

Creative methods

Most projects and sessions provided through Youth Music funding will involve some level of creativity. It is therefore important to use creative evaluation methods wherever possible.

Administering questionnaires using creative methods

these are just a few suggestions we have seen presented back to us over recent years:

- use the cross fader or volume control on a mixing desk as a sliding scale when asking certain questions
- use drums to get a response to a scale question in a questionnaire (where drumming very loudly means you strongly agree and drumming very quietly means you strongly disagree).
- Post five happy to unhappy faces at different areas of the room and, instead of using a questionnaire, read a question aloud and asks participants to go the face that most represents how they feel – then count them.

Using music, songs and lyrics in evaluation

Sometimes the musical creations of participants can tell us a huge amount about their development on a project. Comparing a recording of a participant's composition near the beginning and near the end of a project can show clear musical development. Similarly, looking at the lyrical complexity (or subject matter) over the course of a project can show wider social and personal development. These are fantastic sources of data to include in your evaluation and in showing progress towards your intended outcomes.

It is very important that participants have consented to these being used, and extra care should be taken if presenting these to a public audience or in reporting to ensure consent and anonymity.

Box 1. Reporting song lyrics in evaluation – Making sounds

Rob was very shy when asked to participate in the first song-writing session. He wrote a very short composition with his tutor which was lyrically and rhythmically, quite basic. His lyrics were imitative of an American 'gangsta rap' style (the chorus comprising of simply 'uh, uh, yeah bitch'). By week six Rob was very excited about joining in with the song-writing sessions and often chose to lead the sessions by sharing his latest compositions. His week six song explored his feelings towards his recent custody experience and he commented that it made him feel better to share

It with the group in this way, rather than just talking about it. The lyrics themselves show an increasing maturity and greater sense of emotional expression. A sample from the lyrics is below:

*Whenever I cried, felt like I'd died,
You're son, you're brother,
There's nothing inside*

This lyrical and personal development is a clear indicator of how the workshops contributed to the intended outcome of improving participants' expressive and creative ability.

