



MUSIC
OF
LIFE

Impact Report 2023-2024



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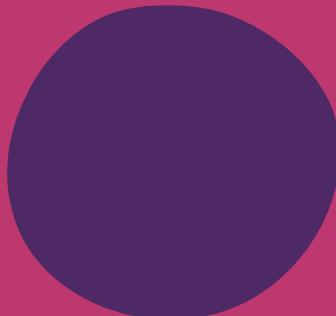
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Welcome from our CEO



The 2023-2024 academic year is a joy to reflect upon. As we entered our 20th Anniversary year, we introduced a record number of new beneficiaries to our regular music provision while continuing to support our existing students. The blend of provisions for brand-new groups and those established for over a decade highlighted the exceptional quality of work our teams deliver weekly, creating incredible musical experiences that are fully inclusive and allow absolutely everyone to engage and participate in ways that suit them best.

With our choirs, we celebrated our anniversary in a very special new format, bringing together students from special schools and their peers from local mainstream schools to perform together. These collaborations inspired the participants and their families, creating memorable moments and laying the foundation for future collaborations and true inclusion.

Our programme for Deaf children continued to positively impact our students' academic and personal progress, while also engaging their families and the wider Deaf community through sharing events and performances. An important milestone for the programme was the completion of the first year of the Teacher Training course at the Royal College of Music, where participants were introduced to various aspects of working with Deaf and Disabled children and visited our schools to gain practical experience.

Our weekly individual music lessons with specialist teachers this year included in new areas, with an increasing number of students in schools we have

previously served. Some of our beneficiaries reached impressive musical milestones, such as top ABRSM grades and festival awards, while others experienced the transformational benefits of learning an instrument or participating in group playing and singing for the first time. Many were able to overcome personal and social barriers through these experiences.

We have focused on developing and supporting the teams of musicians who contribute to our projects every week, offering new training opportunities and work experiences for young musicians with and without disabilities. We are also proud to have integrated an increasing number of practitioners with special needs into our regular provisions. We have big plans for our emerging Young Leaders programme, which has strong support from schools and families, and is aimed at empowering more young musicians with disabilities to become successful music leaders.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all our musicians, trustees, supporters and partner organisations for making this year so unique and unforgettable. Most importantly, the biggest thanks and congratulations go to our amazing young people and their families, who have shared and inspired us with the most joyful musical experiences over these 20 years. Here's to many more to come!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maria Teterina'.

Maria Teterina, Chief Executive



Music of Life Charity Overview

MUSIC
OF
LIFE

Music of Life is a specialist charity that supports development and well-being of children and young people with disabilities and special needs through provision of regular high-quality music-making opportunities. The unique feature of our work is continuity. We support our young people through weekly term-time engagement that spans many years. Positive impact can be traced at many levels – cognitively, physically, emotionally, academically, and socially. Furthermore, our activities positively affect wider groups – families, schools, local communities, and educational bodies.

In our work we address inequality, injustice, financial and social barriers and lack of provision, skills and opportunities within the educational sector. All of these prevent children and young people with multiple and complex disabilities and special needs from accessing music making that is vital and, in many cases, transformational to their development. Our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and many are extremely vulnerable and experience isolation. Our projects are based in London, the Midlands and North of England. We work with over 1200 direct beneficiaries each year on weekly basis during term time. On average, each individual is involved over four to six years, some for much longer.



Our Vision

Our vision is for all disabled children and young people to be able to access, and benefit from, music-making opportunities.

Our Mission

Our mission is to build and strengthen the life skills, well-being and confidence of disabled children and young people through music-making

Our Programmes

Choirs at Special Schools
Music for Deaf Children
Individual Music Lessons

Teacher Training & Work Experience
Community Integration

41,160

INDIVIDUAL MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES
PROVIDED BY MUSIC OF LIFE IN
THE 2023-2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

The Need	How we address the need
Most of our parents face financial hardship – 82% of our beneficiaries are on pupil premium – and do not know where to look for qualified musical help.	All our services are 100% free to our beneficiaries.
Special schools lack the skills to run musical activities and/or are unable to pay for them.	We develop and deliver expertly tailored music programmes in special needs schools and units and work with schools and communities that wouldn't have access to music without our support.
Local music services lack funding and capacity to support music access for young people with special needs.	We collaborate with local music services on provision of individual music lessons using their existing pools of competent music teachers and provide regular funding exclusively for special needs students.
Professional musicians often lack the skills and confidence to work with special needs children.	We constantly grow our teams of music teachers and workshop leaders through our Teacher Training programme by introducing, mentoring, supporting and engaging musicians in our regular programmes.
Families lack the networks and capacity to access music-making activities.	Our projects run in special schools within school hours, which removes the challenge for families to facilitate their children's access.
Disabled children and young lack social networks and interaction with communities of interest.	Our participants gain experience of collaborative work with mainstream schools through joint projects; join mainstream youth music groups with support of our musicians; get exposure to their local communities and forge friendships based on their musical interests.

