

YOUTH MUSIC

Summary findings of consultations to develop Youth Music's strategy for young adults.



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1. Introduction and approach

Youth Music works with over 350 organisations across the country to support young musicians to achieve musical, personal and social outcomes. Currently, less than 10% of those involved are aged 18 to 25. Youth Music is embarking on a new strategy to better support young adults, and hosted a series of consultations in autumn 2018 to help inform this new strategy.

Across five locations, we consulted with over 50 people between the ages of 14 and 27. We worked with our funded organisations to reach a diverse range of people. We asked consultation participants:

- To reflect on their experience of music and what they hoped it would be in the future.
- How Youth Music could better support their futures in music.
- About their relationship with Youth Music and how our funding could best support their development.
- About their knowledge of, and experiences of applying for grant funding.

Youth Music commissioned Adem Holness to help develop the consultations. They were shaped and led by Adem with Daniel Williams (Programme Manager at Youth Music). Sammy Hughes and Winnie Sandy were recruited from Sound Connection's Wired4Music programme to lead sections of the consultations. This enabled a more effective process and provided a paid professional developmental opportunity for the two co-facilitators, who were trained and supported throughout the process.

We aspired to create an open and inclusive environment during the consultations. Though there were clear outcomes, the structure remained flexible and responsive, and the format was adapted where necessary to ensure it was accessible. In the lead up, we ensured all stakeholders understood the context for the work and format of the sessions in order that participants were fully briefed ahead of time.

A report for Youth Music was written by Adem Holness upon completion of the consultations – which provided the content for this summary document.

2. Participants and partners

Participants for consultations were recruited via Youth Music funded organisations. The following factors informed the location and partners we chose to work with:

- Geographic range: consultations took place in both urban and rural settings to reflect Youth Music’s diversity of funded organisations.
- Demographics: focusing on people age 18 to 25, but including people just outside of this bracket for a breadth of experience, and also people from a wide range of socio-cultural backgrounds.
- Music genre interest: talking to people with varied musical interests.

Partners we worked with to recruit participants were:

ORGANISATION	LOCATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN ATTENDANCE	AGE RANGE OF PARTICIPANTS IN ATTENDANCE
Carousel	Brighton	4	23-27
Trinity Community Arts & Basement Studios	Bristol	12	19-24
Lincolnshire One Venues	Lincoln	12	14 - 28
Raw Material, Represent, School Ground Sounds and Wired4Music	London	18	17-26
Skimstone Arts, Generator and Jack Drum Arts	Newcastle	10	21 - 26

3. Findings

Current music engagement

The people we spoke with were involved in music in a variety of ways. Their activities included: studying music both formally and informally; graduating with music qualifications; creating, composing and recording original music; performing original music at open mic events, grassroots, regional and national venues, festivals and on international tours; learning to play instruments; sharing and promoting their music online; organising and running their own music events; working full-time, part-time and as freelancers both in and outside of music; presenting and producing radio; seeing live music performances; listening to music and consuming other music media.

Future musical hopes and aspirations

Most people described their future hopes and aspirations as actively pursuing careers in music, either as artists and/or music professionals. The majority of people we spoke to aimed to be able to earn their income from music and not have to rely on other kinds of work, which they felt took away from the time needed to be creative. They drew direct correlations between low income and levels of stress, which they said stunted their musical development (“more money, less stress”). Most people we spoke to did not earn all of their income directly from music activity.

People that we spoke with described hopes for “making a living” doing different things associated with music. This included playing and performing music live at prestigious and more established venues (not just open mic events or at school); teaching music; running events; working for established charitable music organisations and work within the music industries. Though some people’s aspirations were more singularly focused on making a living from performing original music; developing music production skills; achieving fame and critical acclaim; signing record deals; establishing a fan-base.

