

# Music Makers of the Future

Final Report October 2022

**Birmingham City University**

**The Centre for the Study of Practice and Culture in Education (CSPACE)**

**Emma Nenadic**

**Nikki Booth**



# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Contents</b> .....  | 2  |
| <b>Executive Summary</b> .....   | 5  |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....  | 6  |
| <b>Young People</b> .....  | 7  |
| <b>West Midlands Music Toolkit</b> .....                               | 7  |
| <b>Methodology</b> .....   | 7  |
| <b>Analysis</b> .....  | 7  |
| <b>Ethics</b> .....  | 8  |
| <b>Report structure</b> .....  | 8  |
| <b>MMF Context</b> .....   | 9  |
| <b>WMM Perspectives on Youth Voice and Workforce Development</b> ..... | 11 |
| <b>Key Findings</b> .....  | 11 |
| <b>Youth voice successes</b> .....                                     | 13 |
| Organic youth voice .....  | 13 |
| Peer leadership .....  | 13 |
| Being responsive .....   | 14 |
| Supporting young people’s needs .....                                  | 14 |
| Enabling decision-making .....   | 15 |
| Creating the right foundations for youth voice .....                   | 15 |
| Scaffolding learning .....   | 16 |
| <b>Further Youth Voice Development</b> .....                           | 16 |
| Gradual steps .....  | 16 |
| Not overpromising .....  | 17 |
| Contextual awareness .....   | 17 |
| Capturing and acting on young people’s perspectives .....              | 18 |
| Inclusive governance .....   | 18 |
| Not reinventing the wheel .....  | 19 |
| Collaborative youth voice development .....                            | 20 |
| <b>Barriers to Youth Voice Development</b> .....                       | 21 |
| Communicating via schools .....  | 21 |
| Funding and staff capacity .....                                       | 23 |
| Skills deficit .....   | 24 |
| Bringing geographically widespread young people together .....         | 24 |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Impact of funding on choice of instrument .....                 | 24        |
| Business risk.....  | 25        |
| Decreasing ensemble numbers.....                                | 26        |
| Narrow measures of success .....                                | 26        |
| Unnoticed youth voice practice .....                            | 26        |
| <b>Developing the Workforce .....</b>                           | <b>27</b> |
| Clear roles .....   | 27        |
| Training and mentorship .....                                   | 27        |
| Work placements .....   | 28        |
| <b>Barriers to Workforce Development.....</b>                   | <b>28</b> |
| Recruiting diverse music practitioners.....                     | 28        |
| Attracting music graduates into the profession .....            | 29        |
| Limited career guidance.....                                    | 29        |
| Lack of progression routes and sustainability .....             | 29        |
| <b>Case Studies: Youth-led Approaches.....</b>                  | <b>31</b> |
| <b>Case Study One: Coventry Music Service .....</b>             | <b>31</b> |
| <b>Music Lab Toolkit meeting.....</b>                           | <b>32</b> |
| Two ways of thinking about youth voice in music education ..... | 32        |
| Allowing decision-making.....                                   | 33        |
| Allowing dialogue .....   | 34        |
| Choosing repertoire .....                                       | 35        |
| Adapting repertoire .....                                       | 35        |
| Choosing music to listen to .....                               | 35        |
| Being reflective and open-minded music educators .....          | 36        |
| More than learning a musical instrument.....                    | 37        |
| Constraints of 'wider structures' .....                         | 37        |
| Shared 'ground rules' .....                                     | 37        |
| Perceptions of classical music .....                            | 38        |
| <b>Music lessons.....</b>                                       | <b>39</b> |
| Heather's small group violin lessons .....                      | 39        |
| Arjun's whole class flute lesson.....                           | 43        |
| <b>Case Study One Summary .....</b>                             | <b>46</b> |
| <b>Case Study Two: Wolverhampton Music Service .....</b>        | <b>47</b> |
| BaB consultation with young people.....                         | 49        |
| BaB sessions .....  | 53        |
| Interview with Course Leader, Aman.....                         | 55        |
| Pacing of BaB .....   | 58        |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Schools spreading the word .....   | 58  |
| Young People’s Rivers of Musical Experience .....                          | 59  |
| Max’s Musical River .....  | 59  |
| Kiran’s Musical River .....  | 61  |
| <b>Case Study Two Summary</b> .....  | 66  |
| <b>Youth Consultations</b> .....   | 67  |
| <b>Shropshire Youth Council</b> .....                                      | 67  |
| <b>What Defines a ‘Good’ Music Service?</b> .....                          | 70  |
| Key Findings .....   | 71  |
| Group 1: Wolverhampton Music Service Become a Beatmaker participants ..... | 72  |
| Group 2: Worcestershire Music Service Youth Jazz Orchestra members.....    | 75  |
| Group 3: Sandwell Music Service Student Voice Group members .....          | 78  |
| <b>Youth Club Members, Worcestershire</b> .....                            | 83  |
| <b>Youth Consultations Key Learning</b> .....                              | 90  |
| <b>Recommendations</b> .....   | 91  |
| <b>References</b> .....  | 94  |
| <b>Appendix 1: Musical River guidelines</b> .....                          | 96  |
| <b>Appendix 2: Musical metaphors</b> .....                                 | 97  |
| <b>Appendix 3: The Q-sample statements</b> .....                           | 98  |
| <b>Appendix 4: The ‘Q grid’</b> .....                                      | 99  |
| <b>Appendix 5: Complete rankings</b> .....                                 | 100 |

# Executive Summary



West Midlands Music (WMM) is a collective of 14 Music Education Hubs (MEHs) across the West Midlands region with 'a shared commitment to ensuring high quality, progressive and ongoing music education for all children' (WMM, online<sup>1</sup>).

WMM was awarded Music Mark funding for the Music Makers of the Future (MMF) project, which ran from January 2022 – July 2022. MMF had a dual focus on youth voice and workforce development and aimed to: map out youth voice processes employed by WMM; explore barriers and enablers to workforce development; test a range of new youth-led approaches; run a series of youth consultations; and produce music educator and artist career profiles.

MMF was evaluated by researchers from Birmingham City University (BCU), who employed a mixed methodology with an emphasis on qualitative methods involving interviews, observations, creative methods and Q-sort. The evaluation aimed to explore perspectives on youth voice from a range of individuals, two of the youth-led approaches implemented during MMF, the impact of music on young people's lives, and the overall learning from the project. BCU co-produced case studies and career profiles with WMM, which feature in an accompanying toolkit (WMM, 2022).

This report outlines the findings from this research including recommendations for youth voice and workforce development.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://westmidlandsmusic.org.uk/>

## Introduction

The Music Makers of the Future ('MMF') project was led by West Midlands Music (WMM), encompassing 14 MEHs in the West Midlands. The project was funded through Music Mark's Innovation Fund, which aims to help MEHs 'stabilise and grow following the Covid-19 pandemic' (Music Mark, online<sup>2</sup>). MMF ran from January – September 2022.

As part of WMM's ongoing commitment to increasing engagement with young people and developing youth-led work, the project involved:

- Mapping out current youth voice approaches and perspectives on youth voice across WMM.
- Identifying barriers and enablers to music education workforce development.
- Testing a range of youth voice and youth-led approaches within new and existing strands of work.
- Consulting with groups of young people currently engaged or not engaged with WMM on the role music plays in their lives.
- Producing case studies of a range of professional roles within WMM to inform and inspire future generations of music education professionals.

As WMM's first joint project, it is hoped that the learning from MMF will inform all 14 MEHs' strategic planning and musical provision.

### Research aims

The BCU research team were commissioned to consult with MEH leads and senior staff on youth voice and workforce development, evaluate two of the youth-led approaches which were developed within the project, consult with young people, and elucidate WMM music educators' career paths.

### Research questions

The following questions were investigated:

- What does youth voice look like or what could it look like in WMM from the perspectives of MEHs, music leaders and young people?
- What are the barriers and enablers to youth voice and workforce development in WMM?
- What impact does music-making have on young people's lives, future aspirations and wellbeing?
- What can we learn from Music Makers of the Future and share across WMM and with other music organisations?

