Youth Music Programme Exchanging Notes Interim Report for Music Providers and Teachers.

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Contents

Year One Executive Summary.

This interim report sets out the emerging findings from the evaluation of the Exchanging Notes programme, supported by the National Foundation for Youth Music and undertaken by Birmingham City University. This report provides an overview of Exchanging Notes implementation and the emerging impacts of the program on the standards of music delivery, educational and developmental outcomes for young people, and the embedded learning and teaching practices. It draws on data collected from young people interviews, music leader and teacher interviews, observations, measures of engagement and perception surveys. This executive summary highlights key learning from the first year of the evaluation. It will also offer questions for consideration moving into year two.

Evaluation Objectives.

The project outlined five key outcomes for investigation:

a)   to improve the quality and standards of music delivery for children and young people;

b)   to embed learning and effective practice in host and partner organisations and share practice beyond the project;

c)   to evidence the impact of the Exchanging Notes projects on educational and broader developmental outcomes for young people;

d)   to test the validity of a Youth Music pedagogical quality framework as a tool for increasing educational engagement of young people;

e)   to develop the educational practice of schools, non-formal music organisations, teachers and practitioners through an action research model.

Key Findings.

These findings are based on analysis of data from a range of sources including interviews with young people, music leaders and teachers; observations; and perception surveys. A breakdown of findings by data source is given in the main report.

To improve the quality and standards of music delivery for children and young people.

For many of the young people the cultural experiences offered has impacted their educational progression in music, their social and emotional wellbeing and perceived value placed on school. The young people who have completed the perception surveys have noted positive aspects of the project and their enjoyment.

The importance of multi-agency working has been crucial to improving the quality and standards of music delivery. Including all those involved in the young person's education has provided specialised support, received in the most effective way for the young person. Many projects have included music leaders, teachers, social workers, carers, designated behaviour teachers, school senior leadership, parents, music provider personnel, and the music service in meetings to join up provision. These relations have improved the young person's achievement and engagement in education, enabled early identification of issues which need intervention and addressed the needs of the young people more appropriately. These communicative partnerships have extended knowledge of the young person's learning and wellbeing.

To embed learning and effective practice in host and partner organisations and share practice beyond the project.

Regular meetings between music leaders and teachers have been successful for building trust, setting targets and planning learning. Within these discussions openness, constructive critique and honesty has proven valuable for progression and shared practice. Combined with this, projects who have the support of senior leadership teams have increased visibility within the school and awareness of the importance of music within the curriculum.

Learning is being extended outside of school into youth clubs and extra-curricular music activities. Many young people from Exchanging Notes have performed for wider community audiences.

As part of the action research model Birmingham City University has held three National Meetings. The most recent national meeting held on the 8th July 2015 aimed to engage music providers and teachers in open discussion regarding engagement and pedagogy, building partnership, assessment and the youth music quality framework. These opportunities to reflect have been critical for problem solving and help formulate an exchanging notes community of practice.

To develop the educational practice of schools, non-formal music organisations, teachers and practitioners through an action research model.

Building in time for reflection-on-action has proven to be constructive for many projects. These conversations and reflections help adapt planning and inform a critical awareness of teaching approaches. These reflections have enabled both music leaders and teachers to develop practice, exploring teaching and develop learning. Reflection-in-action has also been significant in the sessions. Music leaders and teachers are increasingly more aware of stepping back, looking at the activity and building new understandings.

Within school cultures, planning is the foundation of a teachers work. Professional knowledge and judgement about routines, skills and strategies to support effective teaching and learning are evidenced. For many of the music providers a long term overview, linked to a national curriculum is new process. Throughout the year many of the exchanging notes music providers and schools have considered new planning mechanisms. They have begun to look critically at curriculum planning and consider a number of different methods that conjoin formal and informal approaches. In conjunction with this, a wider debate about the purpose and value of assessment has been explored, which has led to many projects developing new assessment processes and mechanisms which conjoin informal and formal.

To evidence the impact of the Exchanging Notes projects on educational and broader developmental outcomes for young people.

The young people have developed their knowledge and understanding of composition, performance, listening skills and communication through sound. Following this, there has been an increased uptake of peripatetic lessons outside of the Exchanging Notes project.

Both teachers and music leaders have noted enjoyment and engagement as being good within the sessions with an increase in social development and emotional wellbeing.

Evidence towards this outcome is limited. At the time that the data analysis for this report was being conducted, submission of participant assessment data and completion rates of perception surveys in the summer term were too low to draw emerging conclusions.

To test the validity of a Youth Music pedagogical quality framework as a tool for increasing educational engagement of young people.

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 provision. The framework aims to support projects to reflect on and improve quality of provision. The Exchanging Notes projects have been using the quality framework as a way to explore session content, teaching and learning and the musical and social environment. The projects have highlighted key benefits of the quality framework as being:

- A useful evaluation and planning tool.
- A helpful guide which focuses music leaders and teachers on pedagogy and practice.
- Useful as a guide to focus on child centred learning approaches within the sessions rather than outcomes.
- A catalyst to generate conversation and critical understanding of teaching and learning.

Conclusions.

As this evaluation takes an action research stance we would like to offer some suggestions and questions for consideration which may feed into the planning and delivery of the subsequent year.

- Plan in time for reflection between all those involved with the young people's music and educational development, including senior leadership teams.

- For some projects, reflect on the importance of planning for:

  - long-term engagement which needs to be sustained across four years as young people progress through their school career towards GCSEs, BTecs, and other external examinations. These examinations will involve competing demands on their time, how will their involvement in what might be a non-examination activity be promoted and sustained?
  - the most effective methods to achieve the intended outcomes of exchanging notes (to improve young people's education and wider developmental outcomes; to develop the creative, expressive and musical ability of young people) for the young people who are the key constituency. The desired outcomes should be specifically based upon the wants and, importantly, the needs of the cohorts of young people involved. Resultant plans may well involve divergence from previous short-term performance led project work.

- Does learning focus on the development of young people's understanding of the processes involved in creating music or is learning focused *only* on outcomes based on a final end product? A key issue here is that whilst performances can be a useful way to aid engagement, increase confidence in self-ability, focus participants towards an end goal, and make projects visible within the school environment and wider community, they are only one element of an overall programme and can skew the emphasis of the medium and long term views of what should be longitudinal schemes of work. To this end it is likely that learning should focus on the processes involved in creating music rather than the end product. Linked to this, organisations should be asking themselves what will the core cohort of young people be doing in July 2016, Christmas 2016, July 2017, Christmas 2017, July 2018, and Christmas 2018 that will keep them engaged, motivated, and *more willing* to attend school than otherwise might be the case.

- Review of assessment processes where both formal and informal approaches are combined. This includes attributing skill, knowledge, understanding, social and emotional wellbeing.

- One of the key aspects emerging from the evaluation is the need for increased teacher and wider school involvement. This would further the impact of Exchanging Notes into schools and the local community. We suggest that meetings with the wider school community could help make the project visible in the school. Arranging regular meetings with senior leadership teams, heads of departments and teachers would raise the profile and potential value placed on the project. This could then be furthered by involving the community and parents in learning, joining up provision inside and outside of school.

Evaluation Methodology and Methods.

The methods used in the first year of the evaluation include in-depth qualitative research with music leaders, teachers and young people through interviews and observations, as well as initial quantitative data collection in the form of engagement scales and perception surveys. The proposed methodology also included statistical assessment data and young people video diaries, changes made to capture this data will be discussed further in the interim report.

For the purpose of this evaluation, action research is defined as an interpretative, reflective and experimental methodology that asks participants to act as collaborative researchers. This model of action research requires individuals, in this instance exchanging notes projects, to reflect on current strengths and limitations, and to develop collaboratively and implement a strategy to facilitate change. Data has been analysed thematically and systematically to allow both common and discrepant themes to emerge.

