

Towards a Youth Music Makers' Network

*The continuing professional development
needs of musicians and managers working on
music education projects with
children and young people*

**A report for Youth Music from Sound Sense,
the national development agency for community music**



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1 Introduction

During the year ending September 2003 Sound Sense carried out a professional development and research programme, funded by Youth Music, called *Towards a youth music makers' network* (YMMN for short), and this report of the same name is the final report for Youth Music on the work.

YMMN investigated how barriers between the various providers of music education for children and young people – 'youth music makers' – could be broken down by improving opportunities for training and continuing professional development (CPD).

We worked in two pilot regions chosen by Youth Music (south east of England and east Midlands) and also investigated national initiatives. We carried out mapping and detailed research work together with four trial YMMN events, undertaking relationship building and research, and providing some direct CPD opportunities for youth music makers.

2 Aims and methods

Our aims were:

- to investigate ways of increasing uptake of existing training and CPD opportunities
- to build relationships between the informal and formal music education sectors
- to propose ways of creating wider access to CPD across sectors.

(By "formal" we meant music services that are directly related to LEA provision, whether they operate as an LEA department or in some other set-up. By "informal" we mean the range of community music provision; and also (unless we say otherwise) music work that is initiated by or for the youth sector.)

We surveyed musicians, music service managers, community arts training organisations and statutory youth sector managers. We gathered information on the availability, planning, content, and uptake of music service and informal sector training and CPD, and barriers to its uptake by musicians. We carried out case studies of projects and looked at issues and opportunities for partnership work across the sectors.

3 Key findings

The formal sector on the one hand, and the informal on the other work in different ways:

- *Music services* offer INSET in a range of areas reflecting both their current and new ways of working, including curriculum based work through to sessions in other musical genres. Nevertheless they identify gaps in what they offer in INSET and in the skills of their staff – particularly in music technology, areas of work with specific groups of young people, and delivering music lessons to larger groups of young people than they have done traditionally.
- *Community arts* training organisations are offering a very wide range of subjects, often

geared towards work in specific settings, but also dealing with many of the subjects required by artists working across sectors, including evaluation, partnership working, group work. These courses are often run on an occasional basis, and are not generally advertised to the formal education sector or to the statutory youth sector.

Despite these differences there is growing evidence that a traditional divide between formal and informal music making provision is breaking down. At the least, all sectors are interested in cross-sector working or training initiatives.

There were clear, and largely consistent, messages about how people wanted their training and what they wanted from it:

- *Networking* and conferences are high on the list of popular training undertaken by musicians. Music services and youth sector managers talk about the need for networks to develop relationships with musicians and arts organisations. Umbrella organisations in the youth justice sector highlight the problems of implementing arts projects for youth sector managers; in these fields professional networking was identified as a gap in CPD provision.
- Providers and purchasers both have mixed opinions on the value of and need for *formal accreditation* of learning. Musicians tell us that they want a way for all their experiences and learning to be recognised by purchasers as valid. And purchasers simply want a system they can reasonably rely on to ensure that any musician they work with is 'any good'.

A lack of training opportunities is not a key problem – but *uptake of what's available* is of more concern. Musicians frequently mention the same barriers to taking up CPD:

- money and time on the one hand
- a lack of knowledge of what's available on the other.

4 Key messages

These findings imply that the next steps have to take into account the following factors.

There is the best opportunity yet for *closer collaboration* between the formal and informal sectors, including:

- continuing to build on the formal sector's interest in working more widely
- opening up the different sectors' training to the other
- developing ways in which community musicians can be effectively used in the formal sectors' delivery of music making.

Mostly, the collaboration is still at early stages: building on it will need careful brokering – advocacy to all sectors – as well as on-the-ground working and networking.

There is a continuing need to ensure that youth music makers are *aware of training* that is available, what it does, and how it can be accessed – but there is already, if anything, a glut in information provision, so this has to be handled in very focused ways. There is a lack of cross-sector marketing of training opportunities in all directions. The question of how musicians fund training in the early stage of their career needs to be addressed.

Purchasers of youth music makers' services want to *know more about musicians*: what's available; how can they be sure of quality when hiring musicians. Practitioner directories is an area that is currently receiving some attention.

Accreditation is not the main issue. Certainly, trying to impose a single accreditation system on music leaders will be doomed to failure. The answer is to find a way of threading together all learning experiences and ensuring they have validity and acceptance, as appropriate, by both the musicians and the purchasers alike.

All of the above must continually take into account *the needs of musicians working outside the dominant cultures and disabled musicians.*

5 Recommendations

The next batch of work therefore needs to include the following ingredients:

- A **Network** of those involved in formal and informal education which brokers connections and builds relationships between the sectors; between practitioners and purchasers; and between the trainers themselves. It must involve real representation from musicians working outside dominant cultures, from black and minority ethnic musicians, and from disabled musicians. It must be light touch and can be provided in a variety of ways. The network will need to tackle issues of awareness of training – proactively seeking information about CPD opportunities and feeding it into three interlocking information resources that are currently growing: Arts Explorer, CreativePeople, Learndirect.
- A fresh approach to the issue of validation of musicians' learning, which enables all learning to be validated – including that of musicians working outside dominant cultures, black and minority ethnic musicians, and disabled musicians. Sound Sense's **Patchwork** concept provides a grid on which musicians can plot their training, CPD and other experiences relevant to areas of work that they are involved in. They can use it to evaluate their own learning needs; and by completing sections of the Patchwork for their desired work in some recognised way, can demonstrate their suitability for that work to employers. Employers would use the Patchwork to identify the qualities required by a musician for their job, and to ascertain whether the musician has those qualifications or experience.
- A directory of artists working in education. The redevelopment of the web-based **Artscape** directory will soon provide this. It will help purchasers specifically, because entry depend on musicians providing quality assurance elements.