

How can I improve
the quality of my work?

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National Foundation for
Youth Music



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What is the quality framework and who is it for?

Informed by evidence collected by Youth Music over a period of more than ten years, the quality framework defines the essential criteria for a high quality music-making project. We ask that all projects funded by Youth Music use the quality framework to reflect on and demonstrate the quality of their provision.

As well as a tool for planning and peer observation, the framework can be used for self-reflection by individual music leaders, allowing them to cross-reference their practice against broader principles and to identify areas in which they may wish to develop.

This framework can be used by any organisation involved in the delivery of music-making sessions with young people. We will look for evidence that you intend to embed the quality framework in your project, should you apply for a grant from us.

Using the framework

While the framework refers to a 'young musician' in the singular, in a group setting the music leader will be expected to relate the criteria to each individual and the group, and where appropriate adapt the criteria to address the aims of group music-making. The framework is intended for session

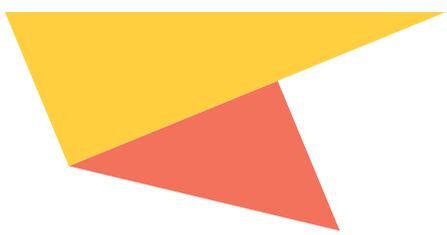
observation: to monitor the face-to-face interaction between the young musician and the music leader. Having said this, sessions do not usually take place in isolation, and some criteria may only become evident over a number of sessions; in these instances a wider and on-going conversation with the music leader may be appropriate (e.g. 'broadening musical horizons by introducing new and other musics' may not be possible or appropriate in each and every session, but the music leader may have a clear plan for how it will be delivered over the whole project). Please note that wider processes and policies (such as safeguarding, insurance and child protection) are not covered.