Data Completion Rates.

The research team have supported projects, as best possible, to complete data collection. This year, the team will try to engage teachers more directly to increase data collection completion rates. Each project has been sent updates on their completion rates and data needed for the forthcoming year.

Exchanging Notes National Meeting.

On Wednesday 8th July the third exchanging notes national meeting was held at Birmingham City University. The national meeting aimed to engage music providers and teachers in open discussion groups surrounding four key areas highlighted in the initial findings from the evaluation. These questions, alongside key discussion points from each group are highlighted below:

Engagement and pedagogy.

- What teaching strategies have been successful in the classroom? What have been less successful? Why?
- How have you structured your sessions? (Planning) How long are the sessions? Has this impacted engagement? What do you plan for next year?
- What should music education look like in school? Do you feel you have achieved this?
- Are there any barriers to embedding your (informal) practice/approaches within a school setting?
- How much agency do you think the young musicians have?
- How engaged have the young musicians been?
- What, if any, are the benefits of this project on learning? (Explore musical development *and* social development)

Key discussion points:

- Music leaders are seen as learning mentors. Working closely with individual students or small groups has a profound effect on the young people's engagement with learning and enhances inclusion. Music leaders are beginning to build strong relationships with the young people, they remain objective but ambitious and drive the young people to success.
- Young people are developing their performance, composing, listening and creative skills through activities that are personalised and engaging.
- Music leaders have explored new teaching strategies and planning approaches including; clearer instructions, differentiation, pace and questioning.
- Planning mechanisms need to be developed so that long term objectives are identified.
- Continued tensions between formal and informal approaches within the classroom.

Building partnership.

- How did you develop partnership with the school(s)/ music provider/music hub?
- What are the benefits of building this partnership? (for music education)
- Are there any challenges in building partnership with schools?
- How successful has the partnership been with the school in developing/delivering the project?
- Moving forward, what could be improved within the partnership? What additional support would you like?
- What is your role within the session? Is there a difference between the music leader and teacher? How does this impact partnership?

- Is the project valued within the school?
- Have you been able to embed your 'informal' approach within a school setting/ have you taken on a more 'informal' approach since the project? If so, how? If not, why?
- Have you been able to conjoin an informal with formal approach? How? If not, Why?

Key discussion points:

- Music leader involvement in the young people's educational life breaks down hierarchical structures and relations within the school environment. The divisions of labour within the sessions therefore have the potential to be more collaborative. Music leaders are an interconnection between teacher and learner.
- Project managers play a central role in supporting music leaders and teachers. They facilitate open conversation, extend conversations to the wider music community both in the formal school setting and informal practices of the music community.
- The importance of multi-agency working has been highlighted in some of the projects. These relations build partnership and communication, extending understanding and knowledge of the young person's learning and wellbeing.
- Projects who have the support of senior leadership teams have increased visibility within the school and awareness of the importance of music within the curriculum.
- A shared understanding of the aims and objectives of the project with joint planning so that curriculum goals are met alongside music provider aims.
- Regular meetings between music leaders and teachers has been successful for building trust, setting targets and planning learning. Within these discussions openness, constructive critique and honesty has proven valuable for progression and shared practice.
- Building in time for reflection on action has proven to be constructive for many projects. These conversations help to adapt planning and all partners to critically evaluate teaching approaches. These reflections have enabled both music leaders and teachers to develop practice, exploring teaching and learning approaches. This has led to developing sets of questions and ideas about activities which have adapted planning for future sessions.

Reflection and assessment.

- What was the intended learning? Did you meet the intended learning?
- Are you assessing the young people progress? If so, how?
- Do you provide feedback to the young people? If so, how?
- Do you measure pupil attainment and progression? Is this important?
- How do you plan your sessions and has this changed during the course of the year?
- Do you reflect in and on the sessions? How? Why is this important?

Key discussion points:

- The development of communicative approaches between music leader and young people who are 'at risk' is vital for music sessions. Some music leaders are becoming sophisticated communicators through reflection in and on the sessions. They adapt activity according to the young person's needs.
- Communication has also been developed through non-verbal sounds where dialogue and musical language is explored and extended.

- Reflection in action has also been significant in the sessions. Music leaders and teachers are increasingly more aware of stepping back, looking at the activity and building new understandings informing activity directly.
- It is felt by the music providers that schools focus on statistics does not account for the development of social and emotional skills nor creativity in teaching and learning.
- The development of an app to join up communication and knowledge of the young people among those involved in their musical learning. Other projects are developing formative and collaborative assessment scales which, not only explore musical skill and development, but wellbeing.

The Youth Music Quality Framework.

- How do you use the Youth Music Quality Framework? If you are not, why?
- Do you use any other frameworks?
- What are the benefits or challenges of using the quality framework? What works, what doesn't work?

Key discussion points:

- Useful evaluation and planning tool.
- A helpful guide which focuses music leaders on pedagogy and practice.
- Useful as a guide to focus on child centred learning approaches within the sessions rather than outcomes.
- Generates conversation and critical understanding of teaching and learning.

Young People Interviews.

Young people's perspectives are central to this evaluation, especially as the evaluation seeks to explore teaching and learning pedagogies, musical development and wider effects on well-being. The purpose of the interviews with the young people was to provide in-depth data on their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of the exchanging notes sessions. A sample of young people were asked to partake in the interviews which consisted on average 6 young people from each project.

Learning.

Throughout the year the young people have been introduced to new learning experiences which have had impact on knowledge, understanding and learning processes. From informal composing, development of musical and extra musical skills, development of friendship groups and an increased understanding of music in daily life and wellbeing.

Musical Skills.

The development of musical skills was reported by the young people in the interviews. Musical skill was directly linked to learning how to play a new instrument, rhythm, beat and listening skills:

> I didn't even know how to play or read music before.

> I have learnt skills and arpeggios which will help me with my grade one, which I am going to do soon!

> … I didn't want to because I got embarrassed. But I can now!

> I find it easier now to pay the beat. At the start I couldn't really play it, but now I listen to the teachers and I have progressed a lot.

Some of the young people felt that the exchanging notes sessions were an addition to their existing music lessons, which increased their knowledge and understanding of being a musician:

> Instead of improving it is more of an addition to your skills… it makes our minds expand.

Trying hard in the sessions.

Many of the young people stated that they tried hard in the sessions. Some described that even though the genre or repertoire was not to their personal preference, they still worked hard to achieve in the sessions:

> Researcher: do you feel that you are making progress?

> Young Person: quite a lot because we try our hardest and we don't mess around. We try very hard with what we are doing. Even if we don't like it.

One young person goes further and describes how they have built confidence to challenge themselves further with more complex musical patterns:

Researcher: do you try hard in the sessions?

Young Person: There are some things that are challenging and often when I have completed the easy things I ask for something more challenging. I really want to challenge myself.

Teamwork.

Many of the exchanging notes projects require the young people to work together in whole class or small groups. Teamwork has become a foundation for success, the diverse nature of their skills and ability mean young people must seek help and offer guidance when needed. The collective experience means those pupils who are less able, feel that they are successful and have something to contribute. Teamwork has become an essential skill including negotiation, listening to each other's ideas, peer to peer help and assessment and working through problems. The young people stated:

We need teamwork. We all have to get along with each other and make sure that we get along.

Teamwork is really important we couldn't do the song if we didn't have teamwork.

Friendships have developed, these friendship assist learning via formative peer feedback. These friendships help motivate the young people and evaluate performance:

…another good reason to have friends around is that they can listen to you as well. So they can also point out your mistakes. Like if they see you doing something wrong, they will help you and try and make you better.

