build invaluable insider knowledge and understanding of the music industry, equipping them with the skills and confidence they need to pursue a career in the creative sector. This year we delivered a total of **30** masterclasses reaching **355** young people, with session topics including branding, YouTube strategy release and vocal coaching.

Events

We programme other events throughout the year at our Gloucester Hub...

Kings Jam

In October 2024, Kings Jam 'Bars In The Park' returned to Gloucester, once more providing a lively and accessible platform for music of Black origin including rap, R'n'B, hip-hop and drill. As well as attracting national and international artists, the event provides emerging local talent with an opportunity to showcase their music.

Running as a pop up this year, the event brought together over **85** unique participants and attracted an audience of **284**. It also evidenced our commitment to youth engagement with **66.6%** of attendees under 25. Furthermore, an impressive **70.6%** of those attending were from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The festival was exceptionally well-received, with **45.1%** of participants rating the event **10/10** and **78.4%** providing an overall satisfaction rating of above **7/10**.

> "It was so sick. We don't have enough stuff like this in Gloucester

Find out more about Kings Jam

Showcases

We programme other events throughout the year at our Gloucester Hub and external venues to give young people a platform to perform or share their work. This year, these have included:

Youth Social Action - A collective of young people aged 13 to 18 of Black, Mixed and Asian heritage who have come together as part of a collaborative youth social action project to raise awareness on the inequalities stemming from hidden racism and underrepresentation in society, with a focus on cultural, music and education sectors. They delivered a celebration event in May 2024 to share their work.

The Drop End of Term Showcase – Young people, aged 10 to 16, shared their collaborative work from the open access sessions with friends and family in an end-of-term performance.

DJ Collective Christmas Party - The DJ Collective is an inclusive group of adults with learning difficulties and disabilities who meet regularly to share their love of music, practice and perform at events across Gloucestershire. Each year they hold a Christmas party for local music lovers, friends and families.

Upsurge Showcase – Local artists aged 18 to 25 from our talent development programme perform at our quarterly Upsurge showcase events, sharing new music and creative work.

During 2024/25, we worked in partnership with local organisations to give performance platform opportunities for young people at events including the Cheltenham Literature Festival, Cheltenham Jazz Festival, Stroud Black History Month, Gloucester Tall Ships Festival and at Kingsholm Stadium during Gloucester Rugby games.

Looking Ahead

As we transition from a local to a national charity, 2025/26 will be a pivotal year for The Music Works. We remain committed to sharing the learning from our evidence-based, place-based approach more widely and demonstrating how music can transform lives and meaningfully integrate into statutory services.

Our research programmes will continue to deepen understanding of music's role in mental and physical health pathways for children and young people. By documenting our methodology and the mechanisms that drive impact, we'll continue to build a robust evidence base that can inform practice across the sector. We look forward to sharing our learning and insights nationally.

Furthermore, our partnership with Warner Chappell Music will evolve significantly as we develop our joint publishing venture, Onatura. Combining our grassroots expertise with industry knowledge and networks, Onatura will continue to nurture home-grown talent and provide emerging local artists with professional pathways into sustainable music careers.

We'll also continue to deliver our annual Creative Futures industry day, bringing music industry professionals from across the country into Gloucestershire to inspire and educate the next generation of creative talent, whilst also expanding partnerships to deliver our artistic showcase.

Whilst we develop our national reach, we remain deeply committed to our local roots. The Music Works has always been a safe space and a creative community for young people - some seeking careers, but many simply needing somewhere to belong, express themselves and feel understood. Moving forward, we will continue to put young people's voices, needs and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do, ensuring our spaces remain welcoming, inclusive and supportive.

THE MUSIC WORKS

Thank you to all our funders

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The Music Works is a key partner in GSW Music Hub , the county's music education hub.

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