

DIFFERENT BEATS

Programme Learning Overview 2019-21



**YOUTH
MUSIC**



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

We are the leading provider of music services for musicians with mental health challenges, and we founded *Key Changes Records* - the first independent record label exclusively for artists with mental health lived experience.

We support over 3,000 artists each year to access collaboration opportunities with professional producers. We have delivered our innovative mentoring programmes and live music events in hospitals and the community since 1997.



Our award-winning programmes promote wellbeing by developing creative, technical and vocational skills, and building positive self-identity through progressive artistic development within our vibrant creative community.

In 2019, we began delivering a new structured programme for young musicians with mental health lived experience, with valued funding from Youth Music.

The programme was specifically designed to support young people from disadvantaged BAME backgrounds, who experience disproportionate levels of mental-ill health, and are more likely to have had poorer outcomes and experiences from mainstream mental health services.



'Different Beats' has now engaged over 150 young people aged 18-25 as core participants, through sessions delivered in professional music studios in Islington and Brixton. More than 350 others have participated in taster sessions in hospital, and regular drop-in music events at Key Changes' centre.

The programme, delivered over 18 months to January 2021, aimed to:

- Increase young people's song-writing & music production skills
- Improve young people's emotional wellbeing/reduce symptoms
- Build young people's skills for managing their mental health
- Increase young people's satisfaction with their social life & friendships
- Raise health sector awareness of the impact of our unique approach

We are delighted to share some of the outcomes and learning from our programme with you in this short summary report.

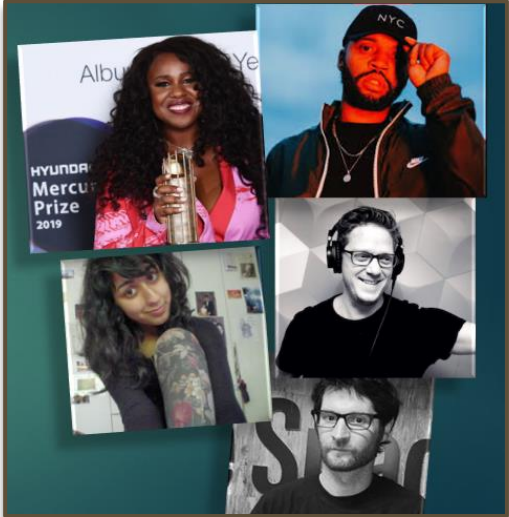
Increasing song-writing & production skills



“It’s like you’ve been painting a picture with five colours, and then suddenly you have ten...”

The programme has given young people weekly one-to-one collaboration opportunities with our professional music industry mentor team (above). Group coaching, mentoring and A&R feedback are also offered from an illustrious team of industry experts – including:

- JORDS (UK rapper & producer)
- NAO (BRIT winning singer-songwriter)
- Jules Dickens (Producer)
- Greg Dugan (Producer & Tutor (Point Blank))
- Ben Jones (A&R Manager & Tutor (BIMM))
- Ronan Morrissey (British Underground)
- Paul Bonham (MMF & BBC Introducing)



Throughout 2019, young people engaged in weekly Music Industry Awareness Sessions at Key Changes’ HQ in Islington, featuring ‘Ted’ style talks and Q&A sessions with a wide range of music industry professionals.

Weekly sessions offered young people opportunities to share their new music ideas with peers and guest speakers, enabling them to gain valuable A&R feedback.

Notable guests included Sarah Grill, tour manager for many high profile artists including Rihanna, and A&R expert Nathan Barley-Phillips (TuneCore, Nuclear Blast).



- 94% of young people reported increased satisfaction with their musical ability*
- 100% agreed that music making enabled them to be creative*

(*Youth Music Musical Development Scale data (taken after 4-6 sessions, 2019/20))



“The great thing about Key Changes is that the mentors all have different strengths, and I’m working with someone who really understands what I want to achieve.