At the beginning of the year I always wanted to go on my own but now I have overcome that and I've been able to work with others. And working with others has helped me with things that I can't do.

Researcher: why do you think they (the music leaders) get you to talk in a group? Young Person: because otherwise we wouldn't talk as a group and we do all just go off and doing our separate things.

Music making and anger management.

Some of the young people on the exchanging notes programme described how through playing instruments they released anger. For these young person, the music sessions go beyond the development of skills but deeper into their psychological well-being:

I can take my anger out on the drums.

I love music because it makes me feel happy…it makes me let out all the stress and pick myself up so that I can engage in lessons.

I don't really play that many instruments but I love to sing and when I sing it really calms me down and I am certainly aware of what's in my environment because it just settles me.

Music really teaches you how to play and you can enjoy it and no one can really tell you whether it's right or wrong…I find that music calms me down if you are angry as well. It is enjoyable.

Barriers to learning.

For many of the exchanging notes young people, access to learning can be difficult. The young people describe these barriers including social and cultural, practical and personal, and emotional wellbeing:

> When we done the performance today I was really nervous doing it because I thought that they were going to laugh us. Some people were smiling but I'm not quite sure if they were smiling because they liked it or whether they were laughing at us.

> …when loads of other people are playing and I try and learn something I can't learn it because other people are playing.

> …if someone gets really upset about something that happened outside of the session then that is going to affect everybody else because it will rub off on everyone else. And then everybody gets upset, kinda bad vibes.

Personalised learning is crucial for the young people's confidence and emotional wellbeing. Giving specific roles and targeted aims helps develop self-belief. One young persons stated:

> I'm feeling not very important because I am not doing very much.

Length of sessions.

Many young people discuss how the length of sessions could be reviewed in order to make learning more personalised, increase or decrease pace and extend engagement:

> I think the sessions could be a bit longer …I was thinking we could all do it together as one big group and show all the other students what we have been learning individually.

> …it is okay as one hour but I would like it to be longer. I have learnt more in an hour and its better.

> It takes us quite a while to get settled and then we only have at least half an hour to actually prepare and get ready to practice.

> I would like [the sessions] to be longer because they are fun. I think you would learn more in longer sessions and it takes away all the pressure of school work and things and it clears your head really.

New Opportunities.

Working outside of the school environment has proven to be a successful element for increased engagement for many of the projects. The ability for pupils to work in professional music spaces has enabled the young people to view themselves as musicians, be inspired, use instruments and equipment not provided in school and go beyond making music exploring production:

> [Going to the studio] was really good. It was really posh and was dead fancy. From outside it looks like a tiny building but then when you went inside and you went down some stairs it was a massive room. There were some more rooms and you could record in one and you could chill out in another. There was a famous band recording upstairs and a few days later they released one of the songs that they had done there.

Working as a musician meant engagement was high. The young people were set time limits to achieve outcomes, which increased excitement and learning impact:

> [Going to the studio] is a lot more different because you had to focus a lot more. Because you have to get it done quickly. In school we just all do it and sometimes you don't get it all done. But there we did.

One young person describes how music activity was not something offered regularly in their previous school. The dedicated weekly time has increased their music activity:

> [This project is good for me] because I don't really get much chance to come into school and play music and to use equipment. So it is a good opportunity and good fun.

For others, a lack of parental support and understanding diminished involvement in music activity:

> I've always wanted to play the drums but my mum said that it is a waste of time because it is just banging.

Music leader and teacher pedagogy.

Across the ten projects there are varying different teaching and learning pedagogies being developed. Within the interviews young people noted the difference between typical in-school lessons and exchanging notes. These differences included; less formal rules, more options to develop individual practice, choice, reflective time and creative play:

> In class there are strict rules but in exchanging notes there are no strict rules. It is not 'you have to do this and you have to do that' it is like you don't have to do something if you don't want to. But in lessons with teachers, you do have to do what they ask and if you don't want to do it you still have to do it.

> You get free time, for example if you want to play something you can play it. In the classroom everybody has to do the same thing, but when you go to exchanging notes you can do your own thing as well.

> In school we already know everything so when we come here we get to see lots of different things and try different things.

Two young people noted the difference in emotional wellbeing between their teacher and music leader:

> In school we have to do whatever everybody else is doing. The music leaders are a lot less strict. They are happier here.

Yes [there is a difference] because music we have in school, you have to play piano and the teacher tells you what to do. I don't like to say it but they are not as relaxed, they are more like 'you have to do it this way'.

Assessment.

Formative assessment which provides ongoing feedback via verbal comments has had an impact on teaching and learning. One young person states that verbal feedback encourages group progression instead of pressurised personal targets:

Researcher: …so the music leader gives you verbal feedback. How does that differ to the feedback you get in school? Young person: It is actually less stressful. When you get your grades you stress about not reaching your target, when you go to (exchanging notes) you don't have a target you just play and everybody plays together.

Yes [we receive feedback]. We get told the things that we can improve and do even better on. We also have booklets that we can write down what we have done and what we can do to make it better. We are doing our bronze arts award.

Some projects have developed their own assessment mechanisms which focus on personal progress and achievement. This is filled out in conjunction with a music leader. The young people found this collaborative and an effective way to benchmark progress:

…yes [they give us feedback on our personal progress]. We sat down with the music leader and he filled out this form about the stages of things that we wanted to do.

Working to a set lesson target is something many of the young people experience in their daily lessons. One young person noted the difference in planning mechanisms of the music leaders. In the exchanging notes sessions the structure is more open and less defined by specific outcomes:

Yes. There is more variety of stuff to do rather than a set lesson plan.

Curriculum music and after school music sessions.

Some of the exchanging notes projects provide sessions during in school curriculum time and after school extracurricular sessions. Although taught by the same music leaders, the young people note differences between in school and out of school music leader teaching pedagogies. In the in-school sessions many young people work towards one outcome, collaboratively, whereas in the after school sessions more time is given to personalised small group work leading to whole group collaboration. The researcher asked the young people what are the differences between the in school and after-school sessions? Young people replied:

…in school we are always improving the same song. In the after school sessions we have time for ourselves to understand and develop…at the end we all come together and play. I think it is a benefit to work separately and come back together. After-school you get more time to practice our pieces.

Enjoyment and behaviour.

Session structure and teaching approaches utilised by the music leaders have led to young people enjoyment. For some projects this has also impacted behaviour. Young people suggest that being offered independence and choice, working with friends, composing their own pieces and the creation of a collaborative atmosphere all play a role in their enjoyment:

> Everybody gets along. You finding in other lessons kids are naughty and stuff. But no one is naughty in there. Sometimes people get a bit hyper and things but we are all together because everybody is having fun there isn't any time when nobody is bored. Everybody is having fun and enjoying it.

> I didn't know some people in there (the music classroom) but now I do and we are mates. I enjoy playing music with them because it is something that we both like to do.

> Yes [we try hard]. We enjoy it as well. We do a lot of work but because it is enjoyable. Especially as we are creating our own piece… but we don't think it will reach the charts.

> Yeah you get a bit more independence. I like the fact that they don't speak to you like other teachers speak to you. They speak to us as if they are one of us. They are just like us and we are all having a good time.

Voice and agency.

The redefinition of the role of young people in the exchanging notes sessions is negotiated in many of the projects. Young people are seen to offer a legitimate perspective and therefore play an active role. Young person's voice in these instances move beyond a response when asked, towards cultural shifts that open up the space of the learning environment giving some power to the young people. When asked by the researcher 'Are your ideas listen to?' young people responded:

> We bring in our own music because it allows us to express ourselves. We have our own say as well.

> Yes. We can give our own opinions. We get to try different things. We are allowed to give our opinions and our own ideas and then we share them. That's how we created our song.

