

**RE-SET**

**REVISING YOUTH MINDSET**





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## The Power of Language and Music

“Have you seen the film ‘The Greatest Showman?’” was a question regularly asked in 2018. After being faced with this question numerous times, I finally took action to watch it. Watching this with an audience aged between 3 – 89 years was a gamble, but interestingly a very uplifting 1 hour, 46 minutes that left me repeating the songs over and over again and falling in love with the messages behind the music. Not only did the film have this effect on me, but on the children and older people as well, which prompted the question: WHY? Why has this film captivated audiences across the globe, won academy awards and made the soundtrack the bestselling album of 2018? Firstly it is important to be aware of the story illustrated, inspired by the life of P.T Barnum and his creation of the circus, and the lives of its star attractions including Tom Thumb and The Bearded Lady. P.T Barnum used ‘*human curiosities*’ to attract audiences to his shows that were considered oddly inspiring or horrifically exploitative and the film (with a fair degree of artistic license) documents his journey from childhood to philanthropy. After researching the history of the real P.T Barnum, there was stark dichotomy between the emotional high and rush of good feeling from the Hollywood version of P.T Barnum and the feeling of disbelief and upset evoked from his real life biography. Were we all captivated by a ‘story’ made accepting and appealing by actors? It’s not a wholly shocking concept, but I felt the impact of this film carried more weight than Hollywood glamour, as it was not the acting I was impressed by, nor the story, it was the emotional response people were having towards it. As I watched the film for a 3<sup>rd</sup> time at the behest of my children and watched them sing and dance, I felt yet another wave of good feeling, including ‘joy’ and ‘positivity.’

These words and others such as 'fun' and 'included' are used to describe young people's experience of RE:SET. When you attempt to 'drill down' and explore why they feel good, young people often say it's because of the RE:SET Mentor. The strength and importance of a positive relationship is understandably key, but as viewers of the film, we don't have a direct relationship with those on screen, so we have to explore more about why we feel connected. Communication is a core element of human interaction and a cornerstone of relationships. How this film communicates with viewers can be drawn comparatively with the communication between RE:SET Mentors and young people. It is the language we use to communicate with our young people that shapes the positive interactions and environment we deliver in. This is not and never has been, an 'off the shelf' service to purchase. It is a model that is tailored to the needs of schools, their young people, families and communities. Therefore, our services create an environment that young people and schools want to be part of, with positive and inclusive cultures emerging through the power of language. This is used to communicate with young people and stakeholders, which builds long-lasting, mutually trusting relationships. A practical illustration of this is by repeatedly telling young people they are messy or untidy or bad, creating an internal legacy that impacts negatively on their wellbeing, as they repeat those words over in their head and their behaviour and actions will act in accordance with that 'truth.' By re-framing how we speak to young people, we can alter the repeating internal music from negative to positive. Rather than saying children are 'messy,' we can say 'we don't live like this' or 'remember to put things away when you're finished.'

In 2014, Headteacher of Pitteuchar East Primary School in Fife – Jennifer Knussen – changed the language used to describe children who were 'challenging,' to 'distressing.' The impact of this change rippled through the school, its staff, and children and to parents/carers. Subsequently, Jen's budget for replacing broken chairs dramatically reduced and relationships improved. The culture in her school changed, by amending her language. It wasn't an instructive action, the rest of the staff modelled her language and followed suit, which is also an example of great leadership. For us, this example, chimes well with the work Apex Scotland has been delivering for more than 30 years and more pointedly, in schools for the past 11 years, as referenced in a 2011 evaluation.

So, the Power of Language has the ability to evoke responses and reactions from us – we already know that from the childhood myth – 'sticks and stones...' We have all heard strong language, but it's also important to have an awareness of tone – what does the message we are delivering sound like?

### **Words to Stories. Stories to Realities**

The power of language affects our reality.

**Words:** "I am not fat, I am just big boned."

**Stories:** "I hate my body. I need to exercise more. But then nothing really ever works for me. Maybe there is a new diet I can try. But what if that doesn't work? Why do other girls have it so much easier? I hate my body."

**Reality:** Body image issues/eating disorders.

So what do we do with this Conflict Language and Conflict Stories? Firstly, we identify the key Conflict Language words and start making adjustments. These are called 'translations.'