1,372

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES

10

SPECIAL SCHOOL
CHOIRS

5

SCHOOLS FOR
DEAF CHILDREN

NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES PER PROGRAMME

312

CHORAL SESSIONS
IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS

178

DAYS OF CLASSROOM
MUSIC PROVISION IN
SCHOOLS FOR DEAF

22

SPECIAL SCHOOLS WITH
INDIVIDUAL LESSONS
PROVISION

1292

STUDENTS ATTENDING
GROUP SESSIONS

126

STUDENTS RECEIVING
1:1 LESSONS

94

CONCERTS,
PERFORMANCES,
ASSEMBLIES AND
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
PROJECTS

28

TEACHER TRAINING AND
TEAM SUPERVISION
DAYS

2023-24 Key Facts and Figures

Our beneficiaries' primary conditions*

PMLD (Profound and Multiple Learning Disability)	66%
Deaf / Hard of Hearing	20%
Physical disability	8%
Blind / Visually Impaired	6%

*Many of our students have more than one condition, with 61% also on autistic spectrum 82% of our students are on Pupil Premium

Summary of music provision



82%

of our current students
are on Pupil Premium



Ethnicity

White British and White Other

Ethnic Minority Groups

Choirs in Special Schools Programme



Music of Life Choirs in Special Needs Schools programme started in 2014. We currently run 10 choirs in special needs schools in Warwickshire, Birmingham and Cambridge, three of these choirs celebrated their 10th anniversaries this year.



The schools we work in cater for learners with complex mental, physical, learning and emotional needs. They come from wide geographical areas and are mainly from very disadvantaged backgrounds, including adopted children, those from low-income households and families with multiple members with disabilities.

Choirs in Special Schools Programme

What our participating schools get?

weekly choir sessions during term-time, led by an expert group of musicians - two professional vocal coaches and a pianist

teacher training and staff support sessions

performances (in-school assemblies and external concerts, including joint performances with other Music of Life choirs and collaborations with local mainstream schools)



Our weekly sessions are fully inclusive, being open to every student irrespective of the level of their access needs. The sessions bring together the whole school for an hour of joy and fun and are hugely anticipated. Staff comment frequently on how the school atmosphere is better on their Music of Life days, describing the very special "buzz" we bring with us! Working consistently with our partner schools, we develop close relationships with staff who attend the sessions with their students, and in some cases learn to use our approaches in their own classes.

Learners have made remarkable progress over time with their attention and listening skills. Participation in inclusion with the other school choir has developed some learners teamwork, communication, and cooperation, helping them to develop better social interactions and build friendships.

Choirs in Special Schools Programme

Choirs highlights of the 2024

Christmas Performances

Each of our choirs had a Christmas performance or a singing assembly at school attended by the parents in November-December 2023. We were very moved by the feedback we received from the families and staff – people were telling us how seeing their children sing made them proud and how much they learned about their young people's potential and opportunities opening to them, mostly surprised at how composed our choirs are during the performances.

Celebratory Concerts

June 2024 was full of amazing concerts and beautiful moments. Six of our schools presented concerts for the parents and friends as we celebrated Music of Life's 20th anniversary and also 10 years' anniversaries with some of our choirs. This year for the first time our participants were performing with mainstream students joint concerts that brought together students from local schools. Each concert was a full house (in some cases more than full!) and the atmosphere was incredible. All schools said they would want the collaboration to continue next year with further integration of the choirs on regular basis.

One of the most significant developments that we have observed throughout the concerts was the level of engagement and confidence in young people who have been taking part in Music of Life sessions for many years and became enthusiastic and very capable young leaders. They are readily volunteering to lead the songs standing in front of the choir and not being shy of the audience and the level of their musical confidence is very impressive. We are putting together a plan with the Choirs team for next year to run focus groups for young people who are interested in leading. We want to try and test the model in schools with older participants who are in Years 10-13, but also invite this year's leavers to join in to continue their musical journey with Music of Life.