> Of course. When we were writing a song, we were all talking about it everyone was saying ideas and then we made sure that everyone was included.

Music leader and teacher identity.

Music leader identity spans many roles. These range from teacher, mentor, collaborator, to professional musician. The division of labour between music leader and young person is therefore shared:

> …they help us with what we are doing and they help structure everything for us.

> … sometimes we talk about our troubles that we are having.

[They are different to our teachers] they don't like us calling them sir, we call them by their names and it is very chilled out.

No matter what you do they don't start shouting at you if you do something wrong, they are always accepting us. They are there to help…to inspire to do more and achieve more.

You get to do more fun stuff and they are a bit more down-to-earth. They are more like friends that you can get on with easily.

The division of labour and the roles assigned to the music leader and teacher can have a great impact on young people's perception of identity.

… (the teacher) was making it easy and trying to get us into the beat. Helping us get the pace and everything like that. She would normally say words that would go with it and then we get into our heads and keep saying it and then we don't make that many mistakes.

Aspirations.

Hopes and aspirations for the forthcoming year range from learning a new instrument, development of compositional and performance skills and the exploration of more complex repertoire:

…performances outside of school

…I want to do harder stuff, like more complex.

… Building my confidence

… I would like to go to the music Academy in town.

… I wouldn't mind doing a little band and doing a gig.

Music Leader and Teacher Interviews.

The purpose of the interviews with music leaders and teachers was to provide in-depth data on their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of the exchanging notes sessions.

Young people's engagement.

Throughout the course of the year music leaders and young people have built trusting and collaborative environments. This has increased engagement, impacted young people's self-confidence and behaviour, expanded their musical repertoire and enabled them to become more creative musicians. For this to be developed, learning barriers had to be broken down. Approaches such as patience, openness, giving pupil choice were central to these creative spaces:

> …there was a lot of shrugging shoulders but as the sessions have gone on he is engaging with me a lot more, it has allowed me to do my job better because he is expressing himself… I feel like I assisted the breakdown of those barriers through my personality. I was very patient with him and easy-going. I didn't come in saying this is what we are doing and this is what I want from you. It was very much like how are you mate, do you like music, let's make music.

> Having the longevity of this project to build up a relationship with the young people with the freedom of not expecting them to do this or to do that. It is our lesson we can spend that time together, musical time together and we are getting to know each other and I try to pull that out then musicality in some ways and identify their preferences.

> It is about them forming that group identity and being able to work with that.

Behaviour.

Behaviour management has impacted many of the projects over the course of the year. The music leaders have had to balance school led discipline but maintain informal approaches. This has taken time to negotiate:

> I think, for some of the kids it is made a massive difference. Some kids when they came in they were completely untameable and running around.

> It is hard to get that balance where you can create discipline yet having fun.

However, some schools have approached managing school wide behaviour by using exchanging notes as a behaviour management tool. Exchanging notes is therefore seen as a reward across the school, not imbedded practice:

> The teachers bribed them during the week with this (exchanging notes), if you don't finish this piece of work then you won't be going on the project. So the engagement because they wanted to come, was good.

Environment and divisions of labour.

The environment in which the sessions take place, is central to engagement. Many of the projects have been working in unsuitable environments which disrupts learning. For some of the projects, spaces have been negotiated, such as the use of the school hall when available, or a relocation of the sessions to outside music environments, supported by music services. School-wide value placed on the project could be questioned in these cases. If practice was seen as being central to the wider implication on the young people's education, spaces would be found in the schools.

> …engagement was difficult because of the setting.

> There have been a few key moments in that one being when we went to the (the studio). We took some notes record a piece of music that they created in the sessions and they then came back from that really motivated.

Working in neutral spaces, neither a school nor specific music environment, has been a central element for some of the projects. One of the music leaders notes that this environment is more relaxed and less formal. This changes the learning environment into an informal space of shared practice:

> I think working in this establishment is a lot more chilled out. I've never been with (young person) in a formal environment so I can't really say but I can imagine, knowing them, that you will get more from them in a relaxed setting because it seems like life's pressures can override learning sometimes. This space changes that.

Young people agency.

Many of the young people were selected to be part of the exchanging notes projects. Throughout the year some of the young people have left projects due to a variety of reasons ranging from: relocation to another country, expelled, return to main stream schooling, ill health and changes in timetables. What was not considered in selecting these young people was their choice in partaking in the music sessions, their option to not attend and their agency in the process. Some of the projects have described these situations:

> We have think of and allow space for somebody to literally not to be interested in music. I struggled with that in the initial meeting because I said that they had picked their initial cohort, this is a music program, what happens if they don't want to do music? And then there is a basic lack of interest in the young people. I think they (the young people) think they are not sure if they really want to go and do that even though they might be interested in music. They might think they cannot be bothered. And then I wonder what about social group.

> Music is a fantastic thing and I think everybody likes music but it is not the right thing for some people to study and you have to you consider that.

> You cannot force feed them you would put them off. It is a hard one. I think the ones that come back (to the sessions) are really positive and they are the ones that will spread the word. They will entice people better then we can. I think that will grow.

One issue highlighted in offering young people complete agency is extending repertoire and knowledge. The music leader, in quote below, describes how having given pupil choice in the first year, they now need to refocus young people and expand knowledge and understanding:

> I think another issue is with the group that a lot of them are very set on what they want to do. And what they like doing. And if they are not doing that, then they are going to disengage. We want to progress them individually, if they have got an interest in something then we really want to support them in doing that, we also want to allow a space for new experiences.

Planning.

Within school cultures, planning is the foundation of a teachers work. Professional knowledge and judgement about routines, skills and strategies to support effective teaching and learning are evidenced. For many of the music providers a long term overview, linked to a national curriculum is new process. Throughout the year many of the exchanging notes music providers and schools have considered new planning mechanisms. They have begun to look critically at curriculum planning and consider a number of different methods that conjoin formal and informal approaches. This has been evidence within one project where the music provider describes their change in perspective and confidence for long-term planning. When asked 'has planning for teaching and learning changed during the year' they replied:

> Dramatically. In my personal workshops I have an idea and knowledge of how it is going to run. It doesn't work like that in school, they need to have every… Not every small detail… but they need to know what the task is, what the task is going to achieve, how we are going to achieve that, what that looks like and how you be able to quantify everything. I have had to rethink and evaluate how I plan lessons. How I make it fit with what the school is doing, that is the most important thing if it is going to be a lesson during school time, it has to fit in with their curriculum and I have to meet their guidelines. It is also made me reflect on the way that I build my lessons, I have learnt a lot of good things and that has all been from help from the music teacher who has actually become more involved in the sessions and the whole project. They have been amazing at giving us feedback and sending back and forth ideas and formalising it so that it makes the lesson plans easy to read for them and it meets the goals. It has changed the way that we deliver the class. That has been really positive for us. It has been nice sharing.

Another music leader stated:

> I think we have also learnt about planning. It is a whole different thing to plan for something and sustaining it for ten to twelve weeks. That's very different to having five days where we have got to learn all these pieces of music and perform them at the end. It is a different way of planning, each hour has to be something in itself, as well as contributing to something of the whole term.