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/music-mark-partnership-innovation-fund-projects/>

## Young People

The following young people participated in this research:

- Wolverhampton MEH Become a Beatmaker students
- Shropshire MEH Youth Council members
- Severn Arts Worcestershire Jazz Youth Orchestra members
- Sandwell MEH Youth Voice Group members
- Youth Centre members, Worcestershire

## West Midlands Music Toolkit

In addition to this report, WMM produced a MMF toolkit (WMM, 2022). The toolkit contains information on all five of the youth-led approaches adopted across five MEHs including insights from case study participants. Elements of this research are included in the toolkit. Four music education and career profiles constructed from interviews led by BCU are included in the toolkit only. These profiles are of individuals who were involved in MMF.

## Methodology

Through participation in this research, MEH leads, MEH teachers and young people had the opportunity to reflect on youth voice, respective youth-led approaches, and their relationship to music and music career pathways.

Data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, Q-sort, creative approaches and observations. The emphasis on qualitative methods enabled the researchers to gather rich data and to better understand the perspectives of WMM workers and young people. As Cohen et al. share:

Qualitative research provides an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours... (2018: 288 referencing Gonzales et al., 2008: 3)

Two exploratory case studies (Yin, 2014) of youth-led approaches (Coventry and Wolverhampton MEHs) were followed. Exploratory case studies enable researchers to delve deeply into a particular social phenomenon and are suited to 'what' and 'why' based questions (ibid.), the former of which underpin this research (see research questions above). As each case involved different settings, age groups and activities, different methods were required for each case. These methods are introduced at the beginning of each case later on in the report.

## Analysis

Data were analysed thematically, which involved researchers ‘identifying patterns/themes’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 80) in the data through the use of thematic analysis (ibid.).

## **Ethics**

The evaluation was approved by Birmingham City University Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences Ethics Committee. All young people’s names and MEH lead names have been anonymised and changed in this report. Excluding young people participants, individuals in the case studies (toolkit co-author, music teachers and artists) agreed to be named.

## **Report structure**

The report has four main parts:

- WMM Perspectives on Youth Voice and Workforce Development
- Case Studies: Youth-led Approaches
- Youth Consultations
- Conclusion and Recommendations



## MMF Context

MMF took place in 2022, marking 10 years since WMM began operating as MEHs. The project was planned during the pandemic at a time when MEHs had developed new ways of engaging with young people online. A WMM member described WMM MEHs as being in 'different places' with engaging youth voice and believed MMF provided a useful opportunity to gather information on what was already happening across the collective and what needed to happen next. There were a number of drivers for the project:

[MMF was] partly driven by funding, partly driven by data, partly driven by a need to grow our businesses...but also our offer...is it appropriate? Is it the right thing for older young people who are going into a very competitive market for the first time? What can we do to help that and what can we do to encourage more participation in music education? So it felt like it [MMF] was very pertinent. (WMM member)

Evidently, WMM are asking important questions about their music education provision and their role in shaping the music education sector. Further motivations for MMF were as follows:

- To see what could be achieved collectively as WMM and create an evidence base.
- To delve deeper into WMM's youth voice practices and inform existing work.

I think we've all talked about young people's voices for a long time and what we wanted to do was put together something that was R&D based to see whether we were doing the right things. (WMM member)

- To build on engagement approaches established during the pandemic and consult with young people (particularly older young people) to understand their lived experiences and views of music education.

We wanted to consult meaningfully with our future generations....we wanted particularly to look at the older age group because there were reductions in ensemble membership, for example. We were trying to work out what are the time priorities for young people, and whether music education has the same relevance and the same attraction as it did when they were younger. (WMM member)

- To research how young people feel about being representatives and taking on governance roles.

What we didn't want to do was to bring in young people onto a board where they're isolated and they're on their own. So we didn't want it to be tick box. We didn't want it to be 'oh, we've got a young person involved - that's fine'. (WMM member)

- To prioritise young people's perspectives and examine this from a talent development and workforce point of view connecting to the following observation:

The management and the leadership side of music education is going to diminish if we don't get these young people interested in providing that offer for young people. It's so essential to everything. (WMM member)

- To consult with younger music educators to better understand what they would like to contribute and how.

# WMM Perspectives on Youth Voice and Workforce Development

Leads from 4 WMM MEHs took part in semi-structured interviews on key aspects surrounding youth voice and workforce development within their organisations. They are referred to as MEH1-MEH4. The interviews focused on if and how MEHs currently engage youth voice, the youth voice processes employed by the MEHs, what was working well, gaps in youth voice and workforce development, and enablers and barriers to building youth voice and developing the workforce across the MEHs' programmes.

It is important to note that this research took place while MEHs were recovering from the pandemic. Opportunities to address and reflect on their youth voice work had therefore been limited.

...we've just been so concentrated on getting all the kids that started pre-pandemic playing back going... we've been very logistical...so things like this [youth voice] have gone on the back burner. (MEH1)

...we're delivering a business model, which is recovering after the pandemic and in the pandemic...what's probably more essential to us is that we're stable. (MEH2)

Coupled with this, MEH4 were concerned that the 'hard two years' preceding MMF had resulted in 'a lot of burnt out teachers'. MMF was therefore a useful catalyst for taking stock of youth voice and workforce development following a turbulent time.

## Key Findings

The interviews revealed the following key findings:

1. MEHs are actively engaging youth voice in their work. Current activity includes facilitating instrument and repertoire choices, gathering and responding to feedback, and governance opportunities<sup>3</sup>. MEHs also mentioned 'organic' development of youth voice within particular music projects/provision.
2. MEHs described youth voice processes as more relevant for older learners, as younger learners require initial support and scaffolding to develop their musical identities in and out of school.
3. Areas for youth voice development identified by WMM centred on:

### More dialogue with young people

- Developing strategies to improve capturing, recording and reflecting on formal and anecdotal insight from young people
- Knowing how to ask the right questions

---

<sup>3</sup> The MMF Toolkit (WMM, 2022) includes information on two youth governance projects, which were ran by Sandwell and Walsall MEHs.

- Connecting with a wide range of young people who do and do not engage with WMM

#### Acting on learning from dialogue with young people

- More action following youth consultations
- How to encourage youth voice while managing expectations

#### Embedding youth voice processes

- How to employ youth voice processes incrementally for all teaching staff
- How to involve WMM's younger staff base more strategically

#### Youth governance

- Creating clear job roles for young people in governance
- Inclusive governance where young people can authentically contribute

#### Partnership working

- Requesting evaluation data from partnership projects
- Locating best practice across WMM and other settings
- Exploring the potential for more collaboration with schools and/or with young people with regards to collecting data

#### 4. The following barriers to youth voice development were identified by WMM:

##### School barriers

- difficulties communicating with children via primary schools
- perceived school expectations that music lessons should consist of music-making only
- a lack of feedback from schools

##### Funding barriers

- a lack of ring-fenced budget for youth voice work in the MEH grant funding agreement

##### Staff capacity and skills

- limited staff capacity
- a lack of youth engagement skills in MEHs

##### External pressures

- statistics and pressure impeding creativity and reflection

##### Business risk

- the implications of youth-led changes posing potential risks to MEHs' business

##### Bringing together young people

- managing disparate groups of young people across MEH localities

### Capturing good youth voice practice

- overlooking existing good practice in favour of big events.
5. MEHs voiced the need for more placements, training and mentorships in order to support the future workforce, coupled with more information for young people regarding professional roles in music education and the arts.
  6. Barriers to workforce development included MEHs' employment terms potentially not being fit for purpose; and challenges identifying and recruiting specialist music practitioners. Wider challenges included the arts sector workforce and filling vacancies across the board; an undervaluing of music education in music degrees; narrow repertoire choices deterring young people from pursuing music education careers.

## **Youth voice successes**

### ***Organic youth voice***

MEH1 commented on the 'organic' nature of youth voice within some of their programmes.

...most of our youth voice is not formalized...it's just things that happen...just organic youth voice. (MEH1)

I think it's just great...that we are able to do these things where we are kind of swayed by what the children want to do...it just organically happens, which I think is really nice. (MEH1)

They added that this was dependent on the type of work. Holiday and food programmes, for example, are 'less structured than school' (MEH1) meaning that music tutors had more time with children and young people. This enabled more dialogue and tutors developed a more informed understanding of young people's needs. MEH3 spoke of their early years project similarly and related the space for engaging youth voice to their funder, Youth Music, sharing 'I know one of their big things is youth voice' (MEH3).