“Several students who were initially non-verbal joined in with the choir and then started singing!”

“83% of learners who attend choir had met or exceeded their end of year target in Communication skills. The skills developed through the choir have definitely contributed to their overall achievement.”

Choirs in Special Schools Programme

Choirs highlights of the 2024 (Continued)

Focus and safe behaviour are noticeably improved during Music of Life sessions and this is transferred to other areas of school.

The team have been extremely supportive and adaptable to changes through this academic year.

This opportunity for our school empowers the creativity of our students. It builds confidence through challenge and being brave. Everyone involved is supported and although not all stand out and shine, no one is left behind.

Staff love to accompany our learners to Music of Life sessions. They willingly volunteered to support an evening concert. Parental support for the concert was huge!



Choirs in Special Schools Programme

Work experience for young people with disabilities (emerging Young Leaders model)

Because many of our beneficiaries stay with us for many years, they very literally grow with Music of Life and get to a point when they have to leave their schools, but don't want to leave music behind. Since 2022, we introduced work opportunities for young musicians with disabilities in our choral programmes and started developing collaborations with other organisations with a view to creating more opportunities for professional growth and pathways to work for our older beneficiaries as next step in their music journey.

We already have some successful examples of our young people joining our teams for regular delivery of our projects. Barney is a young percussionist with special needs who had been attending Music of Life sessions at his school for many years and gradually became part of the band. With support from his family and the Music of Life team, Barney is currently on a work experience placement with Music of Life, performing with all our Midlands-based choirs at their concerts.

Our choirs are increasingly popular at regional and national conferences for Music & SEND Sector. Participation of our choirs in such events increases the visibility of our work, awareness of the importance and amazing benefits of regular music-making for young people with special needs and their communities. It inspires more schools and Multi Academy Trusts to look into establishing choirs in their own settings and also brings more invitations for our choirs to perform.



Choirs in Special Schools Programme

Teacher training programme

Training of new teachers that started as a pilot project in 2020, has been ongoing and integral to our team development. The continuous nature of our work in all schools enables us to introduce new musicians through regular engagement in live sessions with children.

This experience-based method allows trainees to progress from shadowing to leading within a space of several months and with support of experienced members of the team throughout.

It is underpinned by online sessions focusing on methodology, specific aspects of working with various levels of additional needs, repertoire choices, engagement techniques and safeguarding. Peer support groups allow plenty of opportunity to share experiences and challenges. We have a bank of songs and singing games specifically written by members of our team for our choirs and available to all our trainees to use.



Music for Deaf Children Programme



Music for Deaf Children programme is a mix of classroom music provision (in small groups of 5-7 children) and 1:1 instrument teaching. The project started in 2017 at the Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children and has since grown into a programme that comprises delivery of music training in five schools for Deaf children in London and Hertfordshire.

The unique methodology was developed by Ruth Montgomery, a professional Deaf musician and music teacher who has been associated with Music of Life since her student years. We have been supporting Ruth's weekly visits to participating Deaf schools for the past eight years enabling her to try and test her approach and accumulate extensive and unique experience in working consistently with Deaf children.

Ruth is our Programme Lead and she supports and mentors a small team of practitioners, some of them are also Deaf musicians, some are hearing music practitioners who are fluent in British Sign Language and are specially trained by Ruth to deliver the work.

Music for Deaf Children Programme



All our children have become more confident and were able to perform what they had learnt in assemblies, including the Christmas show. One of our children, who is new to the country with no language, has found their skill on the drum kit. The impact it has had on their progress is palpable.



Our students have been performing confidently in assembly, proud of their own achievements, supportive of one another. They demonstrated improved attention and ability to follow instructions. Music of Life have enabled the children to focus on a music activity and develop confidence in communication.



Children were taught life skills alongside their instruments and musical skills. As a group they have become better at attending to each other and working together, waiting for their turn. All children have shown interest in music and want to practice independently.

The children are able to concentrate on short tasks and have developed motivation and resilience across the curriculum.



All children have shown an understanding of different notes and reading music. Ruth has done an amazing job teaching them musical skills through visuals. The children are excited to learn from her every week! It is extremely empowering for pupils to have a positive deaf role model leading the sessions and sharing a 'can do' attitude.



Pupils will no musical background and some from profoundly Deaf families have been able to develop ability at playing instrument and following music.



