

Supporting the North East Music Education Workforce

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

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Supporting the North East Music Education Workforce

Summary

Youth Music commissioned Arts Inform to carry out this research in September 2011, aiming to identify the needs of the music education workforce in the North East region and what role providers, agencies and initiatives could play to support this.

The research sought the views of a range of Music Leaders and the people who employ and commission them to carry out music activities with children and young people aged up to 18 in the North East of England.

The research is structured around three main research questions:

1. What is the current environment for the music education workforce in the North East region?
2. What are the main needs of the music education workforce in the North East and what are the likely impacts of the wider music education environment?
3. How can we enable an effective programme of workforce development within relevant existing provision? How will we get there?

The Core Skills of a Music Leader

What are the perceived Core Skills and Competencies of a Music Leader?

Music Leaders value Musical and Communication Skills highly alongside a wide range of personal attributes that they see as key to the success of their work. A few Music Leaders identify a very limited number of Complementary Professional Skills (such as evaluation, marketing and business skills) as being important to their role.

Employers also value Musical and Communication Skills highly, but do not give the same weight as Music Leaders to Personal Attributes. Employers place a high value on a range of Complementary Professional Skills. There is, therefore, a disconnect between Music Leaders' and Employers' expectations.

There was a marked sense that the skills most valued by the Music Leaders' group lay in the areas of Musical and Communication / Teaching. However it was acknowledged that the working environment for Music Leaders was such that it was necessary to develop additional professional skills in order to operate successfully.

Extract, Chapter 3

How do Music Leaders learn their Core Skills?

Music Leaders believe that many of the key skills they identify are learned 'on the job' and that some are innate. There is limited awareness of how some skills can be supported by formal and informal training.

While it may be true to say that some people are more natural or confident communicators than others, it is also true that the skills of teaching and communicating with Young People are very particular and are ones which can be learned and constantly updated and developed.

Extract, Chapter 3

Music Leaders value the positive impact that other aspects of their musical career have on their skill as a Music Leader.

"Singing in professional ensembles helps to keep my participatory practice relevant, simple things like noticing how to physically put phrases into my voice, and using that awareness to support my teaching."

Music Leader comment, Chapter 3

How do Employers and Commissioners find the Music Leaders they need?

Employers do not always find qualifications and training to be a reliable indicator of a Music Leader's quality. They rely predominantly on word-of-mouth to find Music Leaders, and recommendation from colleagues plays a greater role in establishing a Music Leader's skills and suitability than more formal recruitment methods. Music Leaders find this frustrating, and Young Music Leaders are concerned as to how they will break into the profession when they have not yet established a track record.

Word-of-mouth and recommendation, including feedback from young people was commonly used. This group also placed weight on the musical life and profile of the Music Leader and wanted to employ those who were active musicians. They were interested in the Music Leader's potential as a role model.

Extract, Chapter 3

Music Leaders who are in a direct employment relationship with an employer have access to feedback and appraisal. Those who are not in direct employment may miss out on such feedback and therefore be unable to reflect accurately on their CPD needs.

An Overview of Training in the Region

What training and development do Music Leaders undertake?

Music Leaders in the region have an extremely varied training background and undertake a very wide range of CPD activity. This ranges across musical, non-musical and teaching subjects. They do not however differentiate greatly between music qualifications and music leading qualifications.

Music Leaders tend to undertake training and CPD which develops their creative practice, rather than developing their ability to back up their work with professional disciplines such as marketing, project management, evaluation or business skills. (This mirrors their perception of what they believe their Core Skills to be.) Employers are keen for Music Leaders to gain non-musical support skills and knowledge.

The range of types of training was vast, including musical, non-musical, teaching, networking and para-musical and other arts disciplines (i.e., disciplines linked to music but not dealing with music practice). 109 different activities were recorded... Well over half of these activities (58.7%/64) were directly related to music practice; 12 (11%) were directly related to teaching, 18 (16.5%) were related to skills supporting music or other artforms, and 12 (11%) were related to non-arts skills or knowledge.

Extract, Chapter 4

Where do Music Leaders find their training opportunities?

Music Leaders look to a wide range of training providers, local, regional and national. It appears that Employers and Commissioners are less likely to look outside their own provision to access training opportunities.

Music Leaders value informal CPD such as mentoring, shadowing and observing. They also recognise this as a low-cost option. Employers/Commissioners value training which is effective and relevant, and which Music Leaders can put into practice straight away.

"... the mix of everything over the years has helped me become a well-rounded professional who has wide ranging abilities. Had I simply chosen the training for myself I might simply end up further stereotyping myself by reinforcing skills I already have. Doing a wide range of training and accepting a wide range of opportunities challenges me and widens my comfort zone."

Music Leader comment, Chapter 4

How much do Music Leaders and Employers/Commissioners value training and CPD?

