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Leading questions

Christina Coker, chief executive of the charity, Youth Music

What does Youth Music do?

It provides opportunities for children and young people from birth to 18 to make music, particularly those who wouldn't otherwise get the chance.

What are its aims?

To enrich the lives of children and young people with music. We have often found that music-making has been the catalyst for breaking through barriers within communities where there has been real tension, fear and even hatred.

How did you expand Youth Music?

Eight years on from a standing start 1.5 million youngsters benefiting, employment created for over 6,000 musicians and 4,000 trainees, and lottery support reaching 98% of local authority areas in England are signs of this expansion.

What made it successful?

Being very focused on mission and taking a long-term view.

What obstacles have you encountered along the way?

Fostering a greater capacity for organisations in the sector to work together.

How did you overcome them?

In establishing the network of Youth Music Action Zones in England and Wales, we have developed an

infrastructure through which good practice and expertise can be shared.

Have you had any surprising outcomes along the way?

Causing a world shortage of tubas with our Endangered and Protected Species programme!

What have been your greatest successes?

Meeting the children and young people who have benefited and hearing them say how life-changing the experience has been is the most rewarding part of my job.

What are your goals for the future?

Our ultimate goal is to help establish real equality of musical opportunity for all, regardless of their backgrounds.

What is your management style?

Largely democratic. Flexible and ready to consider all possibilities and take risks where appropriate.

What's the best piece of management advice you have ever been given?

Understand yourself, be self critical and play to your strengths.

How do you judge success?

Being sure those we aim to benefit are getting good experience [and seeing] that Youth Music is making a lasting difference.

Name a management 'no no'.

To think your way is the only way.

Do you have a management guru?

Not really. Although I end up having very helpful guru-type conversations with people from all walks of life.

Interview by
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youthmusic.org.uk »