Although the music leader describes the new planning as a positive experience, their description of planning outlines the strict structure the school is placing on the music sessions. Planning is regarded in schools as a key requirement for effective teaching and learning. However, not everything can be planned for nor predicted. Planning should provide

a structure which can guide activities but also be used to evaluate teaching and learning. How formal have sessions become since planning in this way? This was discussed further with a music leader who describe how the planning has allowed them to begin to explore the conjunction of formal and informal:

> I think in the first two terms we were thinking that we need to be the school and to do what they want. We were changing who were to fit that. This term we understand what they (the school) need so we are able to be more of ourselves. The sessions are much easier. We are able to express what we do in a better way. Researcher: By doing the lesson plans do you feel you still are retaining what you want to do? Or do you feel you are taking on what the school would like you to do? Music leader: in the beginning it was probably the latter because we thought this is what the school wants and we were writing these bullet points to be told that that they won't work, we were so confused about what it was that they wanted that we were just trying to imitate the school. We thought well we better try and be you. But then when we understood what it was. They sent us all these resources which helped my understanding of what we needed to do in the lesson plan then we were actually set free. We could just be ourselves again. And I think for us that was the key.

The importance of communication is highlighted here. Within this project the music provider was entering the school, conducting the activities, with no teacher input. This collaborative communication has begun to open up shared aims and beginning to explore joint expectations.

Similarly in other projects planning mechanisms have changed throughout the year. In another project the music leader describes how a lack of direction and teacher involvement in the beginning of the project created unease and a lack of direction:

> …there was no direction. I didn't have an idea of what exchanging notes was about. I have taken ownership now and I know what direction I'm going in. I know what works and what doesn't work.

However, without teacher involvement or a shared reflective stance there is potential for repeated planning mechanisms. Below the music leader continues to describe a planning model which leads to success:

> … I know exactly what works and exactly where we need to be at the five weak points and beyond.

School regulation and performance management has also been an aspect affecting the planning of teaching and learning. In this description by a music leader, effects of school inspection are discussed. In this description planning attitudes were more strict and formal pre-inspection, but once completed, planning re-focused toward more informal approaches:

> I think particularly after Ofsted came in. Ofsted came in and I think that then there was a decision that they were now not coming back so let's have bit of fun with this and see what we can do.

As exchanging notes combines both music providers' informal approaches with school formal approaches, planning collaboratively has been highlighted as a critical aspect for

teaching and learning. In this first year those planning mechanisms have had to be negotiated and revised:

>…it is important to have that involvement in the planning so we facilitate it as a team. I think we need a better planning process. This year we have had to make a compromise in planning together in order to get some good work going. But it has meant that the teacher's involvement in the planning hasn't been what we would hope.

>There is still a lot to be done on that one. I think also working with different people at different times, you start it with one person and you get somewhere but then you almost have to start again if there is a new leader and you need to gel.

>Music leader: We talk outside of the sessions and we talk about the sessions. We will probably have a 10 minute talk about it. Teacher: that sometimes feels like the part that we don't get involved in. We talk about it together all afternoon but because we don't see you and we only see you for a brief moment we don't get the time to do that. Think it would be good if we had a regular talk, to sit down after school and plan.

Establishing aims that meet the needs of young people which are differentiated can be challenging. Many of the music providers discuss their open approach to planning which overcomes some of these challenges, including planning processes such as: openness, reflection and personalisation:

>…we had always intended to have a certain amount of flexibility and freedom to respond to the group.

>It is different every time. A lot of the time you can't really plan it because need to be able to see where the kids are at and where the energy levels are and how they respond when they come in. A lot of the time, what we do is based on planning from our first judgement, or first reading of energy levels. There is a lot of interplay between us (the music leaders).

>…is about using their interests, we want to progress that. We then consider how we can fit that into the general plan we have.

Alongside joint planning is shared practice. Learning between the music leader and teacher is central to the development of practice. However, for many projects, it seems that practice is not shared. Therefore teaching approaches are not developed, and instead many teachers feel the project is done 'to' them instead of being shared:

>Researcher: have you learnt anything from the teacher?
>Music leader: (Long pause) …I am quite sure I have…just about the development of the partnership. That has been it really.

In this quote we can see the opposite. Here the music leader has learnt many new processes and approaches to teaching which has been impactful:

>Observing classroom control has been amazing. Seeing a structured approach with the curriculum where you are trying to get people to do things that they don't necessarily have an interest in. That has been fascinating.

So that planning is more joined up, many projects have reflected on their processes and highlighted further approaches needed to support progression:

> I would like a review meeting to discuss how it is gone and what hasn't gone so well and how we can change it.

> …the planning for next year will be a lot more creative and more based on their own identity, other than the identity of what the project is.

> We need to get that continuity and making sure that if we are working with lots of different people that we have a meeting at the beginning of the year so that we can all discuss what we're aiming for. And also what we want to get out of that year in terms of the musical skills and abilities and what we want to enhance.

Moving forward into year two, many of the projects recognise planning as an important aspect and significance for success. In year two the research team will be interested to find out whether planning is shared.

Assessment.

Throughout the first year exchanging notes projects have had critical debates about the role of assessment. The investigation of music assessment, where both formal and informal approaches are combined has been contested. School pressures and expected achievement outcomes have challenged music providers. These assessment processes are different to their own mechanisms. This has often created tensions around the opposing views of music's purpose: success in terms of grades and formal assessment or wider assessment which take into account social, emotional and wellbeing factors alongside musical skills, knowledge and understanding. It is against this backdrop that many music providers and teacher have discussed issues surrounding assessment's purpose. In this first quote the music provider stresses a lack of understanding of school assessment processes, expected outcomes and measures of success. The music provider highlights significant social, emotional and wider outcomes in a conversation with the music department, who informs the music leader that no further benefits are being seen:

> I don't know what they (the school) expect. This opens a wider question and great question: what is the benefit of music overall? Researcher: what do you think the schools expectations are? Music leader: I think improvement in their marks and improvement in their stats.

Assessment processes are in a period of flux. Schools have been faced with changing policies and practices which has created unease. Without clear guidance many schools have continued to use old assessment levels. These have featured within exchanging notes sessions and continue to be proposed in the forthcoming year:

> …we will be keeping the old levels but trying to make them reflect a more in terms of what you would expect for a music grade.

For some projects assessment has remained open and not defined by school pressures:

> The school does not give us any assessment criteria, they give us freedom, which is a great thing. You have to agree with the school on a way of working that offers you

freedom. Some of the young people that we are working with have struggled with assessments so a verbal approach works better.

For one project, assessment has been a main area of development. Throughout the year the teachers have faced opposing pressures outlined by the school. The teachers have therefore had to provide evidence of practice within the exchanging notes sessions to support a more formative assessment approach:

> We are meant to do written feedback and I won't say that we have had an argument (with the senior leadership team) but we have had a very open discussion about the fact that it is stupid for us to do that.

Practice has therefore changed throughout the year:

> …at the start of every year and half term we say you are a level 4b for composition and listening and so forth ... but in some ways it is nice because I know what all the young people are good at, and I know what they need to do to improve, but in terms of putting that into a level, I can't.

A wider debate about the purpose and value of assessment has been explored, which has a longer term impact on teacher and music provider processes. It has impacted the project so much that a new assessment measure is being developed. In this conversation we can see the debates had between the school and project:

> We talk about levels because we have to do, but we assess the kids in the sessions by what they are doing right there. At the end of the session kids know what they have accomplished and agreed with us and identified a skill to build. I am hoping that we can continue to use this. We don't use levels and the kids are still making progress, we are still able to assess them and say confidently to their parents that they are engaged in the lesson and they are making progress, they are learning skills and they are learning everything that they need to learn in terms of the national curriculum. But we have in school this constant, every half term, need for data, school needs to know what these kids are doing. That is frustrating for us as teachers and it is an issue. We are super accountable for them. The kids are given targets from English and Maths figures and they are meant to be getting that in music. And it is like no that is not how this subject works. This (exchanging notes) has given us a bit of strength and backup. We have had many difficulties in school and it has given us the support really to say look how wonderful these lessons are without levels.