Music Leaders and Employers/Commissioners both value training and CPD quite highly, and most Employers see it as part of their job to provide training or to provide access to training. However, Employers do not take responsibility for improving or refreshing Music Leaders' personal musical skills.

"Salaried people get paid for CPD, but if you're self-employed then part of what you charge [for your work as a Music Leader] should contribute to CPD, and it's one of your expenses."

Employer/Commissioner comment, Chapter 4

Music Leaders and Employers are aware of the cost of training in both money and time, and are aware that the availability of free or cheap training is likely to be coming to an end.

Within the PEST analysis which Arts Inform carried out with the Employers and Commissioners group in their second meeting, the points were made that Music Leaders should be “developing skills for austerity”, which would enable innovation in the current global recessionary conditions, and that entrepreneurship would become a key skill.

Extract, Chapter 4

Aspirations for growth

What kinds of development might be possible in future?

Many Music Leaders achieve excellence in their practice but need to be more effective in their professional lives. Music Leaders are keen to develop their creative practice in the future, but the tendency to ignore professional skills (noted above) continues to be apparent.

We also asked Music Leaders how they would like to develop their career as a Music Leader over the next 5 years (MLQ16). Of the 54 who answered (81.8% of the total respondents), the vast majority focused on developing their practice, increasing the amount of work they were doing or developing new aspects of their practice to open up new fields of work.

Extract, Chapter 5

Many Music Leaders and Employers/Commissioners see potential areas for growth, over a wide range of practices and settings, including community, family, health, youth, diversity and traditional ensemble work in and out of school. However, this vision for future development of music activities for young people is balanced by pessimism over the potential impact of funding cuts. Many are concerned with commitment to funding and security of funding, not just with cuts or increases.

Unsurprisingly, ten out of the 13 respondents to the question specifically mentioned funding, although interestingly this was phrased in several different ways, for example: ‘continued funding’, ‘funding targeted at a local level’, ‘financial security’ and ‘share resources and wealth’. In other words, it is not necessarily an increase in funding that is required, but the recognition that existing budgets and the targeting of existing resources are important.

Extract, Chapter 5

What are the gaps in skills and training?

Employers and Commissioners seemed generally happy with the Music Leaders they are currently working with, while identifying a few gaps. However, our sample for this conclusion is very small. Music Leaders perceive training gaps in a small number of specific subjects. They would also wish to see an improvement in the styles of training available. Employers and training providers also express concern over the lack of training in business skills such as marketing, planning and evaluation.

Finding information about available training, and the coherence and completeness of such information, is a challenge for many Music Leaders.

Tensions within the music leading community should be borne in mind when developing training.

There is considerable concern over the availability of work in the future and the ability of Music Leaders to make a living.

Tensions between Music Leaders include

- *Working at different rates of pay for different organisations*
- *Freelance Music Leaders working for more than one organisation, raising issues of availability and exclusivity*
- *People being less likely to seek collaboration at an early stage in a project, because of competition for funding*
- *Music Leaders experiencing some feelings of threat over training up other Music Leaders (for example through mentoring or shadowing) who might be in competition for work in the future.*

Extract, Chapter 5

Some Music Leaders also consider that Employers and Commissioners could benefit from training and/or guidance in how best to engage with Music Leaders.

Young Music Leaders and Pathways into the Profession

We spoke to a group of young and emerging leaders, asking them in particular how this group saw the future and what support they felt they required in terms of training and CPD.

Young Music Leaders see music leading as part of a portfolio career. However there may be a lack of understanding about career possibilities for a Music Leader, including the amount and type of work available, and the diversity of settings in which it can be carried out.

The term ‘Music Leader’ was not one that the group were familiar with and sometimes there was confusion about the differences between a Music Leader and a classroom music teacher. Whenever working in schools was mentioned several of the young people dismissed this as they didn’t have a teaching qualification or curriculum knowledge.

Extract – Appendix I

Higher Education is seen as necessary to bolster credibility, but is also seen as failing to offer the practical experience necessary to translate learning into work. Young people are concerned that their lack of personal contacts and lack of entry points into existing word-of-mouth networking may hamper their ability to gain paid work. Some issues experienced by adults Music Leaders are magnified for young people by a lack of resources, contacts and a strong peer network.

“What tells people that we are a Music Leader – how do we gain their trust?”

Young Music Leader comment – Appendix I

There are some skills gaps, particularly among self-taught musicians or those from the aural tradition, who require theoretical knowledge and skills to be offered in a non-threatening way. However, Young Music Leaders are able to commit to different types of training format, including longer-term and intensive formats which are not always attractive to adult Music Leaders.

Training Provision in the North East

Information and training styles

Both Music Leaders and Employers have limited knowledge of training opportunities in the North East. They perceive cost and lack of time as the main barriers to participating in CPD.

Only around 34% of Music Leaders appear to be aware of relevant CPD opportunities that are available in the region. Employers' awareness is even lower at 14.3%.