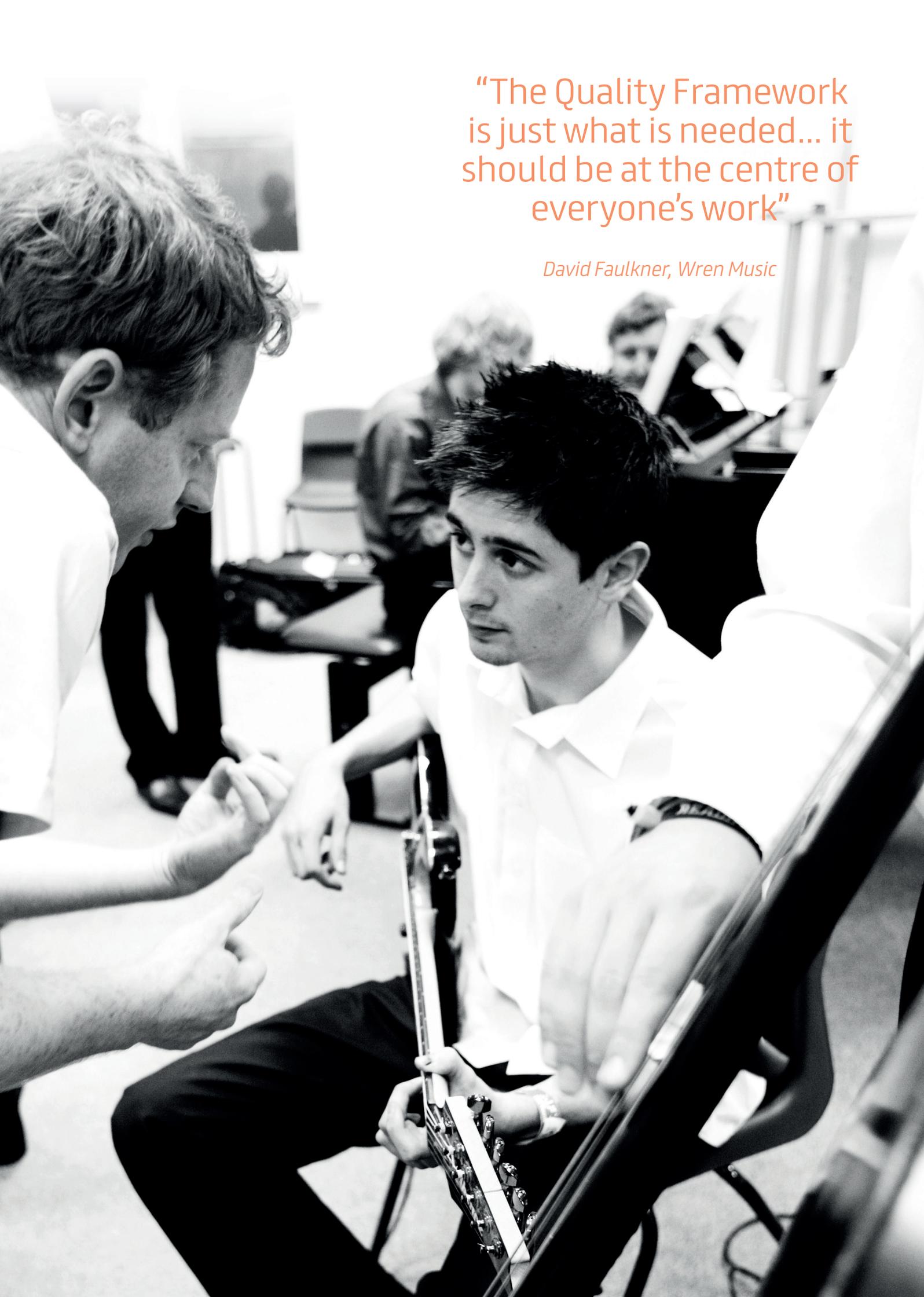
Terms

Music leader – the person leading the activities: the practitioner, usually an adult, the teacher/facilitator.

Young musician – this term was chosen over 'young person', 'child' or 'participant' to empower the young person. It makes the relationship between practitioner and participant more equal, and demonstrates that this framework applies when the young person is actively participating in making music.

Progression – this refers to the broadest interpretation of the social, personal and musical development of the young musician.





“The Quality Framework
is just what is needed... it
should be at the centre of
everyone’s work”

David Faulkner, Wren Music

Background

Youth Music developed the quality framework to explore, demonstrate evidence of, and celebrate the quality of the experiences provided to young people across all funded projects. Youth Music has been developing the quality framework since 2012. Drawing on the findings of Communities of Music Education (Saunders & Welch, 2012), which compared the features of excellent music provision in out of school settings with Ofsted guidelines for music in-school, one of the aims of the quality framework is to enable better dialogue between all those involved in young people's music education.

Two other examples of quality frameworks were closely analysed (one from the education sector and one from the arts), and the presentation, form and language of these informed the development of the Youth Music quality framework.

Raising the standard of work by, with and for children and young people (2012) was a report by the National Foundation for Educational Research, commissioned by Arts Council England. This research examined 31 quality frameworks from a number of settings around the world and drew together the common themes into seven core principles. The framework was then cross-referenced

with these principles to ensure that (where appropriate) they were addressed in the Youth Music quality framework.

Finally, academics, project managers and music leaders were consulted on the draft framework. This led to refinement of the terminology and a consensus that practical examples for each of the criteria would make the framework more accessible and user-friendly.

The quality framework builds on the Music Education Code of Practice, which was developed by Youth Music and Sound Sense in 2011. It is recommended that you read the Code of Practice in conjunction with this framework to access further resources and recommendations about other aspects of music leading not covered here, such as preparation and health and safety. You can find this on the Youth Music Network (www.youthmusic.org.uk/network).

Youth Music uses an outcomes approach across its funding programme. The outcomes approach provides a method for projects to plan effective evaluation activities and measure the impact of their provision. This framework builds on and supports the outcomes approach by supporting you to reflect on and improve the quality of your provision.

