TRANSCRIPT: Musical interaction

Peter Imray & Mark Hanson

Peter: It is quite astonishing how young children with profound and multiple learning difficulties reach out to music, how much it affects them and how much that they feel part of it. There's something about the musical instrument and the rhythm and the beats that strikes very, very deep in the human experience and, because of that, musical interaction is a fantastic way of reaching through to children who can become very, very difficult to reach.

It's a fantastic way of them taking control of situations because children with profound leaning difficulties have very, very little chance of taking control. Everything is done to them, everything is done for them and the important thing about working with these guys is that we do as much with them as we possibly can and musical interaction's a fantastic way of gaining a conversation, a communication, but not through words because these guys don't have words.

Mark: It's very much a musical conversation but it doesn't have to be about voice. It can be through smiling. It can be about body movement. It could be about eye contact. It could be about eye conducting. My job is to follow, to echo back behaviours, vocalisations, looking for intentional communication, but it should always be a child-led environment.

Peter: Now when the child reaches out after a silence and strums the guitar and then Mark plays the guitar in response to that, it's giving the child an understanding that they can have an effect upon the environment around them, which is fantastically powerful and meaningful for somebody who's working at a very, very earliest stages of development.

Mark: The other thing that's really interesting is the way they'll explore the iPad, and whichever part of the screen that you touch will manipulate the sound of a scale. So if Danny brushes across the screen he can affect his environment. He's making music by his hand movements and that's quite powerful in terms of the musical conversation that's taking place.