

SESSION PLANS

YOUTH MUSIC

Consultation workshops with children and young people

MAY 2022



#ShareTheMic

At Youth Music we have a commitment to youth voice and participation. This means we aim to put children and young people at the heart of everything we do. We are always looking for new ways to involve young people in our work.

There are many different ways we do this. We hire young people as freelancers through our NextGen programme, and we invest in young creatives through the Youth Music Incubator and NextGen Funds. Young people are involved in Youth Music's governance and decision-making. They inform our research and planning.

Amplifying young voices equalises access to music making, learning and earning. And it doesn't have to be costly or complicated. Young people are the leaders, changemakers and influencers of the future. Put them centre-stage and you'll soon see the benefits.

We are keen to share our learning and learn from others. Our [ShareTheMic Resource Hub](#) gathers together practical info and resources from organisations across the music education sector.

Background

Between August – November 2021 we ran a series of consultation and co-design workshops with children and young people to help us redevelop Youth Music's funds.

We collaborated with organisations, music leaders and young people to design creative ways for children and young people to share their thoughts on Youth Music's funding. These directly influenced the development of our new Trailblazer and Catalyser funds. [You can read more about how young people's views informed these funds here.](#)

Three of Youth Music's funded partners worked with us to plan and deliver the workshops. The organisations were:

- [Jubacana](#), Oldham
- [MAC Makes Music](#), Birmingham
- [Soft Touch Arts](#), Leicester

Each of the workshops was tailored to the children and young people taking part. Feel free to use these session plans as inspiration to borrow from and adapt for groups you work with.

If you'd like to know more about these workshops, or a particular approach/activity, please get in touch: sam.scott@youthmusic.org.uk.

What did we want to find out?

Each workshop had a different approach tailored to each group. But there were some key themes and questions we hoped to explore:

- What ways could children and young people be more involved in Youth Music's decisions and decision-making processes?
- How can Youth Music involve children and young people more in our grant making?
- What could the application process look like? What should Youth Music be looking for in organisations?
- What are the ingredients of an excellent music project, or inspirational music leader?

The ways we asked these questions looked different from session to session. Each session plan gives an outline of our approach, the activities we ran, and some of the information we found out ([you can read more detail on the findings here](#)).

Workshop #1 - Jubacana

Background

Jubacana is a youth-led fusion music and dance project based in Oldham for young people aged 8-18. This session was planned and delivered with Jubacana Director Holly and Project Leader Freya (who is also a former Jubacana participant).

The workshop was split into several sections. The session began with a collective music-making session where Jubacana's band members taught the two Youth Music staff members songs they had created. This was a good way of generating familiarity and – importantly – for Jubacana's band to welcome Youth Music to their space on their own terms.

Following the music-making session, Holly and Freya led an icebreaking activity where the groups were split into two (with one person from Youth Music in each group) and given the chance to lead the other through a series of improvised body percussion rhythms.



Activity #1 - Mock funding panel

- The group was split into two, with each group asked to look through three different (fictional) project examples. This exercise was designed to get the groups to think about what they feel is important to see in projects, and as a practical way to introduce/demystify the grant-making process.
- Both groups had £1,000 (of Monopoly money) to spend, meaning they could fund two of the three projects - which had all requested £500.
- The groups weren't given any criteria; instead, they identified their own. Discussions were recorded and co-facilitated by Holly and Freya from Jubacana and Michelle and Sam from Youth Music.
- Groups chose their own criteria, deciding what they found most important. They picked out things they liked or didn't like for each example, and decided which projects they wanted to fund.



Activity #2 - "Draw your own music leader"...

The group was again split into two. They were given whiteboard paper, pens, and the following instructions:

- Draw an outline of a person. Give them a name...
- Think about who this music leader is. What are they like? How do they make you feel? What are they good at?
- This was an exercise to get workshop participants to help Youth Music know more about what qualities are important to them.



Activity #3 - "How much do you agree with...?"

For the final activity, the whole group came back together. They were asked to respond to a series of statements, using a five-point scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree".

This activity was designed as a way of capturing the overall views of participants in a quantitative manner, to help feed into Youth Music's guidance. The statements, and responses, were:

1. **YOUTH MUSIC IS GOOD AT LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE:** 100% of the group "Strongly Agreed/Agreed" but added there was room to be listened to more. Every member of the group said they wanted to do another workshop like this in future, and to have an influence on Youth Music going forward.
2. **I WOULD LIKE TO HELP YOUTH MUSIC MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT PROJECTS THEY FUND:** The group agreed but identified that a balance must be struck – they'd want to be involved with things they find interesting and accessible. For example, one respondent said they weren't interested in the financial side of applications.
3. **WHEN PLANNING PROJECTS, YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES SHOULD ALWAYS BE HEARD:** 100% of the group agreed – but said that a balance was important. It's key to ensure voices are heard – and acted upon – with meaning and specificity (i.e. not in a tokenistic way).
4. **I WOULD LIKE TO DO SOMETHING AGAIN:** 100% of the group strongly agreed.

Workshop #2 : MAC Makes Music

Background

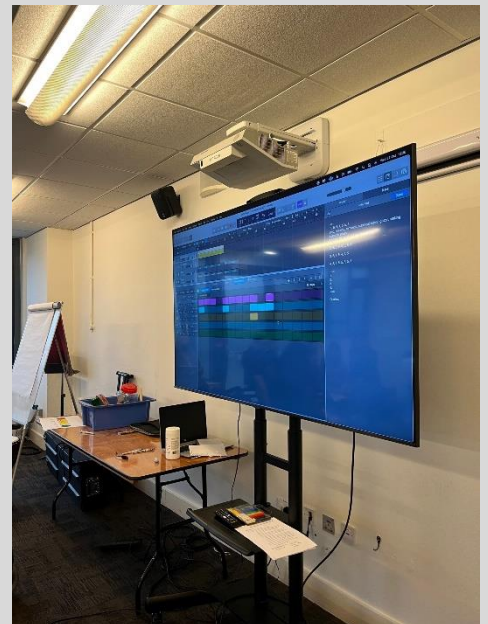
MAC Makes Music provides musical activities for groups with limited access to music provision. A core strand of their work supports disabled children and young people, who were the target group for this workshop.

The workshop was designed with Liz Birch (music leader and former Guest Artist of MAC Makes Music's in-house band SWITCH). The session was split into two groups: one in-person (for those aged 9-17yrs) and one online (14-20yrs).

Each group was asked a series of questions. In total, 11 responses were received. Most questions focused on how their voices should/could be heard through **Youth Music's** funding process.

In-person session

- The group were asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements about how young people could and should be listened to, and why it's important their voices are heard.
- Responses were gathered via the playing of musical instruments (e.g. five strums on a ukulele would relate to the top end of the scale: 'strongly agree', two taps of a tambourine would be "disagree", and so on.).
- Responses to questions were attributed a musical value (e.g. tempo, key, note) and transformed into a piece of music using Logic by music leader Liz Birch. This meant the group could hear their feedback 'live', and ensured the workshop remained musical, creative, and fun.
- The session also included a 'draw your favourite workshop leader' section, where participants listed what they considered to be the key qualities of a music leader.



Online session

- Overall, the five online participants were older than the in-person group. Some were members of MAC Makes Music's SWITCH house band, and two were part of their emerging music leader programme.
- The format of the session was more conversational, but the same questions as in the in-person group were asked. Much of the conversation focused on Youth Music's funding processes and young people's involvement in these.
- Responses were also used to create a track..
- As with the other group, the ingredients of an inspirational music leader or ideal music project were discussed.

Session findings

- 75% of participants said that it was very important that organisations should listen more to young people when deciding who to give money to, or what project to run. However only 38% of respondents strongly agreed that they feel like their voice is always heard at the moment.
- 100% of respondents said they liked being part of music-making projects – and 100% agreed that being able to make friends and play with others was important. The majority said they agreed or strongly agreed that young people should have a say in choosing what they play/project activities.
- 75% of participants agreed that Youth Music are a young-person centred organisation. We asked the groups how they could be involved in Youth Music's grant-making processes. They stressed the importance of Youth Music (and the organisations we fund) listening to young people throughout the design/delivery of projects.
- Respondents also said they would be interested to see the applications that come to Youth Music and would value more regular consultation about what it is that they want Youth Music to fund. Several respondents agreed they would like to have an input in determining their own outcomes.
- Reflecting on the session, Liz said that future sessions could benefit from being longer, as there wasn't enough time to reflect or fully explore the questions/answers given. Liz also thought that 1:1 sessions and more engagement with parents/carers could support more dedicated feedback from members of the group. 91% of respondents said they'd like to do another workshop like this again.

Workshop #3 – Soft Touch Arts

Background

Soft Touch Arts run creative activities to engage children and young people. They deliver a music programme where they run drop-in sessions in their studio and performance spaces in Leicester.

The workshop followed a ‘surgery’ format where young people aged 10-25 sat with Youth Music staff members for 10-15 minutes (either one-to-one or in small groups) over the course of an afternoon. As well as youth voice and participation, we spoke about funding opportunities for young people, how to build careers in music, and more.

Workshop format and planning

The workshop was on a Friday afternoon, when a range of activities – including multiple music groups, a young-person led café, art workshops, and studio sessions were all taking place. This meant we got to speak to a range of children and young people.

Working with Soft Touch Arts Director Joe, music leader Wavey, and Rahul who supports their youth consultation work, the afternoon session was in three parts:

1.30pm – 3.00pm An introduction to Soft Touch Arts

- Youth Music were shown round the different creative sessions that were happening there on that day. This was a great way to meet the young people involved in their projects and hear about what Soft Touch Arts means to them. This was also an opportunity for Youth Music to explain who we are, and why we were there.

3.00pm – 5.00pm Consultation and co-design “surgeries”

- Several Soft Touch Arts music group convened in the Main Space at their venue. Youth Music briefly explained why we were there before the groups began their own music-making sessions. Michelle and Sam from Youth Music stationed themselves in the Main Space and were introduced to participants of each music group individually, or in groups of 2-3.
- The questions Youth Music asked participants were structured on a loose framework to allow for wide-ranging discussion. The questions related to funding and decision-making processes, and what was most important for participants about music projects and organisations. Some of this time was also spent with participants asking Youth Music questions and getting to understanding the funding process in more detail.

5.30pm – 7.00pm Live open-mic and industry Q&A session

- A key outcome of delivering these workshops was the importance of ensuring there’s always a musical element to the sessions. The Soft Touch Arts workshop ended with live performances from participants at their regular Friday night open-mic session.

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