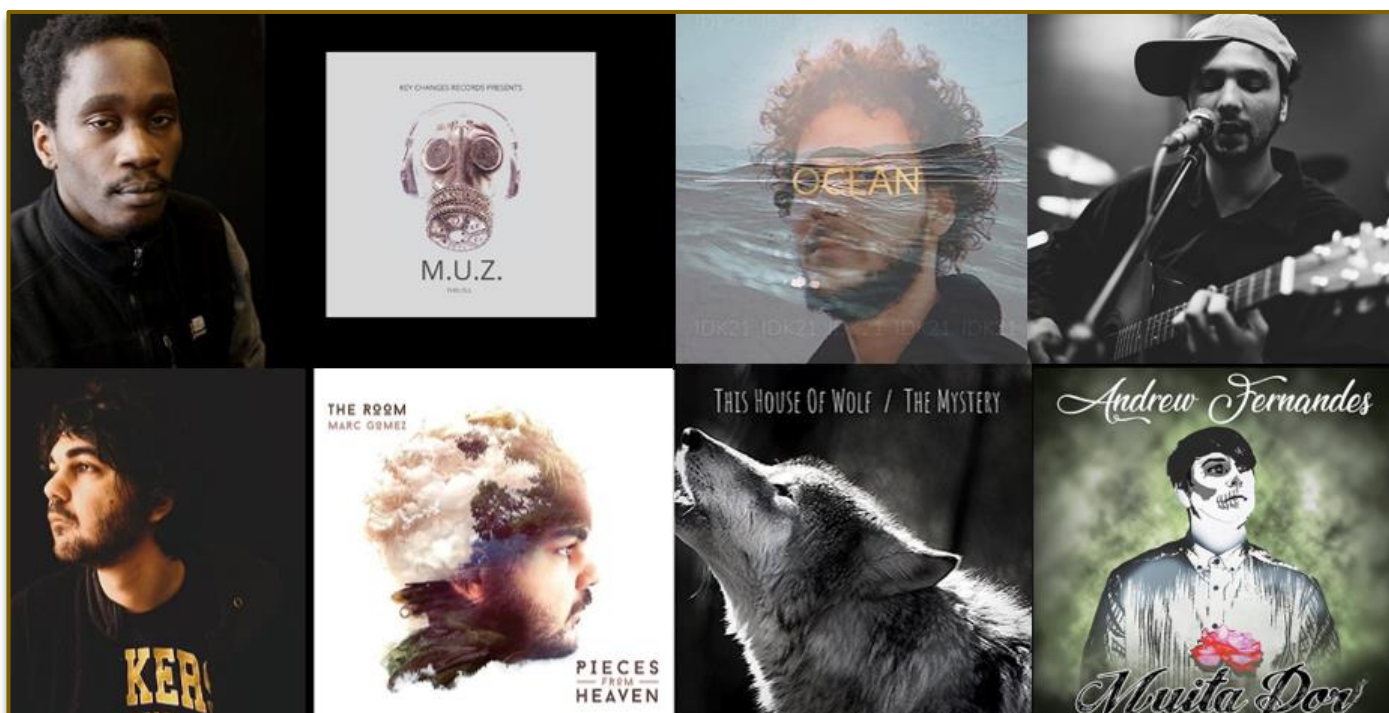
Even though I had a lot of previous knowledge before, I have learned so much from coming here. Once you start doing music in a place like this you realise how much you still have to learn. My vocal skills have improved so much.

If you ask me to compare myself now with how I was when I first came here, I’d say it’s like you’ve been painting a picture with five colours, and then suddenly you have ten.”

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Improving emotional wellbeing & self-care skills

Our unique approach promotes positive self-identity by offering young artists with mental health experience a new way to redefine who they are. We promote self-esteem, confidence and positive self-identity through regular live performance opportunities, and by enabling young artists to co-create professional music videos, biographies, portraiture and artwork which are shared and promoted through our vibrant digital media channels.



Our ongoing consultation interviews suggest many BAME young people have developed poor mental health problems not just from environmental challenges, but also because of negative self-identity stemming from prejudice against their backgrounds. Themes of being isolated, mistrusted, and in brutal/futile circumstances are common among the lyrics of our young black artists particularly.

Our programming directly counteracts this paradigm through creative empowerment, offering a community of interest, friendly support and opportunities for development - evidenced by our evaluation data (overleaf) and further supported by young people in their recent 'Lockdown Diaries' (pictured overleaf).

Our opportunities to collaborate with expert producers from many culturally-relevant genres - everything from Grime and Drill to Reggae, Soul and R'n'B - enable artists to express themselves fully and redefine their personal identity.