Quality Framework criteria

Young people-centred

Y1

Music-making is placed within the wider context of the young musician's life, with recognition of the young musician's existing musical identity

Y2

Young musicians experience equality of engagement: no participant is discriminated against

Y3

The young musician's performance and technique are monitored, and achievements are celebrated and valued

Y4

Feedback on young musician's practice is given, with next steps for improvement made clear (though not necessarily through spoken instruction). Where possible the pathway for improvement is identified by the young musician and their peers

Y5

Achievement and excellence are measured in terms of personal progress and a comparison to others is only made where appropriate

Y6

The music leader and/or project staff identify any needs for additional pastoral or other support, and seek to provide or signpost to this as appropriate

Session content

S1

Activities are engaging and inspiring and allow young people to achieve their full potential

S2

The musical process (and what is expected of the young musician) is clearly explained and demystified

S3

The young musician's views are integral to the session

S4

Young musicians are supported to progress their musical skills, and other skills through music

S5

Sessions have an atmosphere of collective learning; music leader and young musician support each other to develop and excel

S6

The intent for the session is clear and reinforced, although not necessarily through formal spoken instruction

S7

Young musicians are supported to broaden their musical horizons through listening to and understanding other musics, as well as making their own

S8

The music leader recognises and nurtures the young musician's musical development, as well as their wider understanding of what it means to be a musician

Quality Framework criteria

Environment

- E1** | The ratio of young musicians to music leaders (and other project staff where required) is appropriate
- E2** | Consideration has been given to the physical space, with available resources being best used to make it comfortable and appropriate for the target group
- E3** | There are appropriate and sufficient materials and equipment to support the activities
- E4** | The duration of contact time and depth of engagement are sufficient and appropriate to achieve the intended outcomes

Music leader practice

- M1** | The music leader has demonstrable appropriate musical competence, and is both an able teacher/facilitator and an inspirational role model
- M2** | The music leader has an appropriate understanding of the young musician's starting point. Activities are designed and delivered in a manner appropriate to the musical and other needs of the young musician
- M3** | The music leader reflects on their practice: activities are reviewed and adapted over the course of the session according to how the young musicians respond, and the music leader takes time after the session for self-evaluation
- M4** | The music leader has up-to-date knowledge of progression routes appropriate to the young musician
- M5** | Project staff - beyond the music leaders - show commitment to the activities, and music leaders and other project staff communicate before, during and/or after the session

“Quality needs to be the heart of everything we do in music education”

Professor Martin Faultley, Birmingham City University





“This framework should become an essential pillar of quality practice in participatory arts”

Kathryn Deane, Director, Sound Sense

Observation worksheet

This worksheet is designed for use in session observation. You might find it useful to make general notes during the session, then mark on the scale and make notes against each of the criteria when you have been able to reflect on the session as a whole. A yellow mark shows that the criterion was fully met and a purple mark shows that it was not met at all.

It is not intended that music leaders will be scored or ranked, or for a comparison to be made with others (as echoed in criterion Y5 of the framework).

Date / /

Venue

Session title

Music leader

Notes on the session – what happened?

Example

An example criterion from the quality framework



Notes

Demonstrated through your manner with the young musicians and the time you had taken to do some research before the session. This could have been improved by responding with x, y or z for this particular group of young people.

Young people-centred

Y1 | Music-making is placed within the wider context of the young musician's life, with recognition of the young musician's existing musical identity



Notes

Y2 | Young musicians experience equality of engagement: no participant is discriminated against



Notes

Y3 | The young musician's performance and technique are monitored, and achievements are celebrated and valued



Notes

Y4 | Feedback on young musician's practice is given, with next steps for improvement made clear (though not necessarily through spoken instruction). Where possible the pathway for improvement is identified by the young musician and their peers



Notes

Y5 | Achievement and excellence are measured in terms of personal progress and a comparison to others is only made where appropriate



Notes

Y6 | The music leader and/or project staff identify any needs for additional pastoral or other support, and seek to provide or signpost to this as appropriate



Notes

Session content

S1 | Activities are engaging and inspiring and allow young people to achieve their full potential



Notes

S2 | The musical process (and what is expected of the young musician) is clearly explained and demystified