Royal College of Music project



In 2023-2024 academic year we launched a 5-year programme of training at the Royal College of Music aimed at young musicians who are interested in working with Deaf and Disabled children. Designed and led by Ruth Montgomery, the 1-year course is open to anybody in the College and attracts students across the departments and degree levels. It consists of 7 seminars, each one focussing on a specific topic (summary on the right), followed by school visits in which the students can observe Ruth at work in schools for Deaf children that participate in Music of Life programme.

The first year of the Music of Life pilot course “Music Education for Deaf Children” at the Royal College has been a great success. 9 students graduated from the course in April 2024. The feedback from the students has been “overwhelmingly positive”, according to the College. The schools visits were particularly welcomed. Each school was different, and RCM students commented on having real-world experience of the theory they had been taught. During schools visit the students observed lessons, took part in the breakaway sessions and played their instrument in a little concert for the children. Suggestions for improvements in course content included teaching basic BSL/communication skills.

Course Summary

Deaf Awareness and Communication Styles	1.5hrs
Understanding Deaf Schools and SEN	1.5hrs
Classroom settings	1.5hrs
Creating accessible teaching materials	1.5hrs
Early Years education	1.5hrs
Primary music education	1.5hrs
Instruments, ensembles and music exams	1.5hrs
Schools observation	8 hrs



Individual Lessons Programme

Our Individual Lessons Programme are weekly specialist music lessons that can last, depending on students' level, needs and abilities, from 20 mins to 1.5 hours and are delivered on a vast variety of instruments and also include composition, music theory and music technology. We also support students who are ready to join a band, youth ensemble or choir, with their Music of Life teacher on their side, to attend these groups for several weeks to help both the students and the group to adjust.

Success stories in our Individual lessons can look very different. From deafblind children learning the concepts of rhythm and patterns through vibrations of the instrument through to young people with profound and multiple disabilities achieving performance-level degrees in music, they are always stories of dedication, perseverance and long-term commitment. Our teachers focus on what a young person can do, not what they cannot do because of their condition. Our bespoke evaluation tools help us capture the changes that happen at many levels – musically, personally, medically and socially.

Individual Lessons Programme

Our delivery partners:

Birmingham Services for Education

Liverpool Resonate Hub – Young Sounds

Wandsworth Music Service

St Stephen's School, Shepherd's Bush

Individual music teachers
lessons by special arrangement



“Michael has just sat his GCSEs (a huge achievement) and will now move on to A Levels. Over the past few years I have noticed a profound change in his ability to communicate. We are all seeing sides of Michael that were hidden a few years ago, including a great sense of irony and humour. His management of his own time is now much improved and he is able to answer questions and engage in dialogue in great detail, which was a barrier before. I have no doubt that the regular lessons we have had together over the years have been a great contributing factor to this.

Individual Lessons Programme

Case Studies



Korede (originally from Africa) started James Wolfe School in January, facing emotional challenges and communication barriers. He found solace in the visual aspects of piano learning, which didn't rely heavily on verbal instruction. It's heartening to see his progress; he's grasped the concepts of high and low pitches, finger numbering, and can play several tunes. His confidence has blossomed, and we've even started using British Sign Language (BSL) to discuss music.



Mohammed, who is completely blind and deaf, initially struggled to navigate the drum kit. Now, he confidently approaches it with his cane, sits down, and prepares with his drumsticks. This routine sets the stage for his lesson. We employ a Bluetooth speaker placed on his lap to help him feel the music, and he plays drum beats in sync with it. Even when the music ceases, he continues the rhythmic beats until it resumes. He has mastered several songs and can modify the tempo as needed.



Lessons with Miffy are a joy - she is very focused and is keen to make the most of the limited time. She gets very excited when she is able to tackle something difficult, and sometimes she enjoys playing something so much that it is difficult to stop her!



Hollie was diagnosed with a language and cognitive development disorder. Upon discovering this, I spoke with her teacher to discuss her learning abilities in music, which are on par with any child of her age with typical hearing and learning abilities. They were surprised, given her struggles with schoolwork and having normal conversations in sign language. This year, she has been reading music, performing dotted rhythms, and singing and playing in tune. We've worked on memorising pieces; initially, she was hesitant to try but soon realised it was achievable. Music has been aiding her cognitive development in other areas.