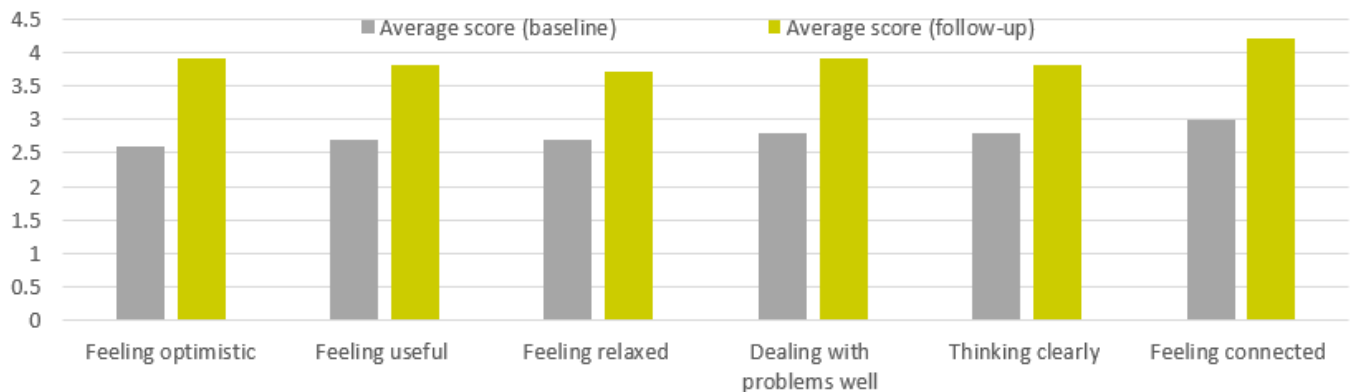


Rapper Dionysius was brought up in North London, with parental roots from Gambia, Barbados and England. Born 16 weeks prematurely, he describes himself as a 'fighter from birth', and says artists such as Nas, Bob Marley, Prodigy, Dead Prez, Chief Keef and Michael Jackson are his biggest influences. Rapping from a very young age helped Dionysius build his confidence through school.

Dionysius says that growing up in Camden Town (which he and his friends often describe as 'Cracktown') exposed him to many negative influences, taking a toll on his mental health. His joint passions, music and kickboxing, have helped him on his road to recovery.

Dionysius aspires to encourage young people to do better, have better relationships with families and to make people more aware of their mental health. His first Key Changes EP release - 'Lost Souls' - is an unflinching yet uplifting reflection on his experiences of youth violence, mental illness and homelessness.

Programme evaluations (using Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Data) showed that self-reported frequency of positive feelings (e.g., Optimism, Feeling Useful and Feeling Connected) shifted on average from 'rarely/sometimes' at baseline to 'sometimes/often', with the most significant increases in optimism (+50% in average score), and feeling connected to others (+40%). There were also average increases of 39% for ability to deal with problems, +37% for relaxation, and a 43% increase in overall wellbeing.



Case Study: Kory

“Five different mental health wards in three months – but Key Changes was always there for me.”

A musician since the age of ten, Kory blends rap and hip-hop with a range of rock influences. He first accessed Key Changes’ support through our InReach programme, which helped him move forward positively from some difficult and traumatic experiences of being detained in hospital.

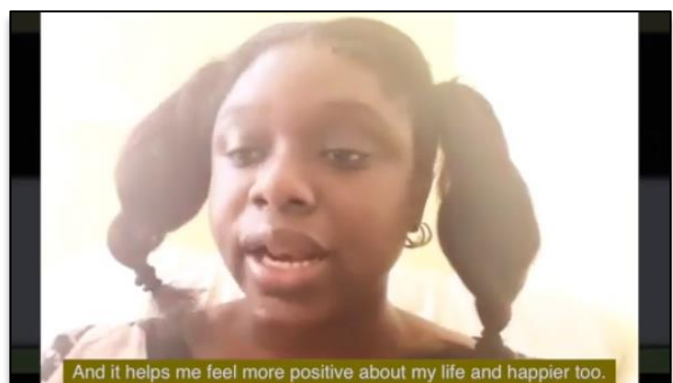
Building a strong relationship with his music mentor was hugely valuable in supporting Kory’s continuing recovery post-discharge. Now accessing our mentoring sessions in the community, he remains firmly focused on staying well to pursue his music.

Our ongoing consultations with young people highlight that a high proportion have had negative prior experiences of mental health recovery support. Chantelle (pictured making a ‘Lockdown Diary’, right) reported that prior to Key Changes, she had engaged in a wide range of recovery support activities that had not worked well for her.

A naturally outgoing person, she had expected to make progress with group therapy sessions, but instead found that hearing about the problems that other people were facing in their lives would upset her very deeply.

Similarly, young artist Rosie (pictured overleaf) who experiences mild mental health challenges, expressed concerns about the relatively limited support options for young people struggling with mental health offered by most GPs.

