

Working with others

Musical inclusion guidance

By Sound Sense for Youth Music

Working with other adults in your session - tips from the Musical Inclusion community

'Work well with people' is one of the criteria in the Music Education Code of Practice: <http://www.soundsense.org/metadot/index.pl?id=25842&isa=Category&op=show>. But what do you do when young people's teachers, youth/case workers, carers or volunteers are proving a hindrance to your session?

This document has been developed from a blog post and related conversations on the Youth Music Network (<http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/learning/blogs/paul-weston/other-adults-your-session-help-or-hindrance>) and a facilitated discussion at a national gathering of organisations funded by Youth Music's Musical Inclusion programme.

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1. What are the drawbacks of having other adults in your session?

The presence of teachers, youth/case workers, carers or volunteers is often helpful and indeed essential in certain settings (such as youth justice). Yet their presence can affect the way sessions would usually run, for example:

- young people may feel intimidated by their presence or demonstrate certain behaviours that will affect the group dynamic (particularly when the adult isn't respected by them).
- there may be codes of behaviour (conscious or unconscious) that are at odds with the effective practice for musical inclusion eg young people in schools having to call staff by their title and last name, rather than first name.

- some adults may see music practitioners as a challenge to their relationship with the young people or a threat to their own methods of teaching.
- adults with previous negative experiences of music might perceive musicians as a threat that will embarrass them in front of the young people.
- the people who contract the work aren't usually the adults who will be in the session. This can lead to misunderstandings around aims and approaches.
- when the other adults are different for each session this can interrupt continuity for practitioner and participants.

Of course, experienced music practitioners may prefer to manage the group on their own. As one practitioner/manager says: *"I believe there is a need for more music leaders who can run sessions on their own without a teacher/youth work/support worker to deal with discipline. Managing behaviour is*

integral to working with groups and cannot really be separated out. Also music leaders having these skills is relevant to securing long term funding from the settings where we are working. If we can provide serious value for money then we can create situations where good quality music sessions become a core part of what is done, rather than a short term extra that only ever works with heavy subsidy."

However there are plenty of situations where it is necessary to have other adults in your session and the this guidance document focuses on those.

2. What are the most common scenarios?

There appear to be four common scenarios and relationships:

1. The adult/s see sessions as an excuse to have a break and disappear, leaving you to manage the behaviour of the young people. This has obvious safeguarding implications but many of us will have experienced it at some point.
2. The adult/s stay but refuse to participate stating that they are “not musical”. This sends a very mixed message to the young people they work with.
3. The adult/s stay but interferes by trying to discipline or control the group. This can undermine your authority and ability to manage the behaviour and interrupt the flow of the session.
4. The adults join in, are open to the experience and only step in when needed. This is the ideal situation for many music practitioners.

3. Making it work: tips from the Musical Inclusion community

An ‘active partnership’ between the music organisation (and its practitioner) and the setting (and its representative, as the other adult in the room) is key – the practitioner and the other adult each learning about the other’s roles.

Every situation is different and is dependent on your people and negotiation skills, but the following tips are from practitioners and managers about how they deal with these challenges.

- ***create a formal agreement***

about what is expected from both practitioner and the other adult. You may need to cover some basic issues such as:

- where you’ll each sit/stand
- whether the other adult should join in with the music or not
- whether they should contribute to discussions about the learning or not

- key things you'll each avoid doing
- key responsibilities you will each take if a young person is acting up.

• ***meet with the key people beforehand.*** Formal agreements aren't always shared with those staff who will actually be in the session. A meeting or telephone call prior to the project will help, which could include the practitioner and the other adult in the room, as well as the employing organisation and someone from the setting. The purpose might be to:

- encourage a two (or more) way flow of information and feedback
- allow each party to explain how things work, ask questions, etc.
- exchange, where appropriate, relevant information about either the setting or the children and young people themselves. This information might be

anonymised, if sensitive, but could support the practitioner in their delivery. (See our 'Collecting and sharing sensitive information' guidance document.)

Formal and informal agreements, meetings etc will add to the cost of the work, but could significantly improve the quality of the actual sessions.