This year has brought significant changes for Hamarit, presenting a steep learning curve for me too as her teacher. By the end of summer 2023, she was nearing grade 1 in flute performance and showing promising progress. In October 2023, she announced her upcoming cochlear implant surgery. From November to January, she underwent the operation and experienced a period of silence (no hearing aids/implants) lasting 3-4 weeks. We focused on rhythm exercises and writing notation during this time. After her device was activated in spring 2024, the flute sounded different to her. Despite giving it time, her interest in the flute waned. It was very disappointing, but we adapted to the changes. She then took up the piano, discovering a renewed interest in learning an instrument and reacquainting herself with sound.



Individual Lessons Programme

Impact Beyond Music

In terms of developing confidence and social and communication skills, I have seen an improvement within my student's sessions. Additionally, supported by his mum, he has joined the Young DaDa Ensemble - an after school music group featuring young people from across the city - and has done brilliantly, playing and mixing with a range of other young musicians.

Ajan was able to self-express his emotions by playing improvisations, which they particularly enjoyed. Ajan was no longer anxious during lesson. Although his focus concentration and motivation fluctuated from week to week, his confidence grew and he has been processing information well.

The singing lessons are so good for Mia's self esteem. She always receives praise from myself as well as staff and visiting teachers who hear her sing. In a world where Mia has many struggles it is so good to hear her laugh and have fun in her singing lesson.



Ali's foster Mum was amazed with her exam result. Here is a quote from her email "She worked hard for it so that is brilliant and worth all the effort. It's great for college applications too! We will celebrate tonight!"

I get a huge amount of feedback about Ryan. He struggles with communication and music has been a lifeline for him.

Daniel walks with more confidence, is more open to working with others and has grown more verbal - he now says hello to people and is keen to show them what he has been learning. He enjoys showing off to his peers especially!



Organisational Summary

A copy of the full 2023 Report and Accounts can be obtained from www.musicoflife.org.uk, the Charity Commission or Companies House. Registered Charity number 1102827; Company number 4963498



Patrons

Evelyn Glennie CH, DBE

Denise Leigh

John Lubbock OBE

Trustees

Ray Longbottom (Chair)

Catherine Clarke (Vice Chair)

Louise Shepherd-Evans

Sophie Bruggemann

Emma Dearnaley

Valentina Di Venuta

Stefano Filippi

Lily Harriss

Tristen Hennigs

Belinda Kembery

Alex McHardy

Team

Maria Teterina, *Chief Executive*

Katie Baxter, *Head of Development and Communications*

Suzzie Vango, *Head of Choirs in Special Schools Programme*

Ruth Montgomery, *Music for Deaf Children Programme Leader*

Gina Baker, *Community Engagement and Events Manager*

Workshop leaders: Naomi Berry, Gina Baker, Zoe Challenor, Emma Cockbill, Lucy Hollins, Charlotte Galloway, Sofia Hunt, Olga Elbourn, Jessica Lawrence-Hares, Miriam Dubois, Rachel Edmonds, Robin Morton, Charlie Penn, Helena Raeburn

Shruti Soni, *Accountant*

Diana Cripps, *Financial Manager (volunteer role)*

>50 music teachers and support musicians

Our Delivery Partners

Birmingham Services for Education

Camden Music Services

Wandsworth Music Service

Resonate Music Hub Liverpool

Education Impact Academy Trust



Music of Life Foundation

statement of financial activities

for the year ended 31 December 2023

TOTAL INCOME

£239,644

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

£235,371



Use your smartphone camera to
scan the QR code for a full copy
of our 2023 Annual Accounts

Thank You

With no public or statutory funding, we rely entirely on donations from individuals, trusts and foundations to support our work. The generosity of our benefactors helps us to ensure the sustainability and further development of our long-term programmes during this challenging period in the funding of music education.

Trusts and Foundations – multi-year grants

The City Bridge Trust
The Karlsson Játiva Charitable Foundation
John Lyon's Charity
The Brian Murtagh Charitable Trust

Individual donors 2023-24

Yuri and Irina Bedny
Jack Brierley
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Anna McClarnon
Katie Metcalfe

Our Royal Parks Half Marathon Runners

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Noel Sweeney Foundation
Powell Family Foundation
Shanley Foundation
Shirley and Ian Watson Charitable Trust
The Grantham Yorke Trust



Support us

Our work thrives thanks to the generous support of people like you. If you'd like to learn more or get involved—whether through fundraising, volunteering, or other opportunities—please contact Katie Baxter at katie.baxter@mofl.co.uk or visit the link below for details.

www.musicoflife.org.uk/support-our-work



Please use QR code above to go to our Donate page

Contact us

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www.musicoflife.org.uk

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