For some of the projects different approaches to assessment need to be explored to best support the young people. These assessments need to reflect the deep communication and listening skills inherent within their music sessions, alongside musical skill and development:

> … It is not really about achievement. Certainly there are a lot of good things happening and we can celebrate it but ultimately it is about making sense of the communication between people, it is about making sense about these young musicians.

The main question surrounding assessment can be summarise in this quote from a teacher:

> Trying to keep measuring their attainment but at the same time being able to do that more informally. It is getting that balance right between the formal and the informal really so that it works within a secondary setting.

Value of exchanging notes within the school and community.

Making projects more visible within school has been highlighted as a priority by many of the music providers. If projects are going to leave a successful legacy, wider benefits must be observed by senior leadership teams and beyond, into the community. This has been a challenge for many of the music providers who have felt as if they are doing the project 'on' the school instead of it being a collaborative aim:

> I feel like we (music provider) are the ones getting the benefit at the moment and not so much the school.

> Have they (the school) obviously seen a benefit? No. Not from the music staff. From the deputy head possibly yes. Do I think the young people have? Yes.

> Made me feel like this project wasn't going to last because the Head teacher doesn't get it… he doesn't buy into it.

However, many projects have noted school commendation for the project. This has created welcoming spaces where the music provider is beginning to feel embedded into school life:

> She (head teacher) can clearly see the benefits. Last week she gave us some amazing feedback. And she's putting some of that down to the musical interventions. So she values its being here which is nice and makes you feel that you are welcome within the school.

> They appreciate what we are doing, and when they see the end results then they can see that for themselves.

> They definitely value the project and how it is embedded into the school.

In order to increase impact within the school and the wider community, projects have identified interventions which they plan to put into action in the forthcoming year:

> I would like direct engagement with parents via Facebook group or via email. It is much simpler to say there is a session today to get information out.

> It is important for us to have school shows so that we can show off this work. Many of the parents don't always engage in the shows but if we have so many shows per year, there is going to have to be one time when that Parent finally gives in and comes. We have spoken about having the kids come for a guitar club and then having the parents join them. It is about getting the parents to see school as a good thing because many of them came here themselves and they often say that they hated it.

In some cases there has been the need for an intermediary, who can negotiate differing viewpoints and help make future plans.

We also have opened the partnership and are now working with the music service. We now have our three heads working together, one ship.

Moving forward.

Within the interviews, aims for the forthcoming year were highlighted. These included widening staff involvement within schools, distributing instruments to young people to further engage at home and performances developing young people's self- confidence:

I would like to find a more enthusiastic member of staff, or a more enthusiastic music teacher from the school to join us.

Hopefully by next year all the pupils should have their own instruments and have a sense of ownership. Hopefully that is the stage when they can take home what they are doing here.

Youth Music Quality Framework Observations.

Youth Music uses an outcomes approach across its funding programme. The Quality Framework builds on the outcomes approach by supporting projects to reflect on and improve the quality of provision. For the investigation of teaching and learning within the sessions, the evaluation team have been using the quality framework as an observation tool. The lesson observations, conducted once per term, offer the research team a snap shot of sessions across the year.

After each session observation music leaders and teachers are invited to engage in a semi-structured interview with the researcher, where teaching and learning is discussed, critiqued and reflected upon. Observations are supported by this interview data, allowing the research team to explore longer term plans for teaching and learning. This reflective process is extended via the national meetings, where time is given to consideration of planning mechanisms together with teaching and learning processes.

Quality Framework Observation Summary.

Key areas of successful practice linked to the quality framework can be summarised as:

- Young people are offered the opportunity to work with a range of materials and equipment.

- The duration of contact time and depth of engagement are appropriately matched to the needs of the young people.

- The young people are supported by a number of adults in the sessions, including music leaders, teachers, support staff and social workers.

- Music leaders are inspirational role models for the young people. The music leader skill and knowledge are matched well with young people's needs and interests.

- Sessions have an atmosphere of collective learning; music leader, teacher and young people support each other to develop and excel. A community of practice is developing between music leaders, teachers and young people.

- Activities are designed and delivered in a manner appropriate to the musical and learning needs of the young people. Collaborative planning is being developed between teachers and music leaders.

Key areas for development can be summarised as:

- Development of communication between music leaders, teachers and other project staff. This includes communication in the session and after, to reflect in and on learning.

- Development of shared knowledge between teachers and music leaders of suitable progression routes for young people. This includes in school and out of school provision to support musical development.

- Expand and broaden young people's musical horizons through listening to and understanding other musics as well as making their own.

- Explore ways of documenting personal progress and achievement.

Lesson observations have proven to be a successful way for the research team to highlight positive and successful aspects of teaching and learning, alongside areas for professional development and CPD. At no point are these observations analysed in isolation, but triangulated against interviews for a richer understanding of the complex nature of the music sessions. However, the research team would like to offer some insight into specific observations and practices linked to the key areas of success and those in development. In these observation reflections you will be able to see questions posed by the research team.

Intent for the session.

Clearly identifying the aims of the session was of particular importance for many of the observations. The music leaders were able to clearly reinforce the intent for the session, which led to good engagement, the development of skills and evidenced early development of a collaborative space for shared practice. In some observations the researcher questioned activity choices. How personalised was the learning? Does the music explored reflect the young people's interests? The researcher notes this within an observation:

> *The music within the sessions would not be the chosen repertoire of the young people. The sessions are developing young people's understanding of musical skills but how can they relate this to their life? How will this affect engagement moving forward?*

Collaboration.

In many observations the relation between music leader and young person was one of co-collaborator. In one observation the researcher noted:

> *The leaders are facilitators but also seen as musicians. They are seen as people working within the field who can assist the young people on their music making journey. Their skills are well matched with the young people they are working with so that they can improve the skills the young people highlighted as being areas they would like to work on.*

Involvement of the teacher.

A critical component of many observations was the involvement of teachers. In some observations teachers had a supportive role, breaking down complex ideas for the young people, helping them on a one to one basis and managing behaviour. However, in some observations the teacher was unsure of their role within sessions. It can often appear that the sessions were being 'done to' the teacher rather than being collaborative. This observation notes reflects this:

> *The teacher was present within the session and shows commitment to the sessions. However their role did not seem defined - could the the music leader and teacher learn from each other and share practice? Who has the heiracrhy? Is this being done to the teacher not with the teacher? Does this create divides?*

In another observation the researcher poses some questions:

> *Do they (the teachers) know what their role is within these sessions? Is this a case where they feel that the music leaders have the 'right' way and they need to learn from them- what are the leaders learning from the teachers? Is there enough time to share practice and planning…this needs to be joined up more?*

This is where joint reflection, between music leader and teacher is important. However, in the case of the observations above, reflection after the sessions could not include the teacher, due to timetabling.

However, over the course of the year it become more evident that in many projects collaboration had developed. The impact of this joined up approach had significance not only for the development of skills but the social collaboration between adults and young people. In some cases the music leader and teacher team taught including both formal and informal approaches.

Reflection in and on learning.

Prior to some session observations, the researcher was able to observe reflection sessions between music leaders and teachers where they would discuss young person progress and approaches to the session. This was invaluable for developing team teaching approaches. These reflective approaches also facilitated session planning which were designed with the needs of young people at the forefront. Via the reflection meetings, music leaders and the teacher increased their knowledge of learner needs and preferences which enabled them to identify, seek and provide extra support for young people. This encouraged high engagement in the session and development of musical knowledge. In the observation the researcher documented the reflective process in action:

> *The teacher asks continuous questions …both teacher and music leader model continuously. A big part of engagement is praise within the session but also getting the young people to realise what has gone wrong and reflecting on how to improve.*

Formative feedback.