Notes

S3 | The young musician's views are integral to the session



Notes

S4 | Young musicians are supported to progress their musical skills, and other skills through music



Notes

S5 | Sessions have an atmosphere of collective learning; music leader and young musician support each other to develop and excel



Notes

S6 | The intent for the session is clear and reinforced, although not necessarily through formal spoken instruction



Notes

S7 | Young musicians are supported to broaden their musical horizons through listening to and understanding other musics, as well as making their own



Notes

S8 | The music leader recognises and nurtures the young musician's musical development, as well as their wider understanding of what it means to be a musician



Notes

Environment

- E1** | The ratio of young musicians to music leaders (and other project staff where required) is appropriate



Notes

- E2** | Consideration has been given to the physical space, with available resources being best used to make it comfortable and appropriate for the target group



Notes

- E3** | There are appropriate and sufficient materials and equipment to support the activities



Notes

E4 | The duration of contact time and depth of engagement are sufficient and appropriate to achieve the intended outcomes



Notes

Music leader practice

M1 | The music leader has demonstrable appropriate musical competence, and is both an able teacher/facilitator and an inspirational role model



Notes

M2 | The music leader has an appropriate understanding of the young musician's starting point. Activities are designed and delivered in a manner appropriate to the musical and other needs of the young musician



Notes

M3 | The music leader reflects on their practice: activities are reviewed and adapted over the course of the session according to how the young musicians respond, and the music leader takes time after the session for self-evaluation



Notes

M4 | The music leader has up-to-date knowledge of progression routes appropriate to the young musician



Notes

M5 | Project staff - beyond the music leaders - show commitment to the activities, and music leaders and other project staff communicate before, during and/or after the session