With stressful sentences like “*I don’t want to always feel like such a failure*”, we replace the “don’t” with a “do” and move away from the undesired outcome and towards what we want. “*I don’t want to always feel like such a failure*” turns into “*I do want to feel secure and successful.*” This seemingly simple translation does a tremendous amount for someone’s psychological and emotional well-being by harnessing the power of language.

The opposite of Conflict Language is Architect Language, which helps people focus on their goals and positive outcomes, reminds them that they are in control of their personal stories, while helping them to be more secure and confident in their decision making process.

If you spend even a minimal amount of time focusing on the specific words people use to complain and blame, you will catch the Conflict Language. You are also likely to find some Conflict Language in your own vocabulary too, and we hear lots of it in schools.

The great thing about the Power of language is it’s **FREE**. These are things that can be achieved at neutral cost, but it takes strong leadership. In the absence of strong leadership, negative language and cultures can become pervasive.

## **Culture**

Creating a culture of inclusion, as evidenced by our 2011 evaluation is achieved through a combination of **four main factors**:

- *The fact that the service is perceived as, and operates as, part of a **whole school system of support for pupils at risk of exclusion**, and*
- *The **overall positive ethos** of the school system, best exemplified by the fact that the Unit is designed to support inclusion as a positive core concept intended to benefit young people, rather than as an alternative to exclusion which can be viewed as a negative and ameliorate attempt to manage or treat young people to the benefit of the school.*
- *The **skills and attributes** of the staff delivering the service*
- *The **flexibility of the actual activities and educational approach** undertaken by the staff and young people,*

*The **combination of these factors leads to an overall ‘buy-in’** to the success of the service from all of the important stakeholders and influencers on the service success; young people, school staff and Inclusion Unit staff have a clear sense of the value of the Unit and its place within the overall system of support for pupils.*

To embrace the power of language and evaluate the impact of the words you speak, speaks for itself, but we must understand the role context and tone plays in this process, which moves me on to the power of music and why I feel we are further captivated by The Greatest Showman. A young cross-gre violinist called Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) offers us an important point on why he believes music is so powerful, it actually penetrates our bodies: “*You know when someone says that a piece of music ‘touched me’ or ‘moved me,’ it’s very literal. The sound of my voice enters your ear canal and it’s moving your eardrum. That’s a very intimate act. I am very literally touching you, and when you speak to me, you are literally touching me. And then we extend that principle to the sound of a violin.*” This assessment from DBR gives greater understanding to how we are actually connected to films, like The Greatest Showman, through the power of language delivered musically.

Furthermore, the conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim believes our early connection to sound is another reason for its power — something we can forget in our everyday lives. Barenboim thinks because we live in a very visual society we're more aware of what we see, than what we hear. But he reminds us that the latest scientific evidence reveals that the ear, which we now know is active in the womb, has an advantage over the eye. He also says: "The ear has a head start over the eye, which doesn't see anything until it comes out. The eye is also something that one can control more fully. If you don't like the way I look, and you don't want to see me, you close your eyes and I disappear. But if you don't like my voice and you're in the same room, then you cannot shut your ears in a natural way. Sound literally penetrates the human body."

Combining the power of language through the medium of music is a powerful tool that helps us to build strong relationships, environments and cultures that are positive and impactful on the wellbeing of people. An interesting read is *The Power of Music* by Elena Mannes who states scientists have discovered music stimulates more parts of the brain than any other human function. That's why she sees so much potential in music's power to change the brain and affect the way it works and we at RE:SET have to agree. In closing, I have included a link to a song from *The Greatest Showman* and copied the words below so you may reflect on some of the points made in this article and see if they connect for you – they certainly do for RE:SET.

**"This Is Me"**  
(from "The Greatest Showman" soundtrack)

I'm not a stranger to the dark  
Hide away, they say  
'Cause we don't want your broken parts  
I've learned to be ashamed of all my scars  
Run away, they say  
No one will love you as you are

But I won't let them break me down to dust  
I know that there's a place for us  
For we are glorious

When the sharpest words wanna cut me down  
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown them out  
I am brave, I am bruised  
I am who I'm meant to be, this is me  
Look out 'cause here I come  
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum  
I'm not scared to be seen  
I make no apologies, this is me

Another round of bullets hits my skin  
Well, fire away 'cause today, I won't let the shame sink in  
We are bursting through the barricades  
And reaching for the sun (we are warriors)  
Yeah, that's what we've become