Extract, Chapter 6

Music Leaders told us that their preferred formats for CPD are one-off training days and online resources. Training formats with the lightest time commitment were the most popular, though Young Leaders were positive about longer courses.

The future role of regional organisations

There is considerable enthusiasm for regional collaboration in a CPD offer to Music Leaders.

Employers / Commissioners responding to the questionnaire were asked whether they would be interested in partnering with other organisations in the North East to develop a CPD offer for North East Music Leaders (ECQ27). 62.5% (15) of total respondents answered this question. Of these, 80% (12) responded that they would be interested in such a partnership. This very positive response suggests that there is considerable scope for collaboration between organisations to develop a joint CPD offer.

Extract, Chapter 6

The Sage Gateshead has a major role to play in supporting the region's Music Leaders in the future, and many organisations would like to work in collaboration with them. However, there would need to be a new approach to collaboration and partnership working on the part of The Sage Gateshead. It is also suggested that initiatives outside the Newcastle area should be explored.

At [a meeting of Employers and Commissioners] there was also a discussion about training in the North East region that was accessed by the group. This discussion focused exclusively on the offer of The Sage Gateshead. A number of attenders used the training programmes of The Sage Gateshead and those that were engaged with training at TSG were positive about the quality and effectiveness of this provision... However, other attenders described difficulty in accessing The Sage Gateshead's offer, which they felt should be more responsive to the particular needs of organisations and parts of the North East region and support development on a local level.

Extract, Chapter 6

The Youth Music Network, and networks and CPD funded by Youth Music, will have an important role to play in the future. However, for CPD to be offered strategically there will need to be clear structures and channels of communication between Music Leaders and Employers so that the most relevant CPD can be identified. The Bridge Delivery Organisation or the new Music Education Hubs may be well placed to take on this role.

Recommendations

1. Effectiveness and business skills

Music Leaders clearly often achieve excellence in their practice but may be less effective than they could be. Music Leaders who develop their professional practice as a small business may be able both to offer a more coherent service and to gain a better view of their own training and CPD needs.

Business or complementary professional skills could improve the employability of Music Leaders in the eyes of Employers and Commissioners, and could also improve and enhance the impact of music activities through better evaluation and monitoring.

2. Communication and networking

Communication and networking is clearly of immense importance to both Music Leaders and training providers (some of whom are also Employers/Commissioners). Improvement in the following areas would be beneficial:

- Improving communication between training providers and Music Leaders, to enable the latter to gain a better understanding of training on offer and the benefits of such training;
- Improving networking between Music Leaders to enable them to share good practice and possibly offer informal CPD opportunities;
- Enabling dialogue between Music Leaders, training providers and Employers, to improve training provision and to heighten awareness of the value of training, particularly in business and complementary skills and in informal format such as mentoring and shadowing.

3. Regional collaboration

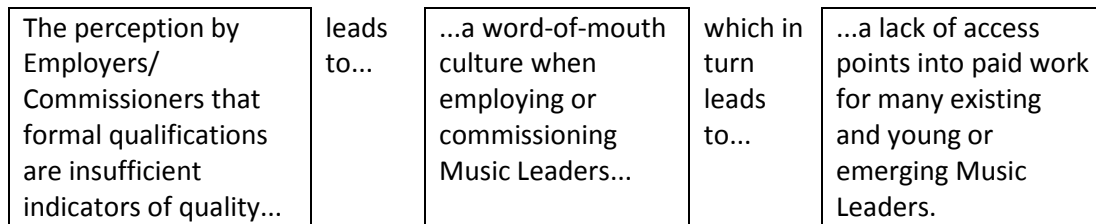
Training providers both within the music sector and across other sectors, both of the arts and of other sectors (such as the charity and small business sectors), should consider developing regional collaborations to provide and share excellent training and CPD, or to open out existing CPD to wider participation.

4. Training formats

Both Youth Music and regional training providers should take note of the networking, practice-sharing and training formats which most suit Music Leaders at different stages of their careers. Youth Music may wish to take this into account when funding training.

5. *The word-of-mouth culture*

The report highlights a problem stemming from the difficulty of identifying good quality Music Leaders by means of qualifications, thus:



Employers and Commissioners may also have limited knowledge or experience of many of the diverse qualifications available in the arts.

In order to gain access to excellent Music Leaders, Employers/Commissioners need to reach out beyond the word-of-mouth and personal recommendation routes when seeking Music Leaders for particular roles. While these routes are not unreliable, they do not identify all the potential Music Leaders available.

It is possible that the new Music Educator qualification, under development as part of the National Plan for Music Education by CCSkills, may be able in part to address this issue, which affects both adult Music Leaders who are already active in the field, and young and emerging Music Leaders.

6. *Regional organisations' role in the future*

It is clear that The Sage Gateshead, the Arts Council's Bridge organisation and Music Education Hubs will have leading roles to play across the region. The Sage has begun to develop its approach to collaboration and this should continue to develop in order to promote high quality partnership working on training and CPD in the North East.