### ***Peer leadership***

All of the interviewed MEHs were facilitating peer leadership in some form, again, mainly through their project-based work. For instance, MEH2's younger ensembles were sometimes mentored by older musicians completing their Duke of Edinburgh awards. MEH noted that youth leadership was less relevant to one-to-one lessons and working with very young children, so youth voice processes are evidently contingent on the type of music provision.

## ***Being responsive***

MEH3 reflected on their efforts to be responsive to young people during a concert situation. This entailed acknowledging and acting on a young person's viewpoint:

I heard one child say, when's it my turn to go on to the stage? So you pick things up on the day...following that comment...we made a big thing about that in the concert so that those children felt that they were still on this stage, even though they weren't sitting on this stage as such. (MEH3)

This highlights how valuing youth voice does not necessarily require discrete, formalised approaches.

MEHs felt it was important to ensure repertoire was familiar and relevant for the young musicians they were teaching. This, MEH1 believed, was key for building motivation:

...teachers will instinctively go down a path that they know the children are going to get on board with...anything like that where you can make a simple arrangement of something...that the children are really familiar with...I know that always goes down really well and then it will spark more interest for other things. (MEH1)

This was echoed by MEH2 in terms of their more 'advanced students' (first excerpt) and WCET (second excerpt):

...we'll never have a situation where they've just got to play a piece. We always have a good discussion of what sort of journey they want to go down...what pieces they actually want to play...the conversation is there. (MEH2)

I'm very much led by the kids because every school is different. (MEH2)

## ***Supporting young people's needs***

MEH1 support a cohort of young producers who

...come [weekly] as a response to what they want and what they need in their progression. We've not just told them what they need, they've told us what they need us to give them. (MEH1)

They also referenced their rock band provision which is

all about making the bands the right fit, the genres that the kids want to play...where do you want to do gigs? (MEH1)

Reflecting on the above opportunities, MEH1 decided that they are

almost connected to youth voice because we're hearing what they're interested in and acting on it. (MEH1)

It is interesting to note that MEH1 perceived the above as 'almost' relating to youth voice. Youth voice carries multiple meanings and it may be difficult to ascertain 'what counts' as youth voice in music education.

MEH3 discussed the benefits of gathering feedback from ensemble members to better address their needs.

we have started asking [ensemble members] questions in the last couple of weeks and just going around to the groups and saying, 'what do you really enjoy? Is there anything we could do better?' (MEH3)

This process enabled the MEH3 to make 'easy' (MEH3) adjustments such as ensuring a student had access to their piano instead of a keyboard and supporting a student when they suggested (paraphrased by MEH3) 'we'd like to be more involved in choosing repertoire'. Students' feedback was also helpful in boosting staff morale and promoting ensembles to other young people more authentically through using peers' views.

### ***Enabling decision-making***

MEH2 shared that while their recent chamber concerts were teacher-led in terms of music directors, 'there was some choice [for young people] to choose their own groups'.

MEH3 run instrument demos in schools which aim to support children to choose which instruments they would like to learn during WCET. They described what happens after the demo:

...then the children choose which instruments they'd like to play rather than the school saying 'we'd like an hour of strings and an hour of wind and an hour of brass'. Let's see what the children would like to play first before you make that decision. (MEH3)

They also send parent/carers information about the demos so that children can discuss their choices at home. MEH3 admitted that while this could sometimes be a 'headache' to arrange, the take up from schools (one school bought in every discipline after the demos) meant that it was 'certainly worth it'. Due to the nature of WCET this process did not guarantee that all children would get to learn their first choice of instrument, but it increased the chances of schools booking instruments 'that actually the majority of the children are interested in playing (MEH3). Other WMM partners run similar initiatives including open days.

### ***Creating the right foundations for youth voice***

MEHs were conscious that decision-making needed to be introduced at an appropriate time. For example, MEH1 mentioned that with regards to children choosing repertoire

...once you get past the beginner stage of playing enough notes to be able to start playing actual pieces or whatever...then you can start a journey through what they're going to learn... what...sorts of music they [children] prefer. (MEH1)

The same applied to MEHs introducing music or particular musicians to children, which would hopefully inspire them to find out more, develop new interests and voice these interests:

I think the children then have a bit more...they want to find out more about it, maybe go home and they'll come back the next lesson and go "I've been listening to songs by that composer or that songwriter, can we try this song next? I really love this song. Can we try that next? Or they'll come to you and ask for particular songs that they've heard or they've been doing it at home or with their families.....where their interest is sparked by something and then they go off, find out a bit more, come back and want to know more or want to try something else... (MEH1)

Similarly, MEH2 shared:

...when you do a school ensemble, or you do a whole class, and you've been there six months, you do ask the question 'so what would you like to play?' (MEH2)

This demonstrates that youth voice takes time. It also highlights that, in some cases, developing relationships with children and young people may be an important prerequisite to young people being willing to share their views with music teachers.

### ***Scaffolding learning***

Based on experiences with particular groups of young people, MEHs were aware that young people needed creative freedom but that they also needed sufficient support and scaffolding.

I think the string group have influenced what they do. But at the end of the day, it still needs the leader of the group to curate it into something that they can actually play because they're good kids coming up with the best ideas in the world...but if it's not actually viable... (MEH1)

MEH4 was conscious that young people were sometimes expected to take on youth leadership roles but that they were still at a stage where they needed help:

...young people have always been seen as the as the kind of young trend...you're trendy, you're out there, you're risk-taking...we expect them to be the leaders in the world...they need help...not in a patronising way, in a good way...(MEH4)

## **Further Youth Voice Development**

MEHs identified a number of areas for further development regarding their youth voice work.

### ***Gradual steps***

MEH1 believes it is important to take 'little steps' in improving their youth voice work. They noted that the learning from, for example, training sessions and conferences takes time to



come to fruition and that if tutors each engaged youth voice on some level, that would be positive.

I think it's a case of us just plugging away bit by bit on this...if I could get to the end of the year and every tutor working in a school has done some form of youth voice that would be a good step, even if it wasn't in all their schools. (MEH1)

This raises the question of how to track this and support tutors to implement approaches in ways which work for them. MEH2 had started to grow their participant-led music making:

Young people don't currently lead or direct any of our ensembles, I think we are predominantly led by adults. 95% of it is. I know we're starting to do that but not across the board. (MEH2)

While particular dimensions of youth voice work were just getting starting or were yet to be explored by MEH2, they believed that it was worthwhile and that improving and embedding youth voice would mean that

We develop the best service and children get the best education... it is an exciting possibility that we could potentially look forward to. (MEH2)

However, MEH2 felt that youth voice was more important for addressing macro issues as opposed to micro issues such as what happens during music lessons:

[youth voice development] has to be purposeful: I don't see the benefit of...I want to learn a different scale, or they've got to have a slightly different plan, or the lessons are five minutes longer. It has to be wholesale benefit. (MEH2)

### ***Not overpromising***

While MEHs recognised the benefits of giving young people a say in their music education, they were conscious of not over promising and agreeing to changes they could not fulfil.

One of the risks of youth voice more broadly is that it has to be done in a way that you...we can't, you know, 'go and have this on a bouncy castle tomorrow'...I think that's a really tricky thing to facilitate with young people...how do you encourage them to be really open and imaginative about things that they want while also having boundaries and structure around what you can actually deliver? (MEH3)

### ***Contextual awareness***

MEH4 emphasised the importance of context in ensuring the MEHs music provision factored this in:

The other thing is understanding your context and your area and that what young people are experiencing here is very different...when you're in an urban city, there's a lot more on offer and there's a lot more to engage with than when you're in a rural area

and you're isolated. There's very little. So how do we make their world relevant to them? Because relevance is key. (MEH4)

The breadth of the MEHs' programmes – and how established particular programmes were – was also an important factor in explaining why levels of youth voice varied across WMM. The unique nature of each MEH means that there is clearly no one-size-fits-all approach to managing youth voice. However, MEH1 mentioned not knowing how they compared with other MEHs with regards to their youth voice work ('I've no idea if we're doing a lot or not a lot' (MEH1)) so there is interest among WMM to understand how their work relates to neighbouring MEHs.

