



**UK Music**  
**CEO Jo Dipple**  
explains how  
music can be used  
to help offenders  
across the UK

Overcrowding, breakouts, jail-cell selfies, staff protests, safety fears, drone-borne drug deliveries ... the chances are you will have read recently about some aspect or other of our penal system which screams about the need for a significant shake-up. And with the recent publication of a Government White Paper on prisons, plus anticipated reviews into youth justice and education in prisons, serious upheavals seem to be on the cards.

At a time of change, we should focus on the key role music can play in the rehabilitation of those in custody and we want Parliament, Government and the industry as a whole to understand and embrace the way music can have positive effects. To this end, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Music, which is chaired by Nigel Adams MP and steered by UK Music, is hosting a roundtable discussion in the House of Commons on December 6 to consider how music can further support young offenders, in particular, in turning their lives around.

Over the past decade the number of children in custody has dropped by 64% to its lowest level on record, according to interim findings of a review into the youth justice system commissioned last year by the Ministry of Justice. While this is great news, it has to be noted that reoffending rates among young offenders have actually risen. With this

in mind, it is vital that music-based projects are given priority because of the great things they can achieve.

For example, a 2014 report into Musical Pathways, a Big Lottery-funded project which assessed the impact of music on young offenders, concluded that music can engage hard-to-reach young people and help them cope. Most participants said their musical experiences helped them to communicate and express themselves.

Personal development is just one of the benefits. Youth Music, a charity supporting children and young people at risk of offending, has highlighted others. Analysis of its projects has noted progress in encouraging numeracy, literacy and team-working. But there is no better way of looking at these things than by hearing from those who have been helped.

Youth Music has highlighted to us Viv from Brighton. He committed minor offences, messed up his GCSEs and had sufficient difficulties in his teens for his local youth offending service to step in. He was encouraged to hook up with the AudioActive project in his area, rapping at their live shows and finding the sense of achievement lifted him from a negative spiral. He went on to study music production, gained a first class degree and has gone on to mentor others. Viv also has a vibrant career ahead of him.

A recent review of education in prison by Dame Sally Coates also recognised that prisoners who have had difficulties with traditional classroom subjects or struggle with self-esteem could often engage positively with the arts. Art, drama and music courses are not however a core part of the current OLASS (Offenders' Learning and Skills Service) framework. We strongly believe this is something which needs to change.

Many charities and organisations support the use of music to give purpose, value and meaning to the lives of young offenders, transforming not only their outlook and abilities but also enriching society as a whole. We all benefit when someone turns their life around and no longer offers a threat to their community. Our roundtable will shine a light on their work.

Among them is the Irene Taylor Trust, whose Making Tracks programme works with people on the fringes of the criminal justice system and through the use of workshops, performances and music sessions it enables them to earn an Arts Award accreditation.

Another is Key4Life which seeks to reduce youth reoffending, with music playing an integral part in the rehabilitation process before and after release from custody. With support from reps from the music industry, young men on this programme are using their creative skills to develop new music. They will shortly be launching a track as part of the What If public awareness campaign, bringing together young men who have taken part from Ashfield and Wormwood Scrubs prisons as well as HMP/YOI Isis.

Anthon Dinnall is a former Key4Life participant who is continuing to play a vital role in the programme through music workshops inside and outside prison and also works at Gaucho restaurant part-time. As he says: "Music provides a vehicle for young men like myself to express themselves in a safe and creative space in and out of prison, and our music can also help to change the public's perception of young people who have been in prison to give them another chance."

UK Music too has a role in all this through its Rehearsal Room network which has spaces in various locations working with

at-risk groups to help them develop their creativity. Each of these organisations is making a real, meaningful contribution to society by enabling rehabilitation through music.

Our roundtable is being staged with the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (the body which oversees the youth justice system), and will bring together representatives from these organisations and others like the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance.

Crucially, the meeting will hear first-hand accounts of how music transforms lives as well as views on the impact we can expect from recent policy developments – either extending or hampering achievements in the future. The meeting will also consider what other steps Parliamentarians and the industry can take to turn young lives away from crime with the aid of music.

UK Music is committed to enabling fair, accessible entry points into the industry regardless of background. Life can be tough for us all and throws up more than enough challenges but a history of offending can put even more obstacles in the path of young hopefuls. We can show that exposure to music as part of the rehabilitative process enables some young people to turn the corner and get a second chance. That is something we should all embrace.

*If you would like more information about the event please contact [Tom Kiehl](#) at UK Music.*