

Social Impact of the Paragon Programmes

Executive Summary for Paragon Music



Social Research



Service Design & Innovation



Strategy & Collaboration



Evaluation Support



Social Impact Measurement

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1. Paragon Music

Paragon Music is an inclusive music company inspiring people to create and perform their own music. Paragon believes that music and the arts have the power to transform lives and through the two most important principles within music - equality and inclusion - Paragon aims to inspire and empower people.

Paragon, supported by Jobs & Business Glasgow (J&BG) commissioned Social Value Lab to undertake a social impact assessment of its programmes:

- **Play On** - a music tuition programme aimed at young people with additional support needs.
- **Make Music Move (M3)** - an inclusive dance and music programme, in partnership with Y-Dance, aimed at teenagers with and without additional support needs.
- **Horizons** - a mentoring programme that enables adults with additional support needs to progress their musical aspirations.

2. Impact of Play-On

A number of outcomes emerge from the Play-On programme:

Learning to play an instrument

Students practice at home, many daily and for long periods, so naturally their

ability to play an instrument has improved dramatically.

Building confidence

All students reported an increase in confidence from the Play-On sessions, related to performing or from being better able to cope with daily life.

Learning to focus

Many Play-On students have problems with focussing on tasks. Playing music in a structured environment and practicing at home helps the students to improve their ability to concentrate.

Happier and healthier

Attending Play-On and the things they learned there has a positive impact on student's mental health, helping to make them feel calm when they are upset, sad or angry.



Making friends

Students have made new friends through Play-On.

A brighter future

Paragon challenges assumptions and preconceptions that the students and

their parents may have. Succeeding and developing at Play-On makes students and parents raise the barrier for themselves.

Better family life

Parents reported their son/daughter being calmer, more confident, more communicative and happier, which has had a positive influence on their happiness and that of their family.

Raised ambitions

Parents were encouraged by the abilities of their son/daughter and were sometimes surprised by their progress and achievements, making them start parents thinking about what else their son/daughter could achieve.

Focus on ability as a musician

One of the key success factors of Play-On is that the project focuses on the ability of the students as a musician or composer, rather than on the limitations of their disability. This positive way of thinking about themselves and their abilities will have a positive influence on the rest of their lives.

Conclusion from the Observer

"It is important in viewing this project not to underestimate the nature of the intervention being undertaken. Observed repeatedly throughout the session were expertly timed opportunistic interventions to catch the moment for participants where cognitive skill, creative skills, communication skills, self-presentation skills could be taken a step forward through tutors manipulating the experience they were creating along with the participant."

3: Impact of M3

Make Music Move or M3 provides dance sessions for a combined group of up to 10 wheelchair dancers (sitting dancers) and up to 8 ambulant dancers.

Become better dancers

The M3 sessions has helped the students become better dancers. In particular practicing with ambulant dancers has improved their skills.

Increasing confidence

Performing in front of an audience is scary for most people, and can be even scarier for someone in a wheelchair. M3 students have been performing in front of large audiences, which has increased the confidence of the students.

Improved health

Dancing is a physical activity and provides excellent exercise for the students. This has had an impact on the student's physical and mental health.



Equality and inclusion

Throughout the sessions sitting and ambulant dancers were treated equal, the focus being solely on dancing and the performance of the exercises.

A brighter future

Students have got a better understanding of their future careers and became more optimistic that their ambitions could be realised.

Changing perceptions

The students feel that through their M3 achievements they have changed the way people view them. They have successfully challenged the perception that wheelchair users cannot be involved in high quality dance productions.

New skills for ambulant dancers

The M3 programme is the only opportunity in Scotland for ambulant dancers to work with sitting dancers in a professional environment.

The Y-Dance dancers that participate in the M3 programme reported a number of new skills and techniques. The Y-Dance participants also became more flexible in their approach.

A changed view on disability

The ambulant dancers have changed their perception of disability somewhat. Now they do not really see the sitting dancers as disabled or different but the same as their able bodied colleagues.

Conclusion from the Observer

"This last point may sound grandiose but there may be a truth in there that would further validate, and perhaps help explain and track the mechanism that Paragon has developed that has undoubtedly transformed the life opportunities of their programme participants."

4: Impact of Horizons

The Horizons programme provides one-to-one mentoring support to adults with additional support needs. The mentors, experienced Paragon musicians, help the mentees to develop their music, perform in public, and build a career in the music industry.

Developing music skills

As Horizons is primarily aimed at music practitioners, developing their musical skills is a natural result of the mentoring programme.

The power of performance

Most mentees are supported in public performances. The possibility to perform is important for any musician, it is even more so for those with additional support needs, because the opportunities to perform in a professional environment are limited to non-existent without support. This gave the mentees a feeling of achievement and pride.

Building a career

Through the Horizons programme the mentees will be given the opportunity to try music as a career.



Growing confidence

All mentees reported a strong increase in confidence from the mentoring programme. Adults with additional support needs are marginalised in society and their musical efforts are not taken seriously. Performances, in a professional setting, helped mentees feel valued and taken seriously as musicians.

Improved mental health

Mentees that struggle with mental health issues found that the support provided by Horizons improved their mental health.

Making friends

The Horizons support helped the mentees make new friends.

Towards a brighter future

Being part of Horizons has influenced how mentees see the future in a positive way.

5. Impact on staff and volunteers

There are a number of powerful impacts on Paragon's staff and volunteers.

Learning new skills

All Paragon staff and volunteers are musicians themselves, and have an education related to music. They reported an increased knowledge, understanding and skills in working with disability groups and improved listening skills.



Becoming a better tutor

Working with Paragon has made them better tutors. It made them more confident and gave them valuable work experience, especially in working with groups.

A changing perception on disability

By their nature all volunteers had a very open, non-discriminatory and equal attitude towards people with additional needs, but this was mostly a theoretical concept. Working with Paragon has put a sort of practical reality to this belief.

6. Conclusion

Paragon succeeds in what it has set out to do. It delivers equal and inclusive music and dance programmes for people with additional support needs. This leads to a range of short term outcomes for the students, mentees, their family, non-disabled co-dancers, and staff and volunteers.

For students and mentees the short-term outcomes include new skills, increased confidence, better (mental) health, more social contacts, an increased ability to focus (for Play-On students), raised ambitions and a changed view on their disability.

In the longer term this leads to improved career prospects, a more positive future and increased independence.

The Play-On parent/carers share the raised ambitions of their child and a better family life. The parents share as the longer-term impact the more positive outlook on the future with their children.

For the other non-disabled stakeholders, the Y-Dance participants and the staff/volunteers improved skills, and teaching skills for the staff/volunteers and a changed view on disability emerge as outcomes. The longer-term impact for them is an increased career perspective.

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