

SECOND CHANCERS



Transcript: Jordan's story

"Funk, soul, classic rock. Metal. Blues. Prince. [laughs]

My name's Jordan Butler, I first started setting up Heavy Sound in 2012. So, you do the math [laughs].

I suppose myself and my career are intertwined these days, my career is, how do you define it? It's music, it's youth work, it's community work and for my early self, music was a really powerful tool for escapism that I used to just hide from the things that were negatively impacting on me as a kid. The older I got, the more I made emotional connection to music, the more trauma I experienced, but the less opportunity I had to access positive activities, particularly with music.

So, at about thirteen I became homeless and about the same time discovered hip-hop and rap and that had a massive impact on me. It gave me kinda a new way of expressing myself with-and-through music, particularly lyrics. I suppose there's a wee bit of me in my career and a wee bit of my career in me [laughs].

So the types of young people we work with are... anyone. The whole idea of building relationships or trying to help people is that how do you judge somebody needs help. All comes from trauma and the need to be safe from trauma. The way we usually identify groups to work with are through a children and family service; through secure units; youth criminal justice; high schools; various different organisations and services. And it's one of those things where we want to be inclusive but not at the point of being exclusive. So we don't just work with young people from disadvantaged areas or areas of multiple deprivation or this, that or the next thing. It's very much where there's a need we'll make sure we're in the places and working with the services where if anybody thinks they would benefit, we will be there or we will try to be there to work with people from all walks of life, as human beings.

I'm working in one of the secure units this lass, again extreme trauma, was always on the run, getting involved in crime and a lot of drug issues and that. She came in on the first session and when she was leaving she turns around the practitioner and

says “thank you, I dinnae want to kill myself anymore”. Measure that, you can’t measure that, you know what I mean? And she engaged in the rest of the project, she stopped running away, she stopped self-harming, she started addressing her drug use and her mental health issues through writing. On her own terms, she decided she wanted to go back to anger management.

However the youngest that we were working with in that particular secure unit was 10 - he shouldn’t have been in there. He was at so much risk being in foster care or being outside that basically there was no where safe enough for him to be rather in a secure unit. And one of the hardest things when you’re dealing with just a child, just a baby, but because they were in a secure and had residential around the school but the bedroom doors were cell doors. Like, there were cell doors like you’d see in a police station. Kids, you know what I mean, children, 10 years old in there. So it was, every time I finished I’d have to go away, I still smoked at the time, I’d go away and I’d have to sit somewhere in the car. I’d sit in the car and have to have a couple of fags and I’d have to just digest it and kinda try and process cos you went in and you take it all, you take it all in on yourself. And it was really difficult but again just I loved ‘em all. It might not be that they end up in the justice system but if they top themselves, if they hang themselves, it all interlinks back... there’s got to be a safety net. In the past year, year and a half, we’ve worked with probably more than 350 young people and in total that number, less than 10 have dropped off our projects. They have all, more or less engaged through the entire projects and for a lot of them, beyond as well. We have four of them volunteering now. They’re achieving awards for volunteering, they remain in contact with us. I’m going to one of their bloody birthday parties with my family next month [laughs]. You know, it’s amazing.”

Interviewer: “How rewarding is this job, would you say?”

“It’s the best. You’ve unleashed expression in here, unleashed expression [laughs loudly].”