### ***Capturing and acting on young people's perspectives***

As evidenced above, MEHs are engaging youth voice in some schools, but this was not necessarily being captured by music teachers and fed back to the central team to ascertain trends or recurring issues. As MEH3 put it:

...in schools, they're [music teachers] talking to students all the time... 'what repertoire would you like to play?' 'Would you like to take exams?' 'Is there anything that you'd like to attend?'... staff do the social side of things with students as well... they tell you what's going on at home... their other interests... So I suppose we are doing loads of youth voice, but we're probably not capturing it... it's about capturing that information and making sure you know that perhaps we'll review it on a regular basis and do something with it.

This was echoed by MEH1 who could recognise youth voice approaches in their work, but felt there was a need to develop how they structure it, for example through recording it, and building in time to reflect on it.

Echoing this idea, MEH4 shared the following regarding youth consultation:

I think we do try and do that and some of us are better at it than others in the sense that we do try and talk to young people who are in orchestras and bands and groups and young people in schools. But I don't know that we necessarily use that information to make decisions. So I think that's a gap. (MEH4)

This was an interesting point which highlights the potential pitfalls of youth consultation if it does result in any practical steps.

### ***Inclusive governance***

Governance was a key theme of the MMF project and two of the youth-led case studies focused on youth voice council models (see WMM, 2022). Referencing another area of governance, young board members, MEH4 flagged a need for more youth representation at board level coupled with a shift in board meeting practices so that young people are included.

We also have to get young people in strategic positions on boards and having a proper voice, not sitting listening to the usual way we do things with board meetings. (MEH4)

One factor that exacerbates this is a lack of clarity regarding young people's roles as board members. MEH4 likened having clear roles, but freedom to share views openly, to 'freedom within boundaries' stating

You need the boundaries because otherwise you don't understand what your place is...[Young people] don't really understand why you're there other than us going, 'we've got a young person on our board.' (MEH4)

So, ensuring inclusive practices for young board members is an important consideration.

MEH3 mentioned that they had a youth council formed of ensemble members 'a long time ago' and were not sure why it had stopped. This suggests that it can be challenging to sustain these types of initiatives. (See barriers to youth voice development later on.)

MEH2 were interest in the idea of inviting their young musicians to be advocates:

[it would] be very valuable for us having a set of advocates to advocate for the benefits of getting involved in music education. (MEH2)

Having been especially focused on stabilisation following the pandemic, they saw youth governance as a mid-term goal:

I think it'd be a nice place to be in in a couple of years...we're recovering. The priority is being here as a service. So I think this would be something good to aim towards in the future...it's good to have the conversations and plant those seeds for us to explore when we're in a position to do so. (MEH2)

Therefore MEHs like MEH2 feel it is important to develop youth voice work at a realistic pace and to not rush the process.

### ***Not reinventing the wheel***

WMM members were interested in accessing and building on existing examples of good practice both within WMM and with other MEHs to grow their work and avoid unnecessary duplication. Here are some examples:

Work out who's doing the best bits in different areas... (MEH1)

...are there some really good examples that other services have used that we could tap into as well? (MEH3)

...there's no point in reinventing stuff. So let's find the people that are doing this really well and let's learn from them. (MEH4)

This highlights the need to continue sharing practice in a way that can be accessed and implemented by other MEHs. Based on some of the points mentioned above, this could include short-term and mid-term plans for youth voice development, and finding out why particular initiatives ended.

### ***Learning from a range of young people***

MEH2 and MEH3 wished to learn from the perspectives of members who receive lessons from MEHs but are not part of an ensemble, and to find out why this was the case. This was in the context of some ensembles having recovered since the pandemic (in terms of numbers of young people), and some which were still 'really low' (MEH3) in numbers. MEH3 were aware that transportation is a key barrier to joining ensembles, but felt that

...there must be other reasons as well. It's about getting to the right pupils in the right way to get those answers back. (MEH3)

MEH3 also wanted to learn from a wide range of young people and 'tap into those students that aren't actively engaged with what we do' (MEH3), continuing:

Is there anything missing from that offer?...Is there anything students would like to see? It's about the best way to do that because what we don't want to do is target all those pupils that we already teach. (MEH3)

So, MEH-led consultation needs to be far-reaching and encompass a range of young people within and beyond MEHs.

### ***Collaborative youth voice development***

A number of collaborative approaches to youth voice development were mentioned by MEH3. They suggested that schools, for examples heads of music (who they had developed strong relationships with), would potentially be able to help them by speaking to students they do not currently engage with on their behalf. They also wondered if young people may be the best people to 'go round and ask those questions. It's about exploring the best way' (MEH3). This would be contingent on schools having time and developing the right questions so that schools feel support to do this.

School staff were also noted as a potential bridge between students and MEHs for gathering feedback on MEH-produced school events:

maybe we need to incorporate something within the staff feedback to say, can you speak to your pupils as well to see whether there's anything they would like to change or do differently another year? (MEH3)

This is an interesting area for development which is worth exploring in future WMM work.

In addition to this project, WMM had previously considered youth voice together. One example MEH3 gave was consulting with younger members of staff as part of a WMM meeting:

...we were asked to bring along somebody within that age bracket [18-25 years old] that worked for us to get their opinions as well, rather than, you know, it's just us. We've worked for the service for a long time, we've got a lot of experience...we all bought – well, as many of us that could - did bring a young person with us. (MEH3)

It is not clear if some of the MEHs were unable to bring a young person with them due to availability, or if it was due to the demographic of their workforce at the time. While youth voice development does not necessarily need to be overseen by this demographic, utilising WMM's younger staff base may offer particular advantages including relatability and rich understandings of being part of a younger generation.

In addition to joint work within WMM, MEHs mentioned how their wider networks and partners connect to or could potentially connect to supporting youth voice as well as understanding the perspectives of young people who do not currently engage with MEHs. For example, MEH3 works closely with their Local Cultural Education Partnership who have done 'lots of youth voice'.

...we've been able to shape some of those questions that have gone out...that feedback comes back to us as well as other partners within that group... (MEH3)

MEH3 also wondered if partnership project evaluations could be a useful springboard for youth voice learning and future youth voice activities.

we've had some lovely things shared, where pupils have drawn pictures and shared all sorts of things with this following concert. (MEH3)

Evaluations, MEH3 noted, were often overseen by music organisations and MEH partners, so more follow up between partners is needed so that MEHs can access this information.

## **Barriers to Youth Voice Development**

MEHs discussed some of the key barriers to developing youth voice and participation.

### ***Communicating via schools***

MEH1 noted difficulties going through primary schools in order to reach primary school aged children and 'asking them what they want':

...we just can't get past the [primary] school environment straight to them, with their families, to ask some questions. (MEH1)

They believed that secondary schools were 'easier' (MEH1) for engaging youth voice due to more established digital communication between students, parents and schools. Therefore they wondered if developing youth voice with primary children was more realistic during school hours. However, they also raised the issue of whether MEHs ought to be responsible for this since their role is to provide music education:

...we'd probably have to go to school with a survey and get them to fill it in while we're with them, which kind of goes against what we're there for because we're there to provide the music lesson, which is part of their curriculum. (MEH1)

It is interesting to note that MEH1 envisaged a survey as their mechanism for consulting with young people; it is possible that a different approach which works for schools and MEHs may be required. MEH1's concern as to who is responsible for developing youth voice related to negative experiences, whereby schools had complained about what they perceived as a lack of music making during lessons. MEH1 gave one example:

We've had examples in the last year where people at schools have complained about someone because they didn't get the ukuleles out...they thought they'd do some singing and stuff to prep for the next lesson in the future...so actually part of this needs to be about educating. (MEH1)

To this end, they questioned if schools would take issue with them running youth voice activities and if this would jar with the school's expectations. MEH2 echoed this concern and was conscious that schools and charities 'buy a product' and that the 'product is designed to help them get grade five etc.' (MEH2).