Won't let them break me down to dust  
I know that there's a place for us  
For we are glorious

When the sharpest words wanna cut me down  
Gonna send a flood, gonna drown them out  
I am brave, I am bruised  
I am who I'm meant to be, this is me  
Look out 'cause here I come  
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum  
I'm not scared to be seen  
I make no apologies, this is me

...This is me

And I know that I deserve your love  
There's nothing I'm not worthy of  
When the sharpest words wanna cut me down  
I'm gonna send a flood, gonna drown them out  
This is brave, this is bruised  
This is who I'm meant to be, this is me

Look out 'cause here I come (look out 'cause here I come)  
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum  
(marching on, marching, marching on)  
I'm not scared to be seen  
I make no apologies, this is me

(Whenever the words wanna cut me down  
I'll send the flood to drown them out)  
This is me

# Apex Scotland Annual Lecture: Building a Fairer Scotland: Does Understanding Childhood Adversity Help?



*"I strongly believe that understanding childhood adversity is key to building a fairer Scotland."  
John Swinney*

The 2018 Apex Scotland Annual Lecture was delivered by Mr John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. Mr Swinney talked widely across aspects of Government and social policy to show how an awareness of the effects of trauma on development and behaviour is changing thinking and influencing practice. He referred to Apex Scotland's 2017 lecture quoting us as stating that we need a new discourse around justice, one where success is measured by those we keep out of the system, not how many we get in. Mr Swinney linked this to his topic in saying that an understanding of the causes and contributing factors behind social behaviour is vital if we are to aspire to a fairer and more just Scotland.

In his address, he spoke about the well-known links between social actions such as school exclusion, care arrangements or justice measures, and subsequent adult challenges including criminality. These negative outcomes, he believes, are demonstrably linked to the experience of adversity throughout a person's development and may be minimised by social reform, which addresses issues such as poverty, family stability, early educational opportunities and improved mental health resources. Referring to the Programme for Government, he illustrated how the Scottish Government's priorities are being shaped by an understanding of these issues and announced a number of significant new resources which he hopes will ensure an improved position. These include training on trauma, increased funding for health visiting and mental health services and continued investment in school based programmes and family support.

It was gratifying to note that much of what he cited as best practice and research based activity has been pioneered by Apex Scotland over the past decade in our schools services and more recently in the hosting and promotion of the Resilience documentary and incorporation of adverse childhood experience and trauma informed care into our overall approach. In particular, the development of our RE:SET service mirrors the principles laid out by Mr Swinney and we trust that more resources will be made available going forward for embedding some of this activity into mainstream services.

The address itself not only lays out a clear picture of where Government thinking is going over the next few years but also offers a significant endorsement of the work done by Apex Scotland and many others to promote the value of trauma informed care and the need to address childhood adversity. The links to the justice programme were explicitly made and indicate a continued direction of travel towards early intervention, diversion from prosecution and a socially progressive approach to criminality. This approach received overwhelming support from the audience and in the subsequent social media analysis of the evening which was overwhelmingly positive.

## Pupil Equity Funding

Pupil Equity Funding is provided as part of the £750m Attainment Scotland Fund which will be invested over the current Parliamentary term to tackle the poverty related attainment gap. The funding should be focused on activities and interventions that will lead to improvements in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing with leadership; learning and teaching; and families and communities mentioned as useful to consider when determining interventions. Now in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year of existence many people are asking what are schools doing with their PEF money and is it making an impact? To provide a yes or no answer would be irresponsible and highly dismissive of some of the great work taking place across the country. The truth is, although in its third year of funding, some schools are just getting to grips with how they can spend their money outside of the historical local authority steer. Apex Scotland's RE:SET service is not a silver bullet, but it does boldly address endemic issues in an innovative way – largely achieved through the relationships we have with our stakeholders and beneficiaries; creating positive lasting cultures.

For more information on how Apex Scotland's RE:SET service can contribute to local and strategic planning, as well as any collaborations to support PEF related outcomes, please contact [louise.love@apexscotland.org.uk](mailto:louise.love@apexscotland.org.uk). Alternatively you can read about our services at [www.apexscotland.org.uk](http://www.apexscotland.org.uk) or by accessing PEF Frameworks in your area.