• ***create a handout or crib sheet for conversations*** along the lines of 'Six things you can bear in mind to help our session run smoothly' may help in some settings/with some people

• ***if you're a musician, discuss with your managers what has been agreed*** Ideally, ask to be involved at planning stage (but this may not be possible because of time/cost) and give your input. Also check it out with the staff that you'll be working with when you arrive.

• ***be prepared to negotiate issues on the spot,*** rather than leaving them

to fester - you can never plan for all circumstances. You may need to be firm about the importance of maintaining the space to carry out the work, and not allowing the other adult/s to infringe upon this

- **communicate clearly and listen**

- most support staff want to be helpful, but their understanding of what's helpful can vary. Make sure to communicate your expectations clearly and explicitly but also listen, respecting the understanding that other staff might have of participants' needs.

"A common mistake is to assume that because a participant is normally fine with you, they will never 'kick off' or cause a problem in your session. We need to be both humble and assertive. There are points where we need to take risks, and trust or push participants to achieve new things, but this should be informed risk, not empty arrogance!"

- **find out the causes of disruptive behaviour from staff** - if staff are hindering your session as a result of their behaviour, you may choose to find out the causes, in similar ways to how you'd work with participants.

Talk to your line manager as soon as problems arise.

"'Problem' behaviours in staff may be driven by fears of looking a fool. They may have resentments or other issues and don't want sessions to succeed. We need to identify this as soon as possible and address it; wherever possible asking, and seeking to understand. I worked in one unit with a history of poor relations between care staff and visiting arts leaders and discovered that staff had been talking about us being paid more than them, they felt that they had to do 'difficult' tasks with the clients, whereas we just came in and had fun, they also received very little training. Because I listened and expressed my admiration of how they managed aspects of their role, relationships improved hugely, which benefited the work."

4. Further reading/guidance

Working with other adults in the class: University of Mark & St John, Plymouth

<http://marjon.ac.uk/sen/interactive/tda-training-toolkit-sen/TDA-SEN-U3-Sess16.pdf>

A training manual for those training teachers to work with teaching assistants, with pupils with special educational needs – but containing useful information for a wide range of settings and practice. Guidance and resources including to videos, scenarios to work through.

According to the introduction, it will help trainees to: understand the key features of working with additional adults in the classroom; be aware of the research evidence about the impact of additional support; understand the importance of promoting pupils' independence; understand the range of roles of additional adults, and; be aware of the issues around managing additional adults.

Handbook for Artists, A Peaker (2000)

This book has good notes on managing relationships with prison warders. It's out of print but you may be able to find it at:

<http://www.abebooks.com/book-search/title/handbook-for-artists->

a-practical-guide-to-working-in-prisons.

About the Musical Inclusion programme

Musical Inclusion was a programme funded by Youth Music, running from April 2012 to March 2015.

Youth Music invested in 26 Musical Inclusion projects, tasked with ensuring that all children and young people in their local areas were able to access music-making opportunities, by working in and through the (new at that point) Music Education Hubs.

Sound Sense led the Musical Inclusion Evaluation and Networking team.

Projects carried out music education work with children in challenging circumstances;

workforce development to ensure the quality of the provision; and strategic working to ensure and the quality of the provision; and strategic working to ensure integration of musically inclusive practice in hubs across England. You can find out more at <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/musicalinclusion>.

Edited from contributions of practitioners working on Musical Inclusion projects supported by Youth Music. Particular thanks to Paul Weston who started the conversation topic.

National Foundation for Youth Music

Youth Music is a national charity supporting life-changing music-making. Every year, it provides children and young people with the opportunity to make music, helping them to overcome the challenges they face in their lives. The projects it funds support young people to develop their creative and social skills, make positive contributions to their community and improve their wellbeing. Its ongoing research and growing online community for music education professionals helps develop high quality practice and drive fresh thinking in music education. Youth Music is supported by Arts Council England, People's Postcode Lottery and charitable donations.

youthmusic.org.uk
network.youthmusic.org.uk



National Foundation for
Youth Music



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Sound Sense

Sound Sense is the professional association promoting community music and supporting community musicians. Community musicians are specialists in breaking down barriers to participation in music. They work with participants of all ages and abilities to support their active and creative participation in music and respond to their needs and interests. Many of them are specialists in working with young people in challenging circumstances.

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