“What I love about Key Changes is that it’s not music therapy but is a therapeutic way of helping people deal with their problems. Some people can’t articulate their feelings or problems in speech or talking therapy or CBT. Without them, I honestly don’t know where I would be. I’d never stepped in a music studio before and I don’t think I would have, especially at eighteen. They really changed the course of my life.”



Improving young people's social life & friendship networks

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, the project offered weekly group learning and performance sessions, providing valuable social interaction for young people such as Steeze (pictured below, bottom left), who had become isolated as a result of spending extended time in hospital.

"I messed around with drugs as a teenager, and ended up getting sectioned at Highgate Mental Health Centre when I was seventeen, which was traumatic. I actually spent my eighteenth birthday in there. After being discharged, I couldn't stop thinking about all the things I'd done whilst I'd been in a manic state. I'd lost a lot of friends. I started sleeping most of the time, I got very overweight and basically didn't leave my house for a year. I felt like a caged hen.

I tried out a few different places, but Key Changes was the one that stood out for me - the feel and vibe of the place was just different. I was still recovering and vulnerable, but my mentor put me at ease. He was very encouraging and built up my confidence. Considering the state I'd been in, anxiety was my biggest challenge at first, and sometimes it was hard to get to the session. But someone was taking an interest in me and telling me to get on with my music, so I did.

I recently co-wrote a track for NHS London's Asthma awareness campaign. I wanted to do it because I have asthma myself. The challenge was to come up with something relatable for young people, and I wanted to emulate Kendrick Lamar's type of aspirational, observational music. I enjoyed working on a group project like that. I got back into eating properly, going to the gym, and socialising with some of the people from Key Changes.

Key Changes played a major part in my recovery. When I look back now, I don't even regret going into hospital. It's like a butterfly effect - if I hadn't come to Key Changes, I wouldn't be doing music now, and I believe that when you stay occupied, your mental health follows suit."



Weekly live sessions helped young people to form new creative collaborations, such as Rosie and Luay (pictured below left) who have now performed many times as a duo, at a wide range of venues.

Post Covid-19, our weekly online group workshop session (pictured below) has enabled young artists to maintain valuable social connections during this particularly challenging period for maintaining good mental health.



Scores for Feeling Connected increased on average by 40%

100% of participants would recommend us to a friend

Increasing health sector awareness of our impact

In addition to the evidence data outlined previously in this report, Key Changes has worked with an expert research team from University College London and Kings College London. 'Mics and Minds' is a scientific study examining the physiological impact of music activities for people in mental health recovery.

Throughout the delivery of our project, a total of 8 Key Changes artists (including young people accessing Different Beats) took part in 'Mics and Minds' Lab sessions, performing live whilst changes in their heart rate, cortisol levels and other biological markers were tracked and analysed. There is a delay in completing the full study due to the current restrictions on groups meeting indoors, however the interim evaluation findings are of interest to the research team and will be valuable in strengthening Key Changes' evidence base for future partnership working.

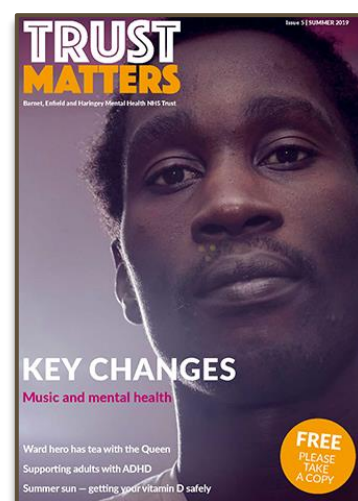
- Positive emotions increased (and negative emotions decreased) after recording tracks
- 75% experienced significantly reduced negative emotional states from taking part

Over the course of the programme, we independently delivered one live CPD event (for World Mental Health Day, 10th October 2019), and participated in two further partnership events, the Good Thinking Ldn Conference and the Power of Music in Health Conference. These events enabled our project team to deliver a presentation about our approach and impact to a valuable audience, including James Sanderson (Director of Personalised Care, NHS England), Dr Jane Bentley & Dr Catherine Jordan, (Atlantic Fellows, Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI) at Trinity College Dublin), Professor Raymond MacDonald, Chair of Music Psychology, University of Edinburgh, and many Health & Social Care practitioners.

Our Open Mic concert events were also attended by increasing Health & Social Care practitioners, as well as Tracy Parr, (Director of Transformation, Children and Young People and Mental Health, Healthy London Partnership), who has attended several of our Open Mic events, and commended our work several times via her own social media channels.