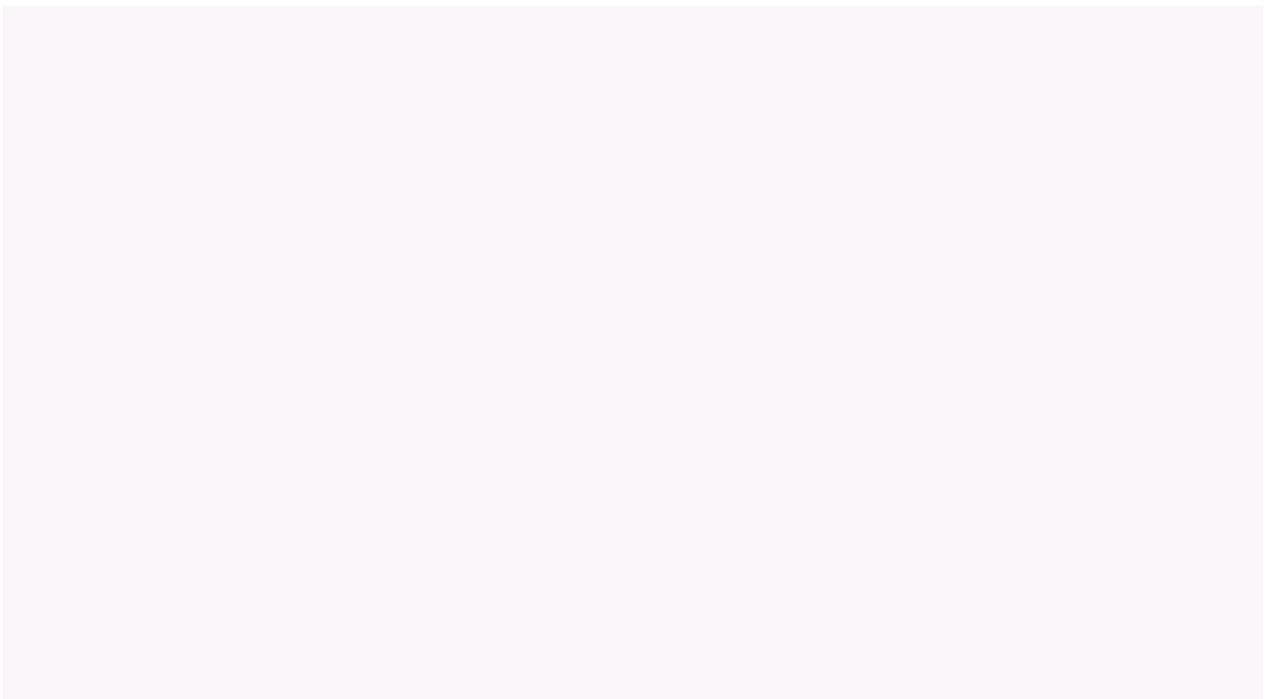


Notes

Summary notes



Next steps



Examples

Youth Music asked music-making organisations to share examples of how they meet certain criteria in the Quality Framework. We'd like to keep developing this resource, eventually having great case studies for each criterion from projects around the country. If you have an example you'd like to share, please post it on the Youth Music Network at <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/qualityframework> or email network@youthmusic.org.uk.

Thanks to AudioActive, CEDA, The Garage, soundLINCS and Wren Music for contributing examples.

Y1 | Music-making is placed within the wider context of the young musician's life, with recognition of the young musician's existing musical identity

“Across Devon we have a number of area roots bands and youth choirs, as well as two county level groups (one instrumental and one vocal) for older teenagers. When we work with these regular groups of young people, the musical and creative relationship that develops between the music leaders and the young people is based on each of them bringing a part of themselves. When writing new tunes or songs the group works collectively, drawing on the young people's ideas and influences from other parts of their musical lives.

“In a one-off session the tune or song is usually chosen by the music leader, but we use the young people's ideas when putting together the arrangement. And more explicitly when we use the junk rig, we usually start with a bass line from a pop song and then improvise around that on the higher pitched instruments (and we are usually able to find some traditional rhythms to go underneath!).

“Having said all this, we also consider it important that the existing musical identity of the music leader is respected: as a professional musician they have a role to play in being one of the musical influences that the young people are exposed to.”



“This tool enables us to reflect on our own practice and to share effective practice with each other.”

Dick Hallam, Chair of Music Education Council

Y2 | Young musicians experience equality of engagement: no participant is discriminated against

“All good music workshops value inclusion and fairness alongside creativity, self-expression, collaboration and meaningful experiences of development. There are many factors that can directly (or indirectly) influence whether a young musician would agree with the statement ‘I had the same opportunities as everyone else’.

“The primary responsibility for anti-discriminatory practice rests with the music leader which is shared with project managers and group/setting representatives. Anti-discriminatory practice, in this context, is probably not the same thing as knowing what the law says (although that is clearly important). Anti-discriminatory practice is the physical expression of a core value that goes something like “I believe we are equal irrespective of who you are, where you are from, what you believe, why you are here, what you already know, like or can do”. This is the best starting point to ensure that young musicians experience equality of engagement.

“The music leader’s ability to differentiate and adapt activities according to individual needs, abilities and interests is essential for anti-discriminatory practice. Simply planning to teach three guitar chords to a group that includes a fluent improviser, a saxophonist and a DJ isn’t likely to work! The leader needs to multi-task such that all participants are engaged in a group activity through making individual contributions that are unique, enjoyable and challenging for them.

“The music leader needs to be monitoring their practice throughout the workshop. Have I included that quiet participant sitting at the back? Have I favoured the ideas of one participant above others? Who hasn’t had the chance to use the iPads yet? Is there a young musician in this room who is dominating others? When did I last check out that everyone is ok? The self-monitoring process can help the music leader to be more aware of their own practice and decision making, and re-engage participants who have ‘got lost’ for one reason or another.”

S7 | Young musicians are supported to progress their musical skills, and other skills through music

“At our organisation we would expect this to be evidenced by practitioner’s pre-session planning and meetings, discussing tailored routes for each young person, awareness of musical progression in and out of qualifications, young people using scales which track the difference made to their musical skills and wider outcomes (social, functional skills).”