While connecting via families or leading activities in school time is problematic, they were conscious that asking teachers to gather information on their behalf was also difficult:

...teachers are really tight [on time]...specifically coming out of pandemic times because they're catching up with maths and English and all the rest of it. (MEH1)

MEH3 noted similar challenges in the context of receiving feedback during or after school music events they hosted:

...you're relying on school staff to feed things back...pupils will have conversations with school staff during the events...if they don't feed that information back, you miss it...I think that's probably a barrier...they're so busy in schools...you don't always get that information passed on. (MEH3)

While receiving feedback is not comparable to running youth voice and participation activities, the above highlights that communication between schools and MEHs is understandably limited, which has implications for how best to develop youth voice work. Related to this, MEH4 believed that the 'structured environments' of schools (as well as universities and music conservatoires) was a barrier to engaging youth voice meaningfully stating that

...it's difficult to get real change in a structure that isn't set up for that change...you're still having to conform to a structure to get whatever it is you need out of it, which is usually a formal qualification. (MEH4)

However, MEH3 did believe that it was possible to be supported by schools but that this was contingent on 'how high up the agenda music is' (MEH3).

...it just depends on having that relationship with the school, with the class teacher, with the head teacher, so that they get what we're trying to get out of the music lessons, to have the best outcome. If you're in a school where it's really important and the head teacher totally values everything they do, then I think they would

probably find some time to support more with that type of work. So maybe they could do it. (MEH3)

Schools' capacity to support MEHs connects to opportunities for further collaboration mentioned earlier. It also connects to a wider systemic factor mentioned by MEH4 which is the significant variation between private schools and state schools and 'breadth of curriculum'.

I think primary schools we're very confident...we're getting loads of buy back. We're getting interest from young children. You know, everybody loves music. Everybody does. But once you get to secondary school, playing a violin in a cupboard for 20 minutes is not attractive...unless you've got an amazing music department, which is where the divides are as well... (MEH4)

### ***Funding and staff capacity***

MEH4 believed there is a 'mismatch' between what MEHs are able to deliver within existing grant funding agreements, and what funders expect them to deliver. They felt increasing pressure to develop youth voice and diversify teachers' roles, but felt 'restricted' by the grant and lacking in staff capacity:

To embed all of this you've got to have it right at the beginning with the teachers...our teachers go into schools, they teach someone music and they go home...they don't have three minutes. So where's the staffing and the capacity to enable this to happen? ...there's not enough time and the nature of what we do as well is that we're teaching right in the field the whole time, so the communication networks are challenging. (MEH4)

They believed that an increase in grant funding was necessary to enable this to happen and shift away from a 'tick box' way of working:

So whilst [youth voice work is] admirable and obviously everyone in our world wants to do this...in reality, we just need to tick the boxes, get the money and pay the teachers and deliver the education. (MEH4)

This was echoed by MEH3:

it's all down to having the budget to be able to do it and, and having a big enough team...a lot of my staff have full contracts or they work for another music service and they haven't got any other time. It's about how to make it work when you've not got a lot of available budget and you've not got staff that are available to deliver it. (MEH3)

This sense of being restricted was also evident in the discussion with MEH2, who stated having 'absolutely zero budget flexibility' to develop new projects.

MEH4 noted that youth voice development depended on particular funders:

Unless you've got remit like Youth Music, you are struggling to get this [youth voice] covered along with everything else. I think there's a genuine willingness to do all of

this really well but it's very difficult in reality to put it in place in a structured way. We can do it in project-based work, which we have done. (MEH4)

MEH3's more extensive youth voice work was also via a project (for early years) funded by Youth Music, whereas in their ongoing work they felt 'it's left for us to decide how to go about that at the moment' (MEH3). So, evidently, youth voice is a condition of funding. It would be useful to gather more information on how youth voice is enacted across the MEHs' projects.

### ***Skills deficit***

MEH4 described how they were 'now expected to do everything with no skills' noting that youth engagement work and teaching and learning were based on different skills sets, and that the former was not traditionally part of music teachers' remits. They wanted to be able to resource a dedicated role - 'if we had a WMM Youth Voice Leader...that would be wonderful' (MEH4) - noting that they were running projects like MMF as 'we need the entrepreneurial skills'. Related to this, the MMF Toolkit includes a youth worker's perspective on engaging youth voice (see WMM, 2022).

### ***Bringing geographically widespread young people together***

MEH2 did not have a youth council or similar, and felt that it would be 'difficult' to bring together the widespread young people they did know:

...there might be one person in a year group in one school, and someone else somewhere else...how would you galvanise that group to have any influence?  
(MEH2)

### ***Impact of funding on choice of instrument***

Several MEHs discussed young people being able to choose which instrument(s) they learn as a clear opportunity for improving youth voice. However, this is not always possible due to funding which impacts which instruments and respective instrumental teachers MEHs can offer.

We've tried going as broad as possible on our instrument requests online. So if you want to learn any instrument that we potentially could teach, they're all on the drop down menu....which also has additional challenges in that you end up with a waiting list of kids who wants to play certain instruments because you just don't have any staff to do them. (MEH1)

Sometimes it's down to what staff you've got and what instruments you've got because if you've not got the budget to buy instruments or you haven't got a ukulele teacher available...it becomes really difficult. (MEH3)



MEH1 believed that funding was a barrier to being able to 'do youth voice properly'. It was also a barrier to them being able to gauge how well they were doing as, without being able to put in place all types of instrumental provision, they were weary of consulting with schools on this topic.

...we can't go to the schools or kids and say 'what instrument would you like to do?' Because we actually need to find a teacher and the instruments and things like that. (MEH1)

Moreover, their funding did not cover being able to recruit particular teachers for potential future requests:

We can't take on an extra violin teacher because kids might want to play the violin in 6 months' time. (MEH1)

MEH1 also noted a tension between the progression statistics they provided as part of their annual data return and choosing other instruments, noting that MEHs were deemed more successful if there were higher continuation rates on the instrument children had begun learning in WCET. They also highlighted the practicalities of WCET and 'what works' in this setting.

...it would be lovely to have a whole class of saxophones. But 30 saxophones in a classroom – that'd just be a nightmare to try and manage. So it's what is manageable in a class setting. (MEH1)

Evidently MEHs have to be practical and operate in a sustainable way which plays to their strengths and existing resources.

### ***Business risk***

MEH2 highlighted that any change in business, such as implementing new initiatives, carried risks:

The risk for me would be that if we were to develop a youth voice led set of initiatives that become quite draining on time and financial resources, that could potentially mean we have to switch up some of the things that we do...that could then destabilise the business. (MEH2)

Examples included requiring a different workforce based on young people wanting to take music lessons outside of school rather than in school, which MEH2 noted as 'then we're into redundancies' (MEH2). Conscious of protecting their staff it was important to take calculated risks:

It's not that we shouldn't do those things. It's just understanding what the implications potentially could be if the business would change. (MEH2)

However, MEH4 countered this viewpoint:

...we have to take that risk because otherwise we will lose them [young people]. We have to innovate to change the way we do things and for a lot of MEHs that is very difficult. They've been very consistent and consistently run with a consistent offer for

the last 10 years through the funding system...Young people have changed. Society has changed, time has changed, and the programming has changed... the music generally has changed. So we have to bring that in. (MEH4)

This suggests a range of viewpoints across the WMM MEHs surrounding organisational change and the risks this carries. As mentioned earlier, each MEH is unique with its own set of circumstances. A key question is how MEHs can be supported to maintain healthy businesses while being empowered to accommodate the evolving needs of young people.

### ***Decreasing ensemble numbers***

MEH4 noted decreasing numbers of ensemble members and how this may impact numbers of young people who are the same age as one another. This then impacts on their social environment and sense of belonging, which may be a factor in whether they would want to share their viewpoint or feel comfortable to do so.

### ***Narrow measures of success***

MEH4 described needing to be data-driven and this being a hindrance to being able to take stock of their work.

...we've got to produce more data and more information and [so it's] let's just get out there and teach. No one really stops to measure the actual impacts of it all...[During the pandemic] we talked about mental health and emotional well-being...the commitment to that. But it's all gone. It's back to stats and pressure. (MEH4)

This highlights how MEHs have a lack of time to reflect on their work and how statistics remain the key measure of success. Developing and embedding youth-led work takes time, and MEHs require the time and space to be able to think creatively and experiment with new approaches.