## Networked for Success

Apex Scotland's RE:SET service are representatives on Fife Children's Services new model of partnership working – Locality Networks. This involves bringing together leaders in each local area to create Children's Services Networks that help improve outcomes for children, young people and families, particularly the most vulnerable and in greatest need of support. The networks raise awareness of the range of people and services working in the local area and allow time for partners to explore what gets in the way of partnership working and what needs to be done to make it easier to provide support when it's needed.

Each local area network is unique in terms of the issues being faced, the people involved, challenges being experienced and potential opportunities and we are excited to be part of them.



*'Hey Karen! Just wanted to thank you for all those years at school I was a little brat! Without you and Lynne I wouldn't have made it through school and I am now a prison officer. If you ever need me to talk to your school kids about how Inclusion (RE:SET) changed my perspective on life, let me know!! Xxx' (Ellie, 23 years, 2018)*

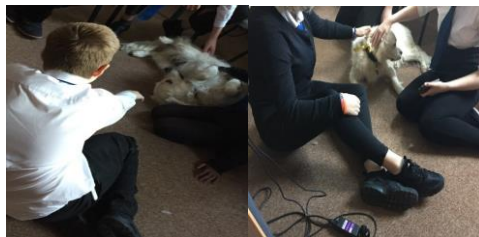
## Exclusion VS Inclusion

The publication Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2 distributed by Education Scotland in 2017, is beginning to show its impact on School Improvement Plans and amendments in exclusion guidance policies across the country. It's also informing how schools are approaching their PEF spending, so we thought we'd highlight the daily battle schools, and indeed society, face of Exclusion Vs Inclusion. I think everyone understands and accepts the rationale behind NOT excluding children and young people, based upon the science and research available. However the notion of Inclusion only seems do-able where there is financial resource to support the additional needs some young people present with, and where mainstream 'structure' and processes are unsuitable. It's also dependent on the culture and attitudes of a school/organisation in tackling this issue. There are schools who take topline restorative approaches, but frontline staff will refuse to accept a young person back into their class because of their behaviour or demand they be removed from subjects and vice versa. We believe there is a changing culture towards managing behaviour and exclusions, but the question of how you effect real change and support young people appropriately remains largely questionable. Providing 'remove rooms' in school under the guise of 'support' does not tackle the root causes of behaviour, or allow the space to unearth the potential of young people who have become hardened to themselves and the 'system,' but it does facilitate a paper exercise with regards to reducing number of exclusions. That is why we believe a partnership with Apex Scotland's RE:SET service adds value to school systems and supports positive culture through our use of language and creation of adaptive environments that have the resources and expertise to explore the reasons behind behaviours driving the need for exclusion and prevent the frequency and impact of them recurring.

## Year of the Young Person

As the Year of the Young Person draws to a close, RE:SET would like to highlight some of the contributions and achievements of our young people. Whilst 2018 marked the Year of Young People, every year is the Year of Young People for RE:SET. However, this year has given a platform to celebrate their achievements nationally.

Our service in St Augustine's has been working with Canine Concern whose volunteer has been bringing into RE:SET his Therapet, Willow. The idea behind the 'Therapet' is based on research showing that the action of patting a dog or cat slows down your heartbeat and reduces blood pressure. Willow the 'Therapet' visits every Tuesday for a 'Stress Management' group and a 'Reading with Dogs' group. Both groups help promote ownership responsibility, social interaction, confidence and emotional comfort. This has been a really impactful piece of work so far and the young people (and staff) get a lot out of these sessions.

