

Getting Things Changed

Getting good Support

EASY
READ







This research aimed to find out how people with learning disabilities could get good support, so they can be in control of their own lives.



We wanted to find out what was going well, but also what the problems are for people with learning disabilities.



People with learning disabilities themselves can tell us what matters to them. In this project, we worked with a theatre company called 'The Misfits' who helped us see what was important for them.



We did the research by making videos of what people were doing with their personal assistants (PAs). We also made videos in a craft workshop.

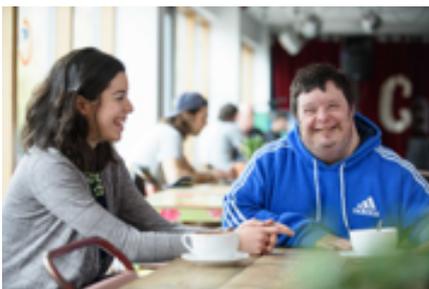


Ten young people in special schools also took part. They were all learning how to make music in a project called *Open Orchestras*.



We wanted to look at how people talk to each other. PAs, supporters and teachers all communicated very well, so that people with learning disabilities could make their own decisions.

What did we find out about having a personal assistant?



It feels like I've actually had a good day out

People with learning disabilities enjoyed having a good relationship with their personal assistant (PA), and especially liked going out with them.



It's the bathroom or the washing up. Whatever you want to do next

People with learning disabilities showed that they could take control when they had a chance. They told their PA or support worker what they wanted.



Which drink do you want? Are you sure?

Support workers and PAs were good at giving people choices. But sometimes this went wrong, as the person with learning disabilities thought they had made the wrong choice.



They suggested I have that safety check. What do you think?

People with learning disabilities wanted to talk through their decisions at times. But it was often hard to have a good conversation, because there were things to get done with their PA.

What did we find out in the craft workshop?



Do you think we can go a bit bigger? Or are you happy with the small pots?

Supporters in the workshop were very good at helping people learn to make excellent things. They did this by showing each person how to move on to the next step and make something better.



We'll have a go and look at the shapes

When people were making things, they were often given a choice of the shape, the size or the colour. Supporters helped them and praised them for choosing.



Hold that
just a
minute
over there

There were times when people wanted to talk, but there were other jobs to do, so they had to wait.



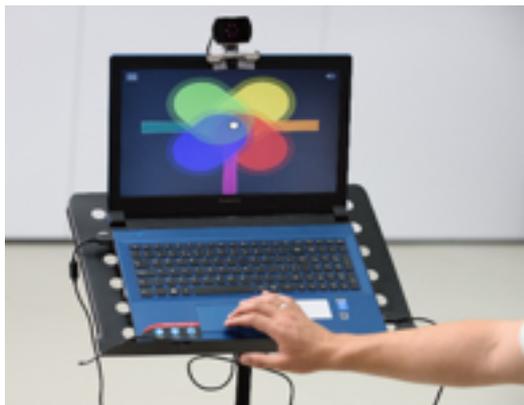
Do you want to
come and have a
look first, come and
have a go?

People were also given choices about what they wanted to do, and they sometimes said 'no'. But supporters encouraged them to do new things.

What did we find out about making music with *Open Orchestras*?



Young people in special schools were learning to make music. They played together in an orchestra.



Many were using a new instrument on the computer called the Clarion. Some students used other instruments as well. You can play the Clarion with any part of your body, even with just your eyes.



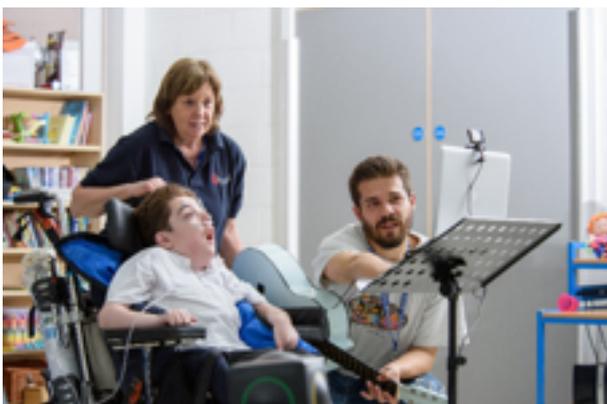
Young people were really good at learning how to put their own sounds together with other people's sounds, to make a piece of music. They had ways of making music that suited their own individual needs.



Teachers and teaching assistants helped the students to play their parts well and to listen to each other's sounds.



This also helped them to get better at lots of other skills. They learnt to concentrate better.



Teaching assistants helped students to know what to do. But they also had to make sure the instruments were working. It was sometimes hard to do both things together.

What did the 'Misfits' think?



The Misfits watched some of the videos. They said it was important to have a good 'match' with your personal assistant or supporter.

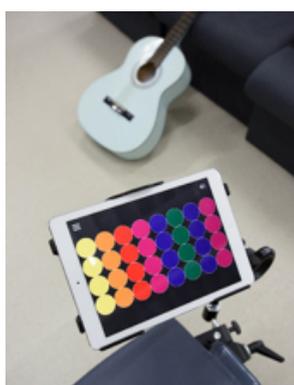


Personal assistants should always listen to the person with learning disabilities. But sometimes that does not happen. The person with learning disabilities could speak up more, and make sure they are in control.



Personal assistants should not always tell people what is best for them. That's not their job.

What would make things better?



Pottery, music and theatre are all creative things to do. People with learning disabilities can be good at these things, and should have the chance to learn new skills.



Looking across all the videos, we could see how good relationships were built on fun.



People want good support to make their own decisions. Sometimes they need more time to have a conversation. People who do not use words to communicate need even more time to respond.



People with learning disabilities can ask others to do things for them. They don't have to do it all themselves. That is true in music, or in pottery, or in everyday life. But at other times, people want others to show them how to learn new skills.



Good communication helps people. But also it's good when activities like music can change, so more people can take part.

The Misfits Theatre Company have made a film called 'A Good Match', which you can get from our website by following the link to 'videos':

www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/gettingthingschanged

**Thank you to everyone who took part
in this research.**

You have all shown how people with learning disabilities can have good lives. More people need to hear your stories, and to see how to give good support.

Our thanks also to:

Julian Goodwin,
for checking this easy-read summary.

**The models in these photos
& Dave Pratt Photography**



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In memory of Dr. Sue Porter, 1953-2017.