### ***Unnoticed youth voice practice***

MEH3 admitted that they were in the habit celebrating their big concerts and that they may be missing out on existing good practice in engaging youth voice that they can build on. Referring to the types of teachers who step out of their comfort zones to cater to all children's musical needs, and the good work that goes on in schools, they shared

I think sometimes we don't shout about that because...here's our big concerts...we don't make a big song and dance about doing just like a little end of term thing for our parents...you don't bring your external people in [to schools]...how do we celebrate the everyday great stuff that happens rather than celebrating just the big stuff. (MEH1)

This is an interesting point which links back to being able to capture and improve existing processes.

## **Developing the Workforce**

This section focuses on attributes MEHs identified as being important for the current and future workforce.

### ***Clear roles***

MEH4 shared their belief that early career music education workers (and young professionals in general) need and deserve clearly defined roles and accessible organisational structures to be able to navigate their roles and progress in their careers:

We don't explain what these roles are. We try to put everything into them as well and we have to be more specific and say no this person is just going to do this actually...that's what they're here for...that's where we have to create the right structures for people to fall into. (MEH4)

The lack of structure some young people experience is, MEH4 argued, exacerbated by 'people [who] think young people are rebellious and take risks and all the rest of it' when, actually, some young people benefit from structure and routine. This, they continued, had been amplified during the pandemic when young people were not able to work with their colleagues in person:

A couple of our young people that we've employed started working during Covid...that was their first job...so they don't know anything about the structure of work. (MEH4)

### ***Training and mentorship***

MEH4 also underlined the importance of training and mentorship.

The change for me is I want more young people in our organization who are being supported by us. I think there needs to be a mentorship scheme. We need to be moving aside...the leadership teams and the management teams need to be offering that training and that mentorship to young people coming up through the ranks. (MEH4)

Their Kickstarter Apprentice<sup>4</sup>, for example, who had recently been promoted to a full-time marketing role was sponsored to complete their CIM Diploma in Marketing. Reflecting on this, MEH4 shared:

So we've got to put those structures in place that are beyond just taking on young people for a few months. (MEH4)

### ***Work placements***

Work experience was highlighted by MEH3 and MEH4 as one of the ways they currently engage with young people. MEH4's work placements are being 'really well received by schools' and MEH3 attract

...students that are the older ensembles, or they've had lessons with this for a long time...they're looking to go do music at university and potentially be a teacher in the future. (MEH3)

The positive work being done in this area carries potential benefits for workforce development.

## **Barriers to Workforce Development**

### ***Recruiting diverse music practitioners***

MEH3 discussed the complexities of diversifying their current teaching staff to cater to all young people's musical interests. They questioned whether their current employment practices were suited to all music educators, and noted difficulties finding practitioners.

It's about having the right members of staff...how do we get those people in if the current terms and conditions don't work? We've got really good terms and conditions here...but maybe the practitioners that would deliver those sessions don't want to be on a contract, maybe they just want to deliver workshops. They must be out there, but it's how do we find them? (MEH3)

So, if youth consultation, for example, were to highlight that young people want to work with particular types of musicians, the next challenge is locating these musicians and having the appropriate employment practices in place to be able to recruit them. The need to make changes in how people are employed was also noted by MEH4:

The workforce has changed. It is much more flexible, it's much more peripatetic in a wider sense and young people aren't seeing themselves having as straightforward a career I don't think...they don't see themselves going in one direction. (MEH4)

---

<sup>4</sup> This relates to The Kickstart Scheme, which 'provides funding to employers to create jobs for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit.' <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

This has implications for music educators and management, and MEH4 was interested in organisational development which would enable a shift away from 'set teams' and traditional management structures.

It's trying to understand what a young person coming into this sector or industry is looking for because music teaching has changed so much in terms of what we do. (MEH4)

Another notable factor is an overall lack of workforce:

I don't know whether the Arts Council or the DfE will look at this as part of the new Plan [the refreshed National Plan for Music Education (DfE, 2022)]...there needs to be workforce development because there's no workforce out there for any area in life at the moment...(MEH4)

### ***Attracting music graduates into the profession***

Another related issue is whether teaching is a profession music graduates wish to go into, and if teaching is valued in colleges and conservatoires.

I don't think music education teaching is necessarily where most people who go to music colleges and conservatories really want to be...I think they're using it as a stopgap for other things. So what are the other things that we need to be providing for them? (MEH4)

This, MEH4 suggested, is exacerbated by a lack of access to diverse music during young people's own music education journeys:

...if we keep teaching classical old men to young, bright women, we're not going to see much change. (MEH4)

### ***Limited career guidance***

MEH4 believed that secondary school children and young people need more information regarding the different types of career pathways they can pursue in music education and the arts, and what these roles entail. They noted that this is important for young people who do, or do not go, through a formal music education system.

It would be really useful to have a portfolio of roles that people can go to. What does this look like? So at 11 [years old] they can go 'what does a music leader do? What does a composer do? What does a producer do?' (MEH4)

### ***Lack of progression routes and sustainability***

Finally, while projects were associated with more opportunities to develop youth voice, their short term nature means it is hard to retain young people and support them to progress:

...we've got to build in sustainability...there's a very clear lack of it. It's all very project-led, so you end up losing the funding after 2-3 years...It's hard because you then got disillusioned young people who've come in excited at the start of a three-year project who are now thinking "what do I do next?". Whilst we're trying to support them through that, we can't guarantee them work. That's really hard. (MEH4)

The above offered a snapshot of how youth voice and workforce development is perceived by selection of WMM MEHs. Evidently there is room for further development in these areas, provided that there is sufficient resource and support.

# Case Studies: Youth-led Approaches

## Case Study One: Coventry Music Service

Coventry Music Service wished to explore what it means to engage youth voice within the context of whole class ensemble tuition (WCET) and small group teaching. They nominated two of their music teachers, Arjun, a flute teacher, and Heather, a violin teacher, to explore this within their own teaching practice in the final weeks of summer term 2022. One primary school, in which Arjun and Heather both currently teach a combination of small group and WCET lessons, agreed to take part, enabling Arjun and Heather to test youth voice approaches with their current students. To support their planning, the teachers referred to a recently published Sound Connections booklet *The Music Lab: A Toolkit for Exploring Youth Voice within Music-Making Practices in Classical Music Education* (Mayne et al. 2022), hereafter referred to as The Music Lab Toolkit. The toolkit identifies decision-making as an important component for enabling youth voice stating:

It is important for students to be involved in musical decision-making and to contribute their ideas. This includes: goal/target setting, phrasing, articulation, dynamics, exams, performances, groupings. (ibid.:26)

Exploring opportunities for decision-making became the focus of Arjun and Heather's teaching for this project. Teachers had the opportunity to meet one of the toolkit co-authors, Dr Anna Bull, to discuss the toolkit, share ideas and interrogate key issues surrounding youth voice. As part of the research, Arjun and Heather were asked to complete written reflections after their music lessons.

The research for this case study consisted of:

- Attendance at The Music Lab Toolkit meeting
- One music lesson observation per teacher
- Analysis of teachers' written reflections
- Joint semi-structured interviews with the teachers based on MMF and on their respective education and career paths. Arjun and Heather's career profiles feature in the WMM Toolkit (WMM, 2022)

## Music Lab Toolkit meeting

### About The Music Lab Toolkit

The Music Lab Toolkit draws on Sound Connections' 'ongoing work with Music Education Hubs in scaffolding Youth Voice' (ibid.:5) alongside the authors' experience leading and making music with young musicians from Lewisham Music Hub as part of an action research project. It was motivated by 'the need for more understanding about Youth Voice within classical musical practice in particular (ibid.)' and offers guidance on practice and pedagogies which can support more democratic approaches to working with young people. Its resources chapter offers 'practical suggestions' (ibid: 38) such as decision-making, interpretation and improvisation tasks (ibid.:38-41), which the music teachers in this case were invited to adapt to their own settings.

The lead author on the toolkit was musician and educator Isabella Mayne, with co-authors Anna Bull and Jenn Raven. Anna described the development of the toolkit as 'experimental work' which had stimulated further questions among the research and facilitation team. She hoped that it would

allow teachers to reflect more systematically on what stage they might already be at with embedding youth voice... The toolkit is both for those who haven't had the chance to have training or try out ideas in this area, but also for those who might be experimenting in this way and just need some fresh ideas. (Anna, toolkit co-author)

While the toolkit was not produced specifically with WCET and small group teaching in mind, it aims to make youth voice work more accessible in music education, and was a catalyst for delving more deeply into what youth voice looks like and could look like in Arjun and Heather's music lessons.