The people we spoke to described a lack of knowledge for pathways into professional music careers or opportunities to translate their creativity and music experience into earned income. This was especially true of information on non-performing roles in music, where people expressed a desire to better understand the different opportunities available to them. They were extremely positive about the support they have from the organisations they are involved with, but many struggled to see clear routes into professions beyond these.

Some noted that the opportunity to develop their own creative ideas for projects could begin to enable them to create this experience for themselves, especially if they could have responsibility for running projects that also benefitted other people. Some participants described wanting to “have a balance between being an artist and supporting others”,

excited by the potential for getting involved with the delivery of music programmes they access or directly with Youth Music. They described the prospect of earning money from music to support their creative or artistic aspirations as exciting and linking in with their aspirations for portfolio careers. However without appropriate support, this seemed intimidating and not altogether feasible for some individuals.

Support needed

Most people expressed a need for mentoring and guidance with their own ideas and projects. For some, they focused on needing specific tutoring on their individual creative or musical practice, but for others this encompassed guidance for developing their creative ideas and managing them as projects; or accessing music industry experience to get paid work in music. Participants requested advice from people just a few steps ahead of them professionally (i.e. not long time established professionals sitting on a panel, who gained their experience in a different time and context).

Outside of London, people described a need for better connectedness within their music communities; stronger networks with peers to help them share skills and support the development of each other and provide paid work opportunities (e.g. as session musicians, event co-ordinators and more). Some people wanted organisations to provide these opportunities for them, whilst others wanted to create these opportunities for themselves.

Some participants described a desire to travel and experience the breadth of music making happening in England - having the chance to learn more about music and projects supported by Youth Music to help them in the development of their own projects. Some people aspired to experience music beyond their immediate locality - many participants stated they were not able to see enough live music and increase their understanding of high quality music due to limited or unaffordable local opportunities.

A lack of opportunity to play high profile and professional performance opportunities was consistent across all consultations, although some (particularly those living in urban areas) had had opportunities for these kind of experiences. They saw a marked need for greater access to high quality live music events both as performers and producers to enable them to develop towards their professional careers as musicians, creative producers and other roles in music. These discussions often included mention of a lack of affordable equipment, rehearsal, meeting and event space or other similar spaces to enable the creation of new work and projects.

Limited access to rehearsal, recording and creative space was significant across all consultations. Creating and recording their own music was seen as a fundamental developmental need. People told us that they wanted more opportunities to be able to produce and record music to a high standard. That without this it is extremely challenging to be in a strong enough position to be able to take their next steps professionally, whether

that's booking gigs or connecting with potential collaborators. Outside of securing a recording contract, participants described a lack of knowledge in how to realistically finance music creation to a level of quality appropriate for their current stage of development. Without this kind of support some participants struggled to imagine how they may progress.

Funding for individuals

Generally, there was a good awareness of some music funders and the programmes available, most notably Arts Council England, PRS Foundation and Help Musicians UK. That said, participants expressed a lack of understanding about grant application processes, (regardless of current professional experience). Many confused grants with loans, and were put off by the prospect of having to pay money back.

A large number of participants felt that formal grant application processes were not set up for people like them. They described not being able to properly articulate the value of their work and that most small development grants (offered by organisations such as PRS Foundation, Arts Council England & Help Musicians UK) were created for people too far ahead. Some people felt it was unreasonable that development grants were targeted at people quite far along in their musical development because they hadn't had the opportunity to develop to that level yet. They described a strong need for combined grant funding and developmental support for people like them, who are transitioning from either education or as a participant in a Youth Music funded programmes into the professional sphere. They felt it was unfair that most grants were assessed on their creative or musical output for those who haven't yet had the opportunity to develop independently as artists and creatives.

Participants at several consultations described a need for a small grant, available to individuals aged 18 to 25, which would be awarded based on an individual's creative potential and/or opportunity for personal or professional growth and development. In London, however, this idea was challenged by some participants, who said that funding support should be directed to organisations already supporting 18-25 year olds (i.e. rather than individuals), due to the limited funds available. These participants described how the organisations they were involved with had opened up new networks and enabled opportunities that they would not have been able to access independently. This was challenged by others who felt that no one music organisation could enable the full breadth of music that people are interested in making, or they may not be set up to enable individuals to make their own projects happen. There was a clear agreement that funding should not be completely taken away from organisations and given to individuals, and overall that a holistic approach would help achieve the best outcomes.

