



Exchanging Notes Evaluation

Aim: To evaluate the effects of a music education intervention on the musical and broader educational outcomes for young people at risk of low attainment, disengagement or educational exclusion through a longitudinal action research study.

Background

This action research project responds to a pilot study¹ which highlighted some of the key differences in music education experienced inside and outside the school classroom. This research suggested that distinctive features of out of school (or 'non-formal') music education practice contribute to the musical and broader educational outcomes achieved by children and young people. However, the authors also identified a need for the study to be widened to more contexts and for a further number of variables to be considered over a larger sample.

Since 1999 The National Foundation for Youth Music (Youth Music) has invested over £130 million in music education, and funded over 3,000 projects, most of which have used non-formal pedagogy to engage and educate children and young people in music. Importantly, Youth Music projects largely subscribe to the principles of community music which focus on inclusion, diversity, equality, co-creation and whole-person development.

The empirical study of, and evidence base for, the musical and wider effects of out-of-school, non-formal music education is not as well established as some other areas of music education, or education more broadly – although it is a growing field. There is also an increasing evidence base demonstrating the positive effects of non-formal music interventions on a wide range of outcomes for young people².

We are seeking an organisation to conduct a large-scale empirical action research project exploring whether a combination of the educational approaches used by Youth Music-funded non-formal projects and by schools working in partnership with them have extended benefits to school-age pupils in challenging circumstances. It will take the form of a new module – Exchanging Notes – being designed for the Youth Music's funding programme (see additional information on the Youth Music Network 'Exchanging Notes Evaluation' group).

The Exchanging Notes module will encourage partnerships between schools and non-formal music education organisations and/or practitioners with a view to increasing the exchange of ideas, practice and understanding of effective music education pedagogies for working with young people in challenging circumstances. This delivery can take place in or out of school (or a combination thereof) and will be used to complement existing school music provision.

The main target group for this work is young people facing challenging circumstances which may place them at risk of low attainment, disengagement or exclusion from mainstream education. Factors that place young people at risk of educational exclusion or disengagement might include (but are not limited to) ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background, having special educational needs, family difficulties

or living in care. In their application, applicants will be expected to state their rationale for selecting the core target participants of their project.

The research will take place over 10 sites, with the evaluation tracking a minimum core sample of 20 young people per site and per year (though direct participant numbers are expected to be higher). The intervention will last for four years, commencing September 2014.

Building on published research and evidence from funded projects, Youth Music has developed a draft quality framework which synthesises what we believe to be the core elements of effective non-formal music education pedagogy and practice. Each project will subscribe to the principles of this framework in its approach and pedagogy, which will provide an element of commonality in the principles of delivery across the 10 projects.

Who we want to support

Direct Beneficiaries: In-school and out of school educators; in-school music and other departments and out of school music education organisations.

Indirect Beneficiaries: Parents/carers; communities.

Specific eligibility criteria

Applicants are expected to be experienced in conducting longitudinal and action research studies (including the facilitation of practice-sharing networks).

Applicants must have experience of conducting research with schools and with young people in challenging circumstances.

Organisations must have demonstrable knowledge of music education policy and practice.

Guideline request amount

£208,000, broken down as follows:

- £50,000 per academic year (September 2014 to July 2018), and
- An additional £4,000 at either side of this period for preliminary planning activity and eventual dissemination of research findings.

Lifespan

The evaluation will run from January 2014 (commencing with an inception meeting) to September 2018. Main project delivery will run for four academic years between September 2014 and July 2018.

Required match funding

None

Intended outcomes

Generic

1. To improve the quality and standards of music delivery for children and young people
2. To embed learning and effective practice in host and partner organisations and share practice beyond the project

Module Specific

3. To evidence the impact of the Exchanging Notes projects on educational and broader developmental outcomes for young people
4. To test the validity of a Youth Music pedagogical quality framework as a tool for increasing educational engagement of young people
5. To develop the educational practice of schools, non-formal music organisations, teachers and practitioners through an action research model

Guidance on activities

It is expected the appointed team will produce six-monthly interim reports from April 2015 – April 2018 inclusive, and the final evaluation will be produced to publication standard, with a free-standing executive summary, in September 2018.

The successful organisation will be expected to liaise directly with the grant-holders and provide support throughout the action research element. This will include at least 8 x six-monthly national meetings with representatives from each site. Full details of proposed action research models should be outlined in the application form.

A representative of the evaluation team will be expected to attend project advisory group meetings as scheduled by Youth Music.

Applicants are expected to outline their proposed methodology within their application. We would expect this to include the collection of indicators relating to the following:

- Musical skills and abilities of participants
- Personal and social skills of participants
- Educational engagement and attainment of participants
- Pedagogical approaches of practitioners across settings
- Quality and standards of delivery across the formal/non-formal partnerships
- Extent to which learning from projects is shared between and beyond participating partnerships
- Other relevant indicators

Applicants are expected to disseminate the findings of the evaluation throughout the course of the grant.

How to apply

If you are eligible to apply for this module and would like to access the full application pack, you will need to join the Exchanging Notes Evaluation group on the Youth Music Network. This will be a closed group where Youth Music will post all application documentation and any questions or updates that arise throughout the application period.

In order to join the group, you will need to:

1. Register on the Youth Music Network (<http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/user/register>).
2. Complete a short eligibility quiz created especially for this funding module. Once registered on the Network, applicants should email grants@youthmusic.org.uk to request a link to begin the quiz. Upon successful completion of the quiz you will be added to the Exchanging Notes Evaluation group and will receive a welcome email within 24 hours.

¹ Saunders, J. And Welch, G. (2012) 'Communities of Music Education: a pilot study', Youth Music/Institute of Music Education: London <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/resources/research/communities-music-education>

² Lonie, D. (2012) Youth Music Impact Report 2011/12, Youth Music: London <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/resources/research/youth-music-impact-report-2011-2012>