Heather met with Anna to discuss The Music Lab Toolkit prior to implementing ideas in her music lessons. Arjun later watched a recording of the meeting. Their discussion covered a wide range of issues related to youth-led approaches within WCET and small group tuition, as well as broader issues surrounding youth voice in music education. Of benefit to the discussion, as well as highlighting the growing interest in decision-making within research and practice, Anna is currently supervising a doctoral candidate, Helen Dromey<sup>5</sup>, whose research is pertinent to this case study. Helen's research centres on the ways that a pupil-centred approach, prioritising musical decision-making, and group interaction, can improve engagement and progression for those choosing to continue learning after WCET programmes.

Key thematic discussion points from the meeting are expanded on below.

### ***Two ways of thinking about youth voice in music education***

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.estaeducation.co.uk/faculty/helen-dromey/> The current working title of Helen's doctorate is Rethinking Continuation in Instrumental Music Teaching through Democratised Learning.



Anna shared some of her recent thinking on youth voice which had developed following the publication of The Music Lab Toolkit. She believed that it was helpful to consider youth voice in two ways, firstly around learning:

What children say about their own learning...giving them a chance to explain what they want in their learning and to make choices about that...setting their own goals... being able to talk about what you enjoy or don't enjoy about your instrumental teaching and learning... (Anna)

Secondly, 'musical voice':

their expressive voice, so learning to find their voice as a musician...[E.g.] what music are they into at home or with their friends? How can this music be brought into the classroom? Young people's expressive voice can also be explored through supporting them to make interpretive decisions... our work with young people showed that this can be really powerful for them. (Anna)

The latter, she continued, required music educators to remove their 'taste judgements' with regards to children's creative decisions. This means that educators need to move away from deciding what music is 'good quality' or not and instead make space for the music that young people are already enjoying.

For Heather, these categories raised the issue of whether students should have more say in their musical goals.

I have an idea of where I want them to be by the end of the term or by the end of the year, but I never really ask 'what would you like to do' or 'what do you think your goals are?...What would you guys like to achieve on the violin?' instead of me just saying 'this is what we're going to achieve on the violin.' (Heather)

Anna agreed that enabling students to answer these kinds of questions could be 'really powerful' and counter other experiences of learning – for example some aspects of the curriculum - that can be 'quite rigid' in what students are expected to achieve. However, Anna added that goals may simply be related to the enjoyment of playing and that this contrasted to how many musicians and music educators are trained:

They might just want to explore the sounds that they can make...their goal might be to enjoy playing music during lessons every week. For those of us whose music education was carried out in a goal-oriented way of 'I'm going to do this grade' this approach might feel quite unfamiliar. But if we're supporting pupils to become adults who enjoy music and who play for enjoyment, thinking about that as an explicit goal can be helpful. (Anna)

### ***Allowing decision-making***

Anna emphasised that the 'general rule' underpinning youth voice and participation in music education is to ask 'at any point can I pass this decision over to the young people?'. Doing so, she continued, was about

...building the children's capacity and giving them the practice and experience of making musical decisions. (Anna)

This links back to Helen Dromey's research project, which sought to include regular opportunities for pupils to take the lead. Helen provided the following information on what these opportunities looked like in her research and how this impacted the group:

These might be as simple as encouraging pupils to take turns leading a scale and choosing the starting string, or spontaneously passing a musical motif back and forth around a group. In subsequent weeks, groups regularly collaborated, making musical decisions about tempo, dynamics, or articulation to create a mood, or improvised to "reimagine" a familiar piece.

While pupils taking the lead led to positive outcomes for this group, Anna shared with Heather that the goal is not necessarily for music education always to be child-led. Referencing ladders of youth participation (see Becko and Raven, 2020 for a recent example) Anna highlighted asking children 'where do you want to be on this ladder?' noting that, in some cases, 'it might be that they [children] actually want adults to lead'.

### ***Youth voice takes time***

While handing over decision-making to young people was a laudable aim, Anna noted that getting to a point where young people were confident in having a voice and speaking up was a 'time-consuming process' and that generally youth voice 'takes a lot of time to embed'. Heather agreed, and envisaged the process would take 'years':

...hopefully over the years as they [children] go through school and they have more lessons...it becomes more...they get to choose the song. I do think that in terms of students leading activities, youth voice can be quite a good approach to whole class. (Heather)

Equally, Heather participated in MMF towards the end of 2021/22 and had limited time to consider youth voice approaches. She shared

I think definitely from next year...I can implement this more. (Heather)

### ***Allowing dialogue***

In addition to accepting that developing youth voice takes time, the importance of dialogue and setting up a space where feedback is encouraged was highlighted. Immediately preparing instruments, Anna believed, could be a hindrance to discussion:

...once you get the instruments out that makes it much more difficult to have a discussion...I think it's helpful to consider the balance between playing and talking .

In some lessons, it might be appropriate to spend some of the time talking about what you're doing, as well as doing it. (Anna)

This connects to an issue raised in the MEH interviews regarding a pressure in some schools to be doing as much music-making as possible.

### ***Choosing repertoire***

Giving children and young people choice over repertoire was mentioned frequently during the discussion. While reading The Music Lab Toolkit, Heather had been 'shocked' to learn how frequently children were denied this opportunity, although she recalled being in a similar position when she was a young musician:

I mean that was me when I was learning. I was just given pieces and I never thought about it. (Heather)

Heather ensured that wherever possible, her students could choose repertoire. For example, in the context of graded exams, she shared that

I always play my students a bit of the pieces and say which one do you like?  
(Heather)

She believed it was important not to tell students her favourite piece and skew their decision-making.

### ***Adapting repertoire***

In lieu of or in addition to choosing repertoire, Anna wondered if there was scope for adapting repertoire children were presently learning within WCET. This tied in with Heather's emerging ideas for her small group lessons, including composing ideas around a piece, Derek the Spider, which both of her groups were currently learning. She was however aware that the children were beginners who had only been learning the violin for four to five weeks so far. She noted that for these particular children, who had understandably only learned 'a few notes...in a few weeks' thus far, that

...there's not masses of interpretation...there is a bit - with ways you can use the bow  
(Heather)

### ***Choosing music to listen to***

As part of MMF, Heather was considering including opportunities for children to suggest and listen to their favourite music during lessons. This was something Anna clearly agreed with:

That's just so powerful that the music that they're into in their lives is welcomed into this space. For teachers, this might seem like quite a small thing but it can be so powerful. (Anna)

The pair discussed potential issues to be aware of including age appropriateness due to problematic lyrics. This also applied to creative music making in response to potentially distressing issues such as war, which had arisen elsewhere in Heather's teaching. A few strategies were suggested including consulting with the school's safeguarding lead to find out if they had particular protocols for discussing controversial or sensitive issues, asking for suggestions a week in advance to help identify any unsuitable lyrics, and only playing appropriate parts of songs. Additionally, provided that schools were on board, Anna suggested that this could be a worthwhile opportunity to discuss the nature of the songs, especially with older students, for example discussing questions such as:

Why do you think that some people might find this song uncomfortable to listen to? ...learning music might involve having discussions about gender, about sexism...music education shouldn't just be about playing, but should include other aspects of the music as well. (Anna)

Following the above discussion, Heather opted to ask for musical suggestions a week in advance:

I might, during the session, say 'think of a song or band or a type of music that you would like us to listen to next week'. (Heather)

This was more optimal practically, enabling Heather to download the music onto her work laptop, highlighting how digital learning can be beneficial in this context.

### ***Being reflective and open-minded music educators***

During the discussion, Heather reflected on her music teacher values and how that shaped her – and Arjun's – attitude towards exploring youth voice and projects like MMF.