Barriers to applying for funding as individuals

The main barrier described by participants was a lack of understanding about the grant application process, specifically what a good funding application looks like, and how to go about creating one. They felt that funders often use jargon, and that in writing good funding applications they would need to speak an unfamiliar language and use the right terminology. Some participants described funding as seeming exclusive.

Fear of rejection was described as significant for people who had never applied for funding. It takes a significant amount of time to prepare an exhaustive application, and for it to be rejected without clear reason as to why, or how it could be improved was described as potentially devastating. The prospect of having to prepare an application without appropriate support was worrying to some people.

Some people described not knowing how to use the money properly, having no budgeting or project management experience, they said it was hard to know where to start. There was also a concern that because of this they, or their work, would not be taken seriously. A participant that had previously received funding through Arts Council England's Project Grants felt an overwhelming weight of responsibility in managing this alone. Without a mentor or person to advise them on the delivery of the project, they felt a significant amount of responsibility and were unsure how to manage changes (particularly those with a financial implication). They recognised this could have been easily mitigated with a dedicated individual who could support them in running a project for the first time.

Some participants were concerned about whether receiving a grant for a music project would affect their income assessed benefits and felt clear information would need to be provided to avoid their universal credit or housing benefit being jeopardised. It was said that appropriate paperwork from funders and relevant guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions should be provided in advance of receiving a grant to provide to local authority officers and others to justify the income in their bank account. Similarly, this would apply to information from HMRC on managing a grant for income tax purposes, in order to prevent grantees with unnecessary fines or charges.

Youth Music's funding for young adults

Summary of responses to the question "what should this be for?"

- Promoting new music
- Access to recording studios for 18-25s
- Live music events
- Music networking events
- Music equipment (for young people)
- Mentoring
- "To prepare you for being 26"
- Performance opportunities
- Opportunities to see other perform
- Rehearsal Space

- Increasing diversity in music
- Radio stations
- Developing artists
- “Artists who want to learn how to monetise their art and pay grass roots artists”

Summary of responses to the question “who should be able to apply?”

- Everyone with an idea
- People age 18 to 25, as there’s not many opportunities for this group
- Organisations
- Individuals (this should be more accessible)
- Artists
- Creatives who come together to form a team
- Foster care leavers
- People suffering from mental ill-health
- Underrepresented people in music (LGBTQ+, race, music genres, gender)

Summary of responses to the question “how could Youth Music’s new grant be most helpful?”:

- Creating music networks
- Accessing space
- Getting paid to play gigs
- Finding people to join a band
- Having someone to help you plan the creative things you want to do
- “It would be helpful to me to have the funds to work on recording music to a professional standard”
- Reaching new audiences and establishing a fanbase
- Being able to make music

4. Next steps

A series of recommendations were produced following the consultations, which include recommendations for Youth Music’s grant funding, as well as organisational development to improve youth voice and participation practices at Youth Music. Youth Music will be working to implement the following recommendations to develop this work over 2019/20.

Work opportunities

The first focus will be on increasing youth voice participation across the organisation, which will be primarily achieved by expanding Youth Music’s successful paid internship programme to offer a wider and more diverse range of paid work opportunities.

Youth Music will create new fixed term, part time or freelance opportunities across its grants, communications and fundraising teams that provide mutual benefits to Youth Music and young adults. By focusing on the clear overlap between Youth Music's business needs and the specific skills and insights this age group has to offer it should be possible to create meaningful and collaborative partnerships that add value on both sides.

It has been recommended that Youth Music starts this at a small and local scale, with workspace at their offices offered to participants, but in the long term the opportunity could be there to develop this community of young music professionals into a national network.