A particular strength of many sessions were the formative feedback conversations, aimed at expanding communication and reflection. Time within the sessions was spent talking to the young people about their ideas, the challenges and successes of learning. These formative assessment offered the music leader important information on learning and areas which needed nurturing. These conversations functioned more like artist/musician conversations than teacher to learner. The researcher notes:

> *The young person is treated like an apprentice producer and musician. It is a nurturing environment. A space where mistakes are made and adjusted.*

In some sessions the young people identified their own targets and aims for development. The music leaders offered the young people the opportunity to identify targets for each session which helped serve as the plan for the next session. These targets ranged from musical or extra-musical:

> *Within the session the leaders give the young people time to reflect on learning, the leaders do not give the answers right away but try to probe the young people.*

However in some observations lack of feedback on personal progress was noted. Individual progression was not celebrated, nor was learning differentiated to ensure all young people reached their potential. In some sessions, the young people had a range of abilities from those who are very musical and having prior experience, to those who have never played an instrument before, nor engaged in music. The researcher therefore questioned this in the observations:

> *Is everyone improving? What about individual learning goals?*

In this observation the music leader conducts a successful reflection with the young people where they get the young people to discuss learning:

> *At the end of one of the activities the music leaders conduct a small group conversation about what they felt they achieved in the session. Alongside young people discussing what they achieved the music leaders identify areas for improvement….the young people are asked lots of questions, both recalling and improving questions.*

Directed teaching.

At the start of the year many sessions exampled directed teaching approaches, which left little room for learner participation, discussion or personalisation:

> *Consistent feedback is given to the young people regarding their musicianship and elements that can be improved. This is directed from music leader to young person, not peer to peer evaluation. It would be good if the music leaders could start asking the young people questions to engage them in the learning, with questions could come greater engagement.*

The integration of the young people as active participants in the sessions has been something which has developed over the year. Within the first two terms engagement via asking young person opinion, the analysis of learning or development of creative skills was absent from many sessions. Instead learning was directed, music was modelled and young people were tasked to learn piece which to perform, as noted in the observation:

> *No verbal comments were given to the young people. The leader would stop and start the group, singing parts back to the young people so they could memorise the beats. Verbal feedback and discussion was non-existent.*

The directed, modelling and repetitive approach to some sessions meant that often young people would disengage:

> *Many of the young people were not being stretched or pushed to reach their personal potential, they played the same beats and rhythms which did not require much thinking… Learning was done to them not with them.*

The lack of verbal communication often made it difficult for some young people to understand learning. However, over the course of the observations the researcher saw the development of trusting environments. Over the course of the observations, many sessions began to example more openness. Young people were invited to offer suggestions, give feedback and work with the music leaders creating a collective environment.

> *They are supported to extend their skills but are also supported to develop their communication and listening skills. Their ability to communicate non-verbally has increased and their ability to listen to the music and direction has also been extended.*

Purposeful interactions.

Music leaders often utilised a range of instruments and musical processes throughout the session for the young person to explore and experiment with. They repeat activities as a way to discover preferences and response to sounds:

> *Repetitive activities are utilised as a way to look at preferences and work from that towards clear communication between what is being enjoyed and what is not.*

It is by doing this that the music leader could begin to recognise the young person's interests. The music leader functions not only as a musician, but a facilitator and communicator for the young person, giving them a musical voice.

> *The sessions have a young person approach where choice and ownership are critical.*

Environment.

For some observations sessions have taken place in unsuitable environments. On all occasion's music leaders have managed the situation well, with young people remaining committed to the music session. However, it could be questioned that if sessions are valued and seen as crucial for learning, a more suitable and conductive environment could have been found.

In some cases observations have happened in out of school settings. These sessions have been personalised due to their location, or inspiring for the young people where they have been enabled to work and produce music like musicians. Engagement has been particularly high in these observations.

Young people's independence and creative musical processes.

Within the early stages of the observations, learner independence and confidence had not been developed. However, music leaders and teachers aimed to develop trusting and community environments, which over time often led to greater independence towards the end of the year:

> *The young people have not developed the dialogue to express their opinion of each other's work. But they feel comfortable playing in front of one another. What questions could have been asked to support communication and increase independent thought?*

The introduction of creative musical processes alongside basic skills were observed. The space for self-discovery alongside facilitated processes were a particular strength of some sessions. This is explored in this comment from an observation:

> *Learning is guided but also space left for self-discovery and improvisation. Instructions are given but remain flexible for the young people to explore.*

In this observation note increased independence is reflected on:

> *The young people are given time to explore their own starting points independently. They feel confident to ask for help when needed but are also given space to develop their ideas and explore them creatively.*

In some sessions young people were offered the opportunity to have 'playtime'. Creative play can encourage imagination and exploration, however with no guidance this playtime did not add to learning, with some young people disengaging:

> *… today's session is very loose. What is being taught? The pupils cannot reach their potential with no guidance.*

Often the researcher was left questioning who had ownership of the music created. In some observations the compositional process was not observed. Although this is not an issue, the process was also not discussed nor reflected upon in the session. This left the researcher questioning:

> *How much of the compositions created are the young people's own ideas? How much has been suggested by music leaders? Does this matter?*

Length of sessions.

All of the observations differed with length of time. Some session last for 30 minutes with some for 2 hours. For shorter sessions there was often not enough time for musical development to be significant as observed here:

> *Due to the length of the session, significant musical development was not observed. Time was spent setting up, getting focused which left little time for music making. How will this progress over the year? How much progress will these young people make with such little time? How will this affect engagement, if progress is slow?*

However in some cases shorter sessions seemed to enable high engagement:

> *The shorter session seemed to work well for some young people. Activities were quick which meant engagement was high.*

Similarly longer sessions also left the research wondering about engagement and enjoyment:

> *The length of the session is potentially too long for the young people who appeared to be very restless towards the end of the session. If the length of the session is to remain the same the music leader and teacher need to plan activities that separate the time up and be mindful of the pace of the session.*

Planning is critical for both shorter and longer sessions to ensure musical development and engagement.

Ratio of music leaders to young people.

Within all session observations the ratio of music leaders to young people was very high. Alongside music leaders were teachers and often other members of support staff who could help increase engagement and participation.

Assessment data.

In addition to gathering evidence of students' experiences in working with music partner organisations, we aimed to collect data related to young people's attainment. The research team tried to make this process as straightforward as possible, hopefully using data that already existed in school. Based on feedback received from project partners throughout the year the research team devised new assessment data spreadsheets for schools to upload attainment data. This data aims to gather information based on key stage two reading and maths, attendance and whether a young person is above, at or below age-related expectation. We would hope to be able to report on this data in the next interim report.

• Key Stage 2 Reading Level • Key Stage 2 Writing Level • Key Stage 2 Maths Level	In most cases the KS2 Reading and Maths Levels will be based on test results. However, if these are not available please provide end of KS2 teacher assessments instead. In most cases, the KS2 Writing Levels will be based on teacher assessments. However, if older students took the writing test, please provide this instead. We will only need to collect this data once, the first time we ask you for some data.
• % Attendance	We will ask for this data twice each academic year: early in the Spring Term for the previous Autumn Term only; early in the Autumn Term for the previous whole year.
• English/Literacy On Track • Maths/Numeracy On Track	These are defined as whether the student is Above, At or Below age-related expectation, based on professional judgement and drawing on teacher assessment. We will ask for this data twice each academic year, at the same time as the % attendance.

Measures of Engagement.

School link teachers, music leaders and young people were asked to complete perception surveys regarding engagement and wider educational development throughout the year.

While the tables below suggest some overall improvement in student engagement both at school and in the music projects, this may simply be due to the considerably fewer returns received in summer 2015, which is clearly a concern. We will be able to track trends for individual students and projects but we also need to further encourage school link teachers and music providers to enter the required data.

In these measures of engagement the teachers, music providers and young people were asked to provide scores against the following characteristics on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is lowest and 5 is highest).

