



Developing the next generation of representative, inclusive practitioners.

[Bristol Beacon](#) is a [music education hub lead](#), Arts Council [National Portfolio Organisation](#), and a live music venue in Bristol. We want to help everyone grow musically, personally, and socially through various activities in community and educational settings, as well as at our venue. In 2018, we established the National Centre for Inclusive Excellence to promote inclusive practice in music education, addressing the underrepresentation of disabled and global majority individuals in our workforce and among children and young people (CYP) engaging in our programs.

To develop and diversify our workforce, and support CYP with additional needs we introduced the [Inclusive Practitioner](#) training course. Structured around Trinity College London's [Certificate for Music Educators](#) the course targeted existing music educators, and musicians identifying as disabled or of the global majority. It combined face-to-face sessions,

mentoring, creative weekends, and peer visits to broaden perspectives. Participants reflected on their learnings through coursework, portfolios, and conversations, moderated by experienced learning assessors.

The course attracted music hub teachers and independent community practitioners from across the southwest and beyond, creating a diverse and widespread community of practice. Graduates have been deliberately engaged in developing our activities; using their personal experience, perspective, and insight to help make what we do relevant to the widest range of CYP, particularly those who are traditionally underrepresented in the music industries.

Below are profiles of two graduates and a link to a film that shows how they, as role models who reflect the identities and experiences of the CYP they work with, are helping us to ensure we can fulfil our ambitions to make inclusion and excellence inextricably intertwined.

Film: [Creating an inclusive music industry](#)

Reflections and learning:

Key learning from developing and delivering the Inclusive Practitioner course.

- **Collective Wisdom:** Prioritise the collective experiences of a group of participants over the individual expertise of the facilitator. Facilitating reflective dialogue and provoking discussions among participants proved far more effective and interesting than one-way information transmission from an 'expert.'
- **Invest in Gaps:** Identify gaps in collective knowledge and actively seek out people with that missing expertise. Offering bursaries to individuals with lived experiences we lacked enriched the cohort and helped shape our programs to better support a more diverse range of CYP.
- **Empower Graduates:** Involving past participants as learning mentors for subsequent cohorts freed up the admin and management team, built graduates' confidence in their new skills, and gave new learners a better experience. By the third year, former participants led all training sessions.
- **Leverage Existing Resources:** Take advantage of available resources, models, and initiatives focusing on inclusion. Seek out best practices and ask for permission to use their resources in return for crediting them and promoting their work.
- **Pay-It-Forward Model:** Implement a pay-it-forward approach by charging statutory bodies (i.e. Hubs, NPOs, Community Music Organisations) and using that income to subsidise places for target participants. Organisations benefit by having highly skilled people who can share what they've learned with their whole workforce, and participation at your CPD sessions becomes more diverse, which enriches the experience of all learners and connects you with people who can help you develop and deliver your music activities in a way that makes them more accessible and attractive to a more diverse range of CYP.
- **Flexible Formats:** We spent time reaching out to a range of partners to try to improve the accessibility of the learning materials. We also encouraged learners to submit video and audio coursework, to democratise the structure of the course. This took time and effort, but the result was a format which helped those with less academic experience to articulate their learning more authentically.

Profile #1 – Siobhan Clough



Siobhan Clough is a twenty-six-year-old Violinist from South Wales. She is one of the next generation of inclusive music practitioners and performers, playing with Paraorchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) and Royal Northern Sinfonia (RNS) and leading inclusive ensembles for children and young people.

As a musician with hearing impairment, Siobhan faced barriers in her musical journey. Passionate about transforming education and orchestral music, she strives to help disabled musicians to realise their potential. She joined Bristol Beacon's talent development project (the National FLOW Collective) in 2018 where she received industry mentoring, attended masterclasses, and created original music.

"Being part of FLOW was the first opportunity to explore different forms of art and meet disabled artists and it inspired me to want to be more than just an orchestral violinist. I remember this moment as a real turning point for me and, as a result, I began seeking more educational opportunities around music for children with disabilities in an inclusive way with a different approach."

Following the end of the programme, Siobhan signed up to Bristol Beacon's ['Inclusive Practitioner'](#) course:

"I spent a lot of time researching different approaches to engage with young disabled musicians. The support I got to reflect and develop in this area really helped me grow in confidence as a facilitator and go on to share my learnings with organisations across the country. It was a wonderful thing to be a part of."

Within a year of completing the course, Siobhan became the Music Leader for Bristol Centre of the [National Open Youth Orchestra](#), the world's first national disabled-led youth orchestra. In March 2023, she became Assistant Musical Director of [Paraorchestra](#).

Profile #2 – Javeon McCarthy



Javeon McCarthy, a vocalist signed to 'Shogun Audio', focuses on community work, guiding young people as a music and wellbeing practitioner. Since completing Music College in 2007, he served as a peer mentor for Bristol Beacon's 'Chorus' singing project. In this role, he supported seasoned vocal practitioners in leading group singing workshops for teenage musicians in central Bristol.

"The singing project at Bristol Beacon was the first time I got to see what facilitating others to make music was like, just not as a participant. Although I was still only eighteen, I remember thinking that this was a cool way to use your music skills."

Over the next decade, Javeon flourished as a vocal artist, securing deals with Island Records, Sony, and Virgin. In 2018, Javeon became a Music Artist Mentor, aiding emerging artists through Bristol Beacon's Home-Grown Heat initiative. This program aimed to provide young, underground artists with opportunities for performance and holistic development in areas like finance, marketing, contracting, and event management.

The following year, Javeon joined Bristol Beacon's ['Inclusive Practitioner'](#) course.

"The CME gave me time and space to think about what I do in my practice, and explore other ways to work, particularly with children who experience barriers in their learning. Bristol Beacon gave me a mentor, who helped me to put theory into practice and reflect on the importance of my own skills and what I bring to the table. Completing the course gave me confidence in my ability to work effectively with anyone, based on their identify, interests and experience."

Upon course completion, Javeon led in the creative development of ['Bristol Youth Studios'](#) at Bristol Beacon. This program serves as a precursor to the Beacon's ['Support for Creatives'](#) programme, offering local young musicians a platform to explore music creation, learn music production software and DJ skills, and enhance vocal abilities. Javeon curated the course, assembled a team of local artists, and oversees weekly sessions.