Many of the most obvious and tangible work opportunities identified by consultees were related to Youth Music's external communications. Youth Music's communications team has subsequently held three more consultations specifically for people interested in shaping this. Ideas from these sessions included employing young people to find new ways to promote project content, creating new original content such as videos, podcasts, radio shows, news articles and blogs, as well as producing live Youth Music events and creating an opportunities board for their peers.

Some of these ideas have already become short term paid roles in the Communications Team, and this is expect to grow over the year, with many more potential work opportunities linked to Youth Music's twentieth anniversary celebration and its ambition to increase funding for 18 to 25s.

In keeping with the principles of youth participation those who work with Youth Music will do so in partnership with a key link member of staff and appropriate pastoral and mentoring support.

Grant funding for 18-25s

Through these consultations Youth Music's has identified that there is demand and scope to create the following new funding streams to develop our support for this age group:

- Small grants that individual young people can independently and directly apply for to support their next steps in music or their music career*
- Larger grants for organisations working with 18 to 25 year olds

**subject to securing additional funds.*

Various models of fund distribution, grant size and grant focus were mentioned in the report which we are exploring in more depth, but the key recommendation was to begin with establishing a working group of young people to support with the co-design and co-production of the new funding streams.

Youth Music would then recruit young adults into paid work opportunities to co-create the grants programme. This would include collaboration to develop the funding priorities, the mechanisms to access the funding, the marketing strategy, the assessment and decision making process, the development of new partnerships, and researching existing good practice and models.

Youth governance

As Youth Music's work with youth voice and participation develops it wishes to continue recent work to diversify its board of Trustees, particularly in relation to age. The existing Trustees and Youth Music are currently working on a strategy to implement this over the next year as new vacancies emerge.

The board has committed to proactively recruit younger people to become full trustees, and is currently exploring existing governance models (from organisations such as the Roundhouse and Sound Connections) as well as reviewing existing processes and procedures in order to ensure an inclusive governance environment for all Trustees.

Appendix 1: summary information sent to consultation participants

Shaping the future of music-making for 18-25s

Thank you for taking part in one of Youth Music's discussion groups looking at what we can do to increase our support for people in this age group.

We spoke to more than 50 people (between the ages of 14 – 28), in person, from Brighton, Bristol, Lincolnshire, London and Newcastle.

These discussions helped us to understand your experiences; find out what you want to do next in music; explore how our funding could help you with this and how you could best access this funding.

Here's a summary of the key things you told us

- Music is an incredibly important part of your lives. It helps you to define and express yourselves.
- Many of you feel ready to start earning money from music but would like some extra help getting there.
- Having a mentor to support, advise and guide you through your next few steps is essential.
- Individuals aged 18-25 should be able to apply for funding from Youth Music to support their next steps in music.
- Applications for an individual grant should be based on how much it allows people to develop themselves and/or their music communities, not on a perceived level of 'talent'.
- There needs to be clear help, guidance and support to help individuals apply for funding.
- Youth Music's support should be for all people involved in music, not just musicians.
- There are already brilliant organisations helping people to take their next steps, Youth Music funding for these organisations needs to continue.
- Pathways into paid work in music and non-performing jobs are not clear so there should be more guidance and opportunities available.
- Some people would like to have more of a say about how organisations run their music projects, but need to be paid to do this.

- More access to space, performance opportunities and resources is needed as there isn't enough at the moment.
- Some people wanted better networks to connect with their peers or to new opportunities.
- Some people want support to experience music outside of their hometown, for example through visiting other music projects or by performing and touring.

What we're doing next

Taking all of this information into account we are now working on shaping Youth Music's new funding programme and looking at how we can involve people aged 18 - 25 in this process.

In the New Year we'll be in touch again to check that we are responding to your recommendations and discuss how we can work together.

Thank you again for taking part - we really appreciate you giving up the time to talk with us and we'll be back in touch soon!