

Approved by Tony Sisson

Aiming High for Young People case study – Bassetlaw Studio Project (Notts)

Music Project Strikes a Chord

A project that encourages young people to explore their feelings through music and song writing has helped to transform at least one young life.

The Bassetlaw Studio Project ran for five weeks during the 2007 summer holidays. Young people from Bassetlaw could go along to the Worksop Circle Arts Centre in Nottinghamshire to learn how to play musical instruments and practice song writing. It was part of the Positive Activities for Young People programme, run by the Connexions Nottinghamshire. The idea is to give young people constructive things to do during their summer holidays and help them to improve their confidence and abilities. The summer school had run the previous year and young people who took part in 2006 returned to act as volunteers and mentors for the 2007 students.

More than 60 young people took part in the Studio Project, which culminated in an end-of-season show called Teenage Kicks in front of a live audience of 200 people. The young people not only performed, but they also designed and made the stage backdrop

Many participants felt the project had improved their confidence and self-esteem. However, for one young woman in particular, attending the Bassetlaw Studio Project proved to be a turning point in her life.

Kate* was a frequent cannabis smoker who was not living at home and had lost contact with her mother. Her attendance at school was patchy and she had been affected by the death of a close family member. She was encouraged by a key worker to go along to the summer school to express her feelings through music. Kate met her key worker on a weekly basis to discuss any issues that arose.

It soon became obvious that Kate was a good singer and she was invited to perform in the end-of-season show. The key worker managed to arrange for Kate's mother and brothers to come along to the performance and this helped to open channels of communication once more.

Kate's mother began attending appointments with her daughter to discuss post-16 options. Kate became a volunteer at the Worksop Circle Arts Centre, which is home to the Bassetlaw Studio Project, and her work with music and song writing gradually revealed that she had an eating disorder.

Kate was offered counselling to help her deal with her condition and she began to develop clearer ideas regarding her future. She joined the E2E (Education to Employment) programme which provides alternative education packages.

A few months on from her involvement with the Bassetlaw Studio Project, Kate was clear of drugs and had rebuilt relations with her family. She was undertaking a work placement as part of her course and following an eating disorder counselling programme that looked at diet and body image.

Kate regards taking part in the Positive Activities for Young People programme as the catalyst that helped her to regain control of her life. She says: "I had reached a real low before I went to the Circle. When I was there they helped me to see the things that were happening in my life and how to get through them. I want to thank everyone at the Circle and my key worker for their help and care; and for giving me back my life and a future."

-ends-

* The young woman's name has been changed to protect her identity