Measure of student engagement from school link teachers

Autumn 2014	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Enjoys school	6 (4%)	24 (16%)	41 (28%)	**54** (37%)	21 (14%)	**146**
Views school as worthwhile	7 (5%)	21 (14%)	41 (28%)	**59** (40%)	18 (12%)	**146**
Tries hard in lessons	10 (7%)	17 (12%)	45 (31%)	**47** (32%)	27 (18%)	**146**
Joins in with their peers	8 (5%)	20 (14%)	35 (24%)	**61** (42%)	22 (15%)	**146**
Makes friends easily	10 (7%)	27 (18%)	35 (24%)	**53** (36%)	21 (14%)	**146**
Makes decisions confidently	11 (8%)	28 (19%)	**48** (33%)	40 (27%)	19 (13%)	**146**

Summer 2015	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Enjoys school	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	8 (19%)	11 (26%)	**19** (45%)	**42**
Views school as worthwhile	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	6 (14%)	**15** (36%)	**15** (36%)	**42**
Tries hard in lessons	2 (5%)	4 (10%)	8 (19%)	**15** (36%)	13 (31%)	**42**
Joins in with their peers	3 (7%)	4 (10%)	5 (12%)	12 (29%)	**18** (43%)	**42**
Makes friends easily	3 (7%)	5 (12%)	4 (10%)	**17** (40%)	13 (31%)	**42**
Makes decisions confidently	3 (7%)	4 (10%)	9 (21%)	11 (26%)	**15** (36%)	**42**

Measure of student engagement from music providers

Autumn 2014	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Enjoys the music project	3 (1%)	7 (3%)	52 (20%)	**137 (54%)**	56 (22%)	**255**
Views the project as worthwhile	7 (3%)	11 (4%)	75 (29%)	**122 (48%)**	40 (16%)	**255**
Tries hard in music sessions	7 (3%)	21 (8%)	77 (30%)	**97 (38%)**	53 (21%)	**255**
Joins in with their peers	23 (9%)	59 (23%)	**79 (31%)**	63 (25%)	31 (12%)	**255**
Makes friends easily	25 (10%)	79 (31%)	**86 (34%)**	46 (18%)	19 (7%)	**255**
Makes decisions confidently	27 (11%)	**85 (33%)**	63 (25%)	59 (23%)	21 (8%)	**255**

Summer 2015	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Enjoys the music project	0	1 (2%)	4 (6%)	10 (15%)	**51 (77%)**	**66**
Views the project as worthwhile	0	2 (3%)	4 (6%)	15 (23%)	**45 (68%)**	**66**
Tries hard in music sessions	0	0	5 (8%)	12 (18%)	**49 (74%)**	**66**
Joins in with their peers	3 (5%)	4 (6%)	6 (9%)	21 (32%)	**32 (48%)**	**66**
Makes friends easily	5 (8%)	5 (8%)	16 (24%)	17 (26%)	**23 (35%)**	**66**
Makes decisions confidently	0	5 (8%)	21 (32%)	17 (26%)	**23 (35%)**	**66**

Measure of student engagement from students

Autumn 2014	1	2	3	4	5	Total
The group is friendly	0	6 (6%)	22 (21%)	30 (28%)	**48** (45%)	**106**
I try hard in the sessions	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	18 (17%)	38 (36%)	**45** (42%)	**106**
I am learning new things	2 (2%)	4 (4%)	10 (9%)	29 (27%)	**61** (58%)	**106**
I am enjoying the exchanging notes project	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	21 (20%)	30 (28%)	**51** (48%)	**106**
I feel happy to share my ideas with the group	6 (6%)	7 (7%)	28 (26%)	25 (24%)	**40** (38%)	**106**

Summer 2015	1	2	3	4	5	Total
The group is friendly	0	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	14 (29%)	**28** (57%)	**49**
I try hard in the sessions	1 (2%)	0	5 (10%)	15 (31%)	**28** (57%)	**49**
I am learning new things	1 (2%)	0	4 (8%)	14 (29%)	**30** (61%)	**49**
I am enjoying the exchanging notes project	0	2 (4%)	8 (16%)	9 (18%)	**30** (61%)	**49**
I feel happy to share my ideas with the group	2 (4%)	4 (8%)	9 (18%)	8 (16%)	**26** (53%)	**49**

Video Diaries

In order to support the projects with the collection of video diary data, the research team released some funding to purchase iPads for each project. These iPads were distributed at the national meeting in July. With this delay, only a few projects uploaded video data. It is hoped that all projects will upload video data this year, ready for analysis. It is estimated that initial analysis will be reported in the next interim report in April.

Conclusions.

Reflection Questions.

As this evaluation takes an action research stance we would like to offer some suggestions and questions for consideration which may feed into the planning and delivery of the subsequent year.

1. Does learning focus on the process of musical development or end product? Does learning focus on the development of young people's understanding of the processes involved in creating music or is learning focused on outcomes based on a final end product?

2. Many music providers previously planned and developed projects based on short term goals. As this is longitudinal project, music providers along with their collaborative teachers, need to reconsider planning mechanisms. Reflection on longer overarching aims over the year and beyond, into the next phases and years of the project would be constructive. These plans can be open to flexibility and change based on learner needs.

3. Meetings with the wider school community would make the project visible in the school. Arranging regular meetings with senior leadership teams, heads of departments and teachers would raise the profile and potential value placed on the project involving the community and parents in learning would join up provision inside and outside of school. If SLT and parental engagement is an issue, what events could be held to encourage involvement? What evidence could be provided to SLT to support the project?

4. Build in resilience for potential change of staff within your planning mechanisms. Having a wider cohort of staff involved should also increase the overall impact of the project.

5. Plan in time for reflection between all those involved with the young people's music and educational development, including senior leadership teams. If this is a strong aspect of your work could you create case studies to share with other exchanging notes projects?

6. Peer observation between music providers. This will allow projects to monitor and develop the quality framework. These observations potentially could build stronger networks between projects. It would also allow projects to both observe practice and receive feedback. This could be critical for continued professional development.

7. Review lengths of sessions to increase engagement based on your knowledge of the young people. This could be reducing time so that sessions are fast paced or increasing time for deeper reflection.

8. Review of assessment processes where both formal and informal approaches are combined. This includes attributing skill, knowledge, understanding, social and emotional wellbeing.

9. Increased teacher involvement (beyond music teachers) so that exchanging notes has further impact in schools.

10.   Reflect on the purposes of this project – to increase the likelihood that this cohort of pupils are more likely to remain in the education system as a result of participating. Is what is going on at the moment likely to lead to this?

Moving Forward.

Priorities for the next phase of the evaluation.

Observations visits have been planned or awaiting finalisation for the forthcoming term. To support observations, more members of the team and the steering committee will be visiting projects in the next year. They will be able to offer useful feedback on the Youth Music quality framework. The team will also be supporting the collection of assessment data by responding to schools via email and telephone conversations with senior leadership teams if needed.

The fourth national meeting will be held on February 9th 2016 with the fifth on July 7th 2016. The research team aims to encourage teachers to attend this meeting. It is hoped that greater integration of the teachers in the project will increase their involvement, engage them further in the evaluation aims and develop their partnerships with the music providers.

Birmingham City University along with Youth Music have identified the need to communicate evidence to senior leadership teams and key stakeholders. An executive summary will be sent to senior leadership teams and stakeholders to increase awareness.

An increase in data completion rates is needed. The research team would like the support of music leaders and teachers in the collection of this data so we can best monitor progression at key point during the year.

Thanks.

The research team would like to thank all music leaders and teachers for their efforts. It has been an enjoyable year and we look forward to seeing the exchanging notes programme progress into year two.