In September 2020 - we shared our Project Learning Report & Case Studies with a wide range of 'Arts for Wellbeing' organisations, and our work was subsequently featured in London Arts in Health Forum's magazine, and the Baring Foundation's upcoming report on the Arts for Wellbeing sector. As a result of this activity, Key Changes has also been included in the Top 10 Shortlist for Gulbenkian UK's Award for Civic Arts organisations - selected by a panel led by Baroness Bull, OBE.

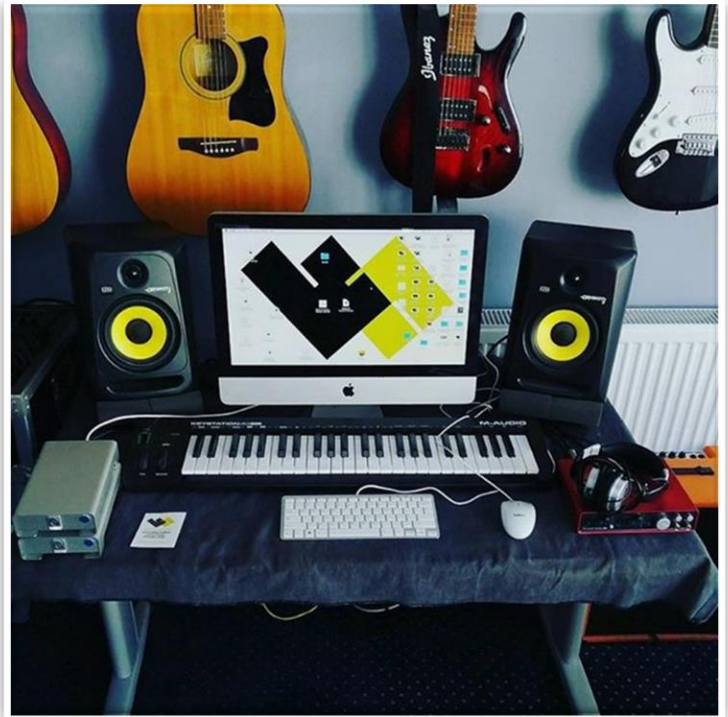
In October 2020, we delivered a digital awareness campaign on BAME mental health (coinciding with Black History Month) which was promoted by the BUPA Foundation and featured on Sky News Breakfast. In December 2020, Key Changes gave a presentation on our programme learning and recommendations at a webinar engaging approximately 30 NHS mental health professionals.



Other programme learning & recommendations

Over the course of the project, over 90% of those who started any of our community-based programmes went on to complete 12 or more sessions. Following ongoing consultation with participants, care coordinators and our staff team, we attribute this to several important factors:

- **Expert matching** – through an initial consultation we gain an in-depth understanding of each artists' individual creative tastes, influences and aspirations - helping us connect every artist with their ideal mentor
- **Empowerment** – artists drive the creative development process with mentor support to execute their work professionally. This promotes a powerful positive change in self-identity as each person begins to recognise and value themselves as an artist
- **Progression** – personal transformation is underpinned by our innovative music industry informed practice – offering not just opportunities for participation, but ongoing development through our in-house label and artist development programme
- **Community** – our support enhances artists' natural drive to share their music – however low their personal/social confidence levels may be. The enjoyment and wellbeing artists gain from recording, promotion and live performance is best evidenced by our weekly 'Open Mic' opportunities (currently delivered online) which are consistently oversubscribed.



Our other key recommendations for organisations seeking to support young people's mental health through music projects are:

1. Promote professionalism

Key Changes offers a professionalised, music industry informed service, and we require young artists to uphold the same level of professionalism, regardless of their mental health challenges. If artists are experiencing low mood, they are still required to attend their session on time - even if they feel unable to make music, they will access one-to-one support from their mentor and find different ways to use the time productively. This builds self-esteem, resilience, healthier mental health management skills and ensures creative momentum is not lost.

2. Support appropriate independent progression

Our data analysis shows that 12-16 sessions are optimum for most young people to build the skills and confidence to progress into other new creative and cultural opportunities. Our 12-week programme (with some flexibility) – offers a defined time for artists to achieve pre-agreed goals, such as recording an EP and promotional video. After this is completed, we encourage artists to try out a range other services, even if they intend to return in the future.

This promotes focus, reduces dependency on our service, and supports wider inclusion. Our monthly 'drop-in' sessions (currently online) enable people to stay connected with peers and mentors. In 2020/21 we are further developing this by offering weekly progression support sessions from London's prestigious Barbican Centre (subject to ongoing restrictions). Sessions will help young artists find continuing opportunities for creative/cultural participation, and volunteering/work experience.