S8 | The music leader recognises and nurtures the young musician's musical development, as well as their wider understanding of what it means to be a musician

Through taking part in a quality project, young people should develop an understanding that there is a wealth of careers related to music: performer, sound engineer, composer, broadcaster, music journalist, technician, film scorer, instrument maker, manager/agent, producer... the list goes on. And it may well be the case that a career in or with music is not the intention for every young person. How many of us garner enjoyment from music while not considering ourselves musicians, perhaps from being informed listeners and audiences? How many of us define as 'musical adults' because we sing in a choir on Wednesday nights, or like to strum the guitar on holiday?

E1 | The ratio of young musicians to music leaders (and other project staff where required) is appropriate

"There isn't a neat formula that can be applied to all the variables involved in a music workshop to calculate the perfect ratio. It is useful to consider significant variables.

- How large is the group and how old are they?
- What is the setting/location and where is it? (e.g. school, youth centre, Pupil Referral Unit, festival site)
- What else is known about the setting/location? (e.g. access, accessibility, power, musical resources, sole use or shared)
- What spaces are available for the workshop? (e.g. upstairs/ground floor, is it going to be suitable? are enough separate spaces available?)
- Is the setting providing staff to support the workshop?
- What is known about the group? (e.g. looked after children, children with physical disabilities, informal youth group)
- What else is known about the group? (e.g. they are enthusiastic musicians, they have never met each other, they can be boisterous)
- What is known about the workshop? (e.g. single taster session, regular weekend session, holiday project, 12-week school project, links to a festival, culminates in a performance)
- What else is known about the workshop? (e.g. Rock School, gospel choir, singing and songwriting, Samba drumming, music production)

"Managers and music leaders should be aware of any statutory requirement for ratios relevant for the group they are working with (such as within early years or with childminders). Ideally the music leader will not be included within

this ratio, as the relevant settings have a responsibility to provide appropriate staffing levels at all times. Managers and music leaders should always try to find out if any formal or informal ratio guidelines exist for the setting that is hosting the workshop.

“Two examples of projects help to illustrate how variables inform decisions about ratio:

“Download is a 12-week music technology project working with whole classes for one-hour sessions in primary schools. It makes use of any and all technology resources that are available in the school. A named teacher is committed to attend and support every session. Additional training sessions are available to the teacher to improve their music technology confidence, skills and knowledge. The project was led in each school by a single music leader and supported by the named teacher. Class sizes were typical for a primary school, ranging from 22 to 28.

“soundBOOST is a project working with looked after children. One strand worked with a small group of around six to eight care leavers for two-hour sessions weekly, over 24 weeks. The sessions focussed on singing, rapping, songwriting, music technology, recording, and playing instruments. The group were supported by a Leaving Care worker. Participants, particularly in the early stages, needed short focused activities to retain engagement. The project contracted two music leaders.

“It can be seen from these two examples that the ratio of music leaders and project staff to young musicians varies considerably. For Download the ratio is around 1:14. For soundBOOST it is around 1:3. However, having considered all the influencing variables, we are confident these are the most appropriate ratios.”

E2 | Consideration has been given to the physical space, with steps taken to make it comfortable and appropriate for the target group

“Our music room is located in a building next to our soft play room, computer room and main kids’ room. Therefore more often than not, young people will drop in and out to participate in music.

“I do my best to ensure that the music room is always welcoming, everything is working/assembled/turned on and that it is generally a great environment to explore and make music. Creating a safe environment is a key part to a young person feeling confident enough to learn.

“Recently however, introducing variety to these sessions has created even more interesting results. I experimented by closing the music room, relocating to an alternative room, closing the curtains, putting some soft lights on, putting a projection of the sea on the wall and some SFX of waves in the background. I then set up some assistive music technology such as iPads, a Soundbeam as well as some simple percussive instruments. The results were immediately different! Just the fact that I had changed room was enough to spark an



alternative type of engagement and curiosity. All the other sensory 'add-ons' just helped fuel the situation and the whole session was great throughout the day, creating some really good soundscapes.