I think me and Arjun are quite similar as teachers...we studied at exactly the same time...we were in the same year group, we're the same friendship group, we've had the same pedagogy lessons at the conservatoire, we work with the same music service. So I think that we probably both have similar openness to this kind of learning...(Heather)

The shared history and synergy Heather describes underlined the importance of 'having reflective spaces between teachers' (Anna). Conversely, Heather was aware that not all teachers shared similar levels of openness:

I imagine that a lot of teachers teach how they teach because it works...you teach the exam pieces that work and you teach the book that you teach. I can see how it's easy to get into that rut... (Heather)

Anna made reference to 'pedagogy of correction', explored in previous work (e.g. Bull, 2018):

There's evidence that instrumental music teachers spend a lot of time correcting errors and that's what they think is good teaching. We need to challenge this approach, and think much more carefully about when, why, and how we are correcting pupils (Anna)

They discussed how Heather's reflective approach applied to her thinking about youth voice and opportunities to pass decision-making over the children.

It's just almost a matter of kind of giving it [decision-making] a label and actively noticing when you're making decisions or when you're passing decisions over to your pupils to allow them to make them. In this way, sharing decision-making becomes a conscious approach. (Anna)

### ***More than learning a musical instrument***

Heather described how her teaching approach had shifted away from children learning the violin to children learning about music through the violin.

...yes, you're going to learn the violin but I think if the focus is you're going to engage with music and become young leaders, and that's going to be around playing the violin, I think that's a really good approach to have to whole class. It is going to inspire children to want to do music, more than 'we're going to learn the violin today'. (Heather)

Heather's broadened conceptualisation of WCET teaching is a likely additional factor in why she was able to consciously engage youth voice in her music lessons.

### ***Constraints of 'wider structures'***

Relating to the barriers raised earlier in this report, Heather shared some of the wider challenges she experienced in some of her schools including unexpected school trips which drastically reduced her lesson time, limited information regarding schools' behavioural policies and not being sufficiently informed of children's additional needs. The latter is a widespread issue that can impact parity of access to WCET (Nenadic and Booth, 2022). These factors can negatively impact opportunities to develop youth voice:

...teachers are working within these wider structures and pressures that can make it difficult for them to implement youth voice approaches. For example, parents may want their kids to do exams, teachers may not have enough time in the timetable, or there may not be any professional development training available or any support networks for teachers to reflect on their teaching. (Anna)

### ***Shared 'ground rules'***

Heather problematised effectively collaborating with classroom teachers during music lessons. She believed this was partly about clear communication:

I can't expect the teacher to know what I need from them. I just need to tell them. (Heather)

Building on this, Anna recommended working with class teachers and children to create 'ground rules' (Mullen, 2013: 99-100). This involves giving group members a joint say in how they work together. Mullen discussed the positive impact setting ground rules can have on children:

What is really important to me is that the children understand that by doing certain things and stopping yourself from doing others, you can help make a group perform better. (ibid.)

While Mullen refers to children only, it is possible that involving teachers in this process will promote teacher 'buy-in' and ownership while enabling clearer lines of communication with visiting music teachers like Heather.

### ***Perceptions of classical music***

As WCET can often be oriented towards classical musical practices, and the young people from Lewisham Music Hub (who participated in Sound Connection's action research) largely played classical instruments, this was a key discussion point. Drawing on a teaching experience beyond WCET, Heather recalled one of her piano students mentioning 'I don't do classical piano'. Anna had found that some of the action research students had been 'quite critical' of classical music.

They didn't like the fact that you have to always do what the score says and you can't bring your own interpretations into it. As some of the young people described it, they didn't like it that "you always have to do what your teacher says". But many of them had ideas for interpretation for their pieces... and wanted to be able to bring their personalities into their playing, even if this meant they weren't playing it correctly. (Anna)

Heather noted a correlation between students who stated that they did not like classical music and a reliance on music apps, which gave them a sense of achievement but didn't necessarily develop their ability to play on their own:

They're [students] like I can play my favourite song because this app is teaching me...they think they can play the piano because they've been given a kind of paint by numbers, press this button... (Heather)

Anna suggested introducing students to alternative examples of piano playing as they might have limited examples and meanings to draw from.

This might mean improvising around the piece yourself and showing them what can be done with it, or working to get them to play in different styles, or seeing if they can play it without the [app] music. (Anna)

Connected to the point raised earlier about widening learning goals to aspects such as enjoyment, Anna highlighted the role of creativity and musical imagination in enabling musical progress:

I think those of us who are classically trained have a sense of wanting to push children to progress, and we've got our implicit model of what progress looks like. For

that child, progress might involve making space for her own musical imagination so that she can explore different ways to play the same song. (Anna)

Improvisation and reinterpreting songs connects to decision-making and composerly thinking, providing further opportunities to engage youth voice.

## Music lessons

One school observation per teacher took place in July 2022 towards the end of summer term. While Heather and Arjun had been teaching their respective groups since the beginning of the term, the observations coincided with the first set of lessons which were planned in conjunction with MMF.

Heather and Arjun were asked to consider the following questions in a post-music lesson reflection.

1. What youth-led/youth-voice approaches did you test and why?
2. What were the successes of these approaches?
  - a. How did the learners engage?
3. Were there any challenges testing these approaches?
4. What approaches might you be testing at the next lesson? Will this build on today's lesson in any way?

Table One shows activities which promoted decision-making in Heather and Arjun's music lessons. These are expanded on below.

**Table One: Musical decision-making activities during music lessons**

| Heather   | Arjun   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating and clapping rhythms</li> <li>• Creating and playing rhythms on the violin</li> <li>• Improvising using one string and first finger</li> <li>• Choosing what style of bowing to use</li> <li>• Sharing favourite music</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating physical actions to accompany extended flute techniques</li> <li>• Creating a class composition drawing on physical actions, colour, children's names and word size</li> <li>• Playing the 'number game'</li> </ul> |

### Heather's small group violin lessons

The researcher observed two of Heather's small group violin lessons, the first with 5 violin learners (all female) and the second with 4 learners (mixed gender) at the start of the school

day. These groups are referred to as group one and group two respectively. Both lessons were with Year 5 (8-9 years old), took place in the school library and were similarly structured. The learners had begun whole class violin lessons in April 2022, and had moved onto these small group lessons in June 2022.

The following sections include Heather's written reflections on the successes and challenges of incorporating decision-making opportunities, and how this varied across the two groups.

### ***Dialogue***

Building on the idea of allowing dialogue in music lessons, there was conversation between the children and Heather before the violins were unpacked. Heather asked each group what they had been doing ahead of summer term shortly ending. Group two appeared to be more confident than group one and enjoyed telling Heather about their recent school camping trip.

### ***Leading warm ups***

Heather led a 'copy my rhythm' clapping warm up, which students were already familiar with. She then invited students to take it in turns and lead the warm up, creating their own rhythms through clapping and then through playing rhythms on the violin. All of the children engaged in this, and one child (group two) created multiple rhythms. Heather noted the different responses across the groups:

The first group were more reserved, and most copied the example I did or did something similar. The second group came up with their own ideas more. I think for the first group just clapping by themselves in front of others was a big enough challenge. (Heather)

This highlights the groups' different starting points whereby group one were more inclined to mirror Heather's musical ideas and needed more time to develop and feel comfortable sharing their ideas with others. Heather chose, as she put it, not to 'push them' as they had more improvising planned, but noted that if there was more time she would have spent longer on the rhythms.

### ***Improvising***

Students were then introduced to the idea of improvising.

Heather discusses improvising and likens it to needing a pen but having a pencil.  
"Making something up." (Field notes)

The basis for the improvising was the first line of a tune (*Derek the Spider*) children had been learning that half term. Children were asked to improvise on the notes they had learnt in the tune using any string and their first finger. Initially they improvised along to a chordal accompaniment played by Heather as a whole group, and then as two smaller groups enabling students to take turns and actively listen to their peers' musical ideas.



We discussed how it sounded nice to listen to the other group making up their own tunes. (Heather)

Furthermore, improvising with others meant that children 'wouldn't feel too exposed and have pressure to play the "right" notes' (Heather). Heather encouraged the pupils (e.g. "that's it, have a go!", "I've heard some nice sounds") and the group appeared to be highly engaged in the activity. One child had their eyes closed while improvising and was immersed in the experience. When asked if he had created music before, he shared that he plays beats on Garageband. The activity uncovered an existing disposition towards creating music. Heather had successfully tapped into this and built on this. Additionally, Heather noted

I like using improvising in lessons because students can just be creