

Lewisham Music Sonic Minds Evaluation

Guidelines for interviewing young people



Direct questions can be a stressful experience for displaced young people. After arrival in the UK, they undergo demanding and intrusive questioning as a matter of course by the agencies who find them (for example, Border Force officials or the police) by social services (and especially if they face a challenge to their stated age) by accommodation providers, solicitors, and most hostile and distressing of all, by the Home Office. These questions generate additional stress in the need for the young person to give consistent answers, all the time. As a result, any process which involves questions of any time can be met with suspicion and reluctance to engage.

It is important to take steps to ensure the experience of evaluation is a positive one.

- Make sure the person asking the questions is someone known to the young person through the project.
- Ensure time is taken so that the young person understands why the questions are being asked.
- Reassure the young person that answers will stay within the project only.
- Underline thanks to the young person for helping in this way

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR INTERVIEWING VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

Preparation

- Prepare a maximum of 8 questions from the list below (one per outcome area)
- Set up chairs in a circle (recommend 4-5 participants per group interview)
- Have a flipchart / pens in the centre of the circle on the floor (not on a stand)
- Have a recording device and have a consent statement prepared
- What protections are in place for those who are less powerful in the activity/evaluation process?
- Be clear about what questions you are planning to ask, and why the particular questions are being asked.

Who are you?

- Be clear about your own positionality and how your own frame of reference may impact your approach to asking questions. You are unlikely to be neutral in the situation, but you are able to be objective:
 - How do you see the world, and how is it different / similar to how the participants view the world?

- How do you show up, and how does this influence how you interact with the participants?
- Be aware of your own privileges
- How are you considering racial inequity?
- Consider the power dynamics between yourself and the participants and how you might address any inequalities

Starting the discussion

Plan a trust-building ice-breaker. For example by asking one or two of the young people to share (on their or your phone/device) a song / piece of music they are listening to. Ask them why they shared this and what it means to them. Use this as a stimulus for discussion.

Asking questions

- It is very important that before asking questions relating to the evaluation are posed in any format, that time and care is taken to ensure the young person knows why the evaluation is happening and what it is for
- Take care to emphasize that sharing their true feelings will be really helpful
- When working with vulnerable young people it is important you have the flexibility to tailor your personal approach to them and their needs
- Focus on insights rather than sticking rigidly to the questions
- If the young person has limited language, clearly demonstrate through gesture and expression
- Use simple and direct language that the participants will understand. Avoid jargon
- Avoid closed questions that lead to a yes/no response
- Avoid putting participants in a position where they answer what they feel you want to hear, or that they answer to try to please you. Therefore don't ask leading questions
- Consider using visual aids – carefully considered images for example – to prompt discussion
- Be prepared for unpredictable and/or emotional responses, and consider in advance how you would deal with that. Some questions may be triggering for young people, and some aspects of your language may not translate well.
- How are you considering participants mental health and wellbeing during the process of the group interview / questions?

Are you listening?

- Use active listening techniques:
 - Give your full attention to the person who is speaking. Don't be distracted by background activity, or by your phone!
 - Listen without judgment and assessment. Suspend your own thought process and absorb what you are hearing
 - Display positive body language – don't fold your arms, maintain good eye contact, nod and smile, lean forward to show you are interested and attentive
 - Reflect things back to check you have understood correctly
 - Be patient

Closing the discussion

- How will you officially close the discussion? Make sure you offer thanks and gratitude, and explain what will happen next
- You could ask the participants if they have any questions for you
- Be mindful of the fact that many interesting discussions happen informally when the 'official' discussion is ended. Consider how you might capture this, and ensure you build in time at the end of the session so that participants don't feel like you are rushing off

Embedding Social Justice principles into evaluation

This evaluation approach is informed by the [Equitable Evaluation Framework](#) and these key principles:

1. Evaluation work should at its core be about advancing towards equity
2. Evaluation work should be exploring questions about how historical and structural conditions are contributing factors, the effect of the activity on different populations, the effect of the activity on underlying systemic drivers of inequity, how cultural context is tied up in the structural conditions and the music activity itself.
3. Evaluation work should be multiculturally valid, and orientated towards participant ownership

Outcome area	Possible question(s)
Motivation	<p>What parts of the workshops did you enjoy the most? If the workshop was extended, what types of activities would you want to continue? What types of activities would you want to remove?</p> <p>Would you want the workshops to be longer or shorter?</p> <p>What did you find difficult about the workshops? What did you find easy about the workshops? Was there anything that got easier over time throughout the workshop? Was there anything that got more difficult over time?</p>

<p>Creativity</p>	<p>Did you find it easy to create and share your ideas? If no, then what did you find difficult?</p> <p>In the workshops, you were asked to make pieces of music together with other students. Was this challenging, and if so, why?</p> <p>Did you prefer making music alone, pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class?</p> <p>Did you enjoy the process of recording music?</p>
<p>Self efficacy and Agency</p>	<p>In the workshops, you were given some opportunities to lead the class. Was this comfortable for you? Did it get easier with time? If not, then what was difficult about it?</p> <p>Do you feel like you are able to make music or be creative on your own? If not, what do you think you might need to help you be creative outside of the workshop?</p> <p>Did you feel comfortable expressing yourself in the workshops? For example, if you were feeling sad, could you communicate that you were sad?</p> <p>If the workshop was an optional course, would you choose to participate?</p>
<p>Technical and transferable skills</p>	<p>Do you feel like you were able to learn new skills or build on existing ones? If yes, could you describe which skills?</p> <p>Do you feel like the workshops helped you be able to communicate in English?</p> <p>If you could choose, what skills would you like the workshops to focus on and develop (recording, performing, different instruments, etc)?</p>

Wellbeing

How did playing music affect your mood?

Were you able to make new friends or improve existing relationships during the workshop?

If you liked the workshops, what parts of it did you find enjoyable? What parts of it did you not find enjoyable?