“Taking this further, we always like to encourage our young people to mix into the community. I now can take our drumming sessions into the woods or down by the river. The young people who used to tell me that they hated music when they refused to participate in sessions at the centre, were now imagining they were cave men banging the drums from years ago making as much noise as they could in the middle of the woods. A great success considering not only were they almost leading the session themselves, they were doing it using their own imagination and creativity.



“A change in environment has produced some very interesting and new results from our young people. Furthermore, it can stop sessions going stale and adds some real variety to making music. Sometimes as a music leader we may think mainly about us the practitioner and the young people themselves and see this as the most important two-way relationship for making music. I think however it's important to remember there's a third 'influence' in all of this, one which we can control, and this has just as much affect on our sessions as the relationship between the music leader and the young people. As we know there are five senses in our body and these all impact on how we think and feel.”



E3 | **There are appropriate and sufficient materials and equipment to support the activities**

It is important that the equipment available is appropriate to the size of group and the planned activities. For example, if young people are working individually on creating electronic music, there should be enough work stations, software licences and sets of headphones for each of them to have sufficient creative time within the session. Attention to simple detail can change the feeling of the session; if there are not enough copies of the lyrics and young musicians are not able to make their own personal notes on the arrangement, will they remember it as well? Will they develop their own ways to write notes on the music? Will they feel the same sense of ownership and achievement when it goes well?

In this context, 'materials' also refers to the session content and the planned activities, and it is important that this has been well prepared by the music leader. In a session observation, in order to see whether this is the case, it may be necessary to talk with the music leader about how and what they had prepared in advance.





“Do, Review, Improve
informs and challenges the
quality of practice”

*Peter Renshaw, Barbican and Guildhall School of
Music & Drama*

M1 | The music leader has demonstrable musical competence, and is both an able teacher/facilitator and an inspirational role model

“Obviously a practitioner needs to have adequate expertise to be able to respond to any musical or technical requirements. This will partly come down to their planning and preparation but is equally relevant to how well they can respond to demands or questions as they arise. I think credibility as a musician/artist is hugely influential especially when working with ‘hard to reach’ young people who can find it hard to quickly build a trustful or respectful relationship with adults. This can be a tricky balance as a music leader between letting a young person see that you have got expertise but at the same time, not showing off to a point that a young person feels intimidated or belittled by their skill/expertise. It’s not always about what they do in a workshop either. One of the things I have noticed is that young people often go home and Google an artist/music leader, find out what work they have done or released or what other people say about them. So, music leaders need to be mindful that their publicly accessible profile (often through social media etc.) is also a key factor in their responsibility as an inspirational role model.”

M4 | The music leader has up-to-date knowledge of progression routes appropriate to the young musician

“How can a music leader possibly have an up-to-date knowledge of all progression routes and who decides what is appropriate?”

“In our work supporting musical progression in the East, we are keen to explore and question the approach we and our partners take on progression. Only by constant and honest critical reflection and enquiry can we hope to best serve the progression needs of the young people we work with. By the advice we give, we play an important part in helping young people reach their full potential in all areas of music, not just the areas we are involved in.

“Today’s 14 year old pianist could be tomorrow’s tour manager, today’s seven year old guitarist could be tomorrow’s recording engineer. These are all equally valid progression routes for someone from any musical activity. So as a music leader we have a responsibility to constantly review our knowledge of all aspects of the progression environment that can support young people. This can best be achieved by making ourselves aware of how we fit into the local, regional and national music education picture. Of course we can’t be expected to know all of the answers but once we are networked we are only a couple of emails from finding the right person to ask.

“The appropriateness of progression opportunities is decided by constantly talking and listening to a range of agents from the child and their parents, to other educators and music leaders they might go to.

“With the rapid advance of new technologies, young people are progressing to musical futures that don’t yet exist and we cannot dream of. It’s their journey, so they should have the greatest say in deciding the route they take.”

Thanks to all those who have contributed to the development of this resource.

National Foundation for Youth Music

Suites 3-5, Swan Court, 9 Tanner Street, London, SE1 3LE
Phone number: 020 7902 1060
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