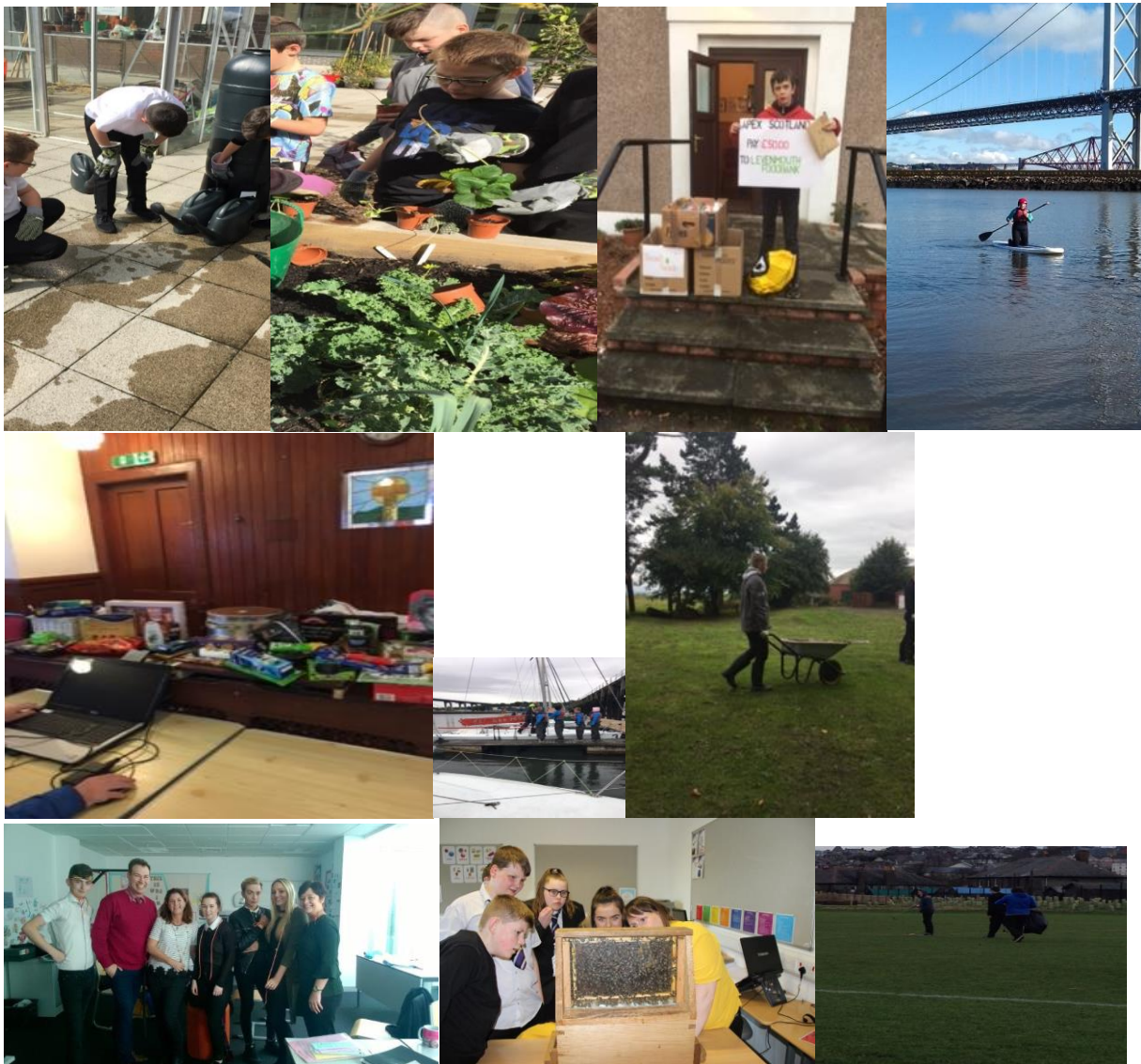




Young people in S2 and S3 from RE:SET in St Augustine's have been volunteering at the Community Gardens based at the Edinburgh College, Sighthill campus. This takes place every Tuesday and has been a fantastic opportunity for young people to learn about the environment and develop their practical skills. The work at the community gardens provides opportunities for young people to achieve certificated recognition.

In Levenmouth Academy, young people have continued their involvement with Levenmouth Foodbank, attending Café Connect every Tuesday and doing a variety of fundraising activity including food collections and raffles. Also, as part of awareness raising about the environment young people worked with Bee Buddies to explore all about the importance of bees and their eco systems and environment. Young people also learned about sailing at Port Edgar and gained their basic certificate.

Dunfermline High School RE:SET service has continued its very active LGBT work with drop in, peer support, information days and work with the community.



# Annual Reflections

As this year draws to a close, we reflect on all the activity RE:SET and its beneficiaries have been involved in and are thankful to all the support received from our funders, our school partners and voluntary sector colleagues. However, our biggest thanks goes to our young people and their parents and carers who remind us that every day is a school day, and we continue to learn from you, as collaborative partners.

From everyone on Apex Scotland's RE:SET service we wish you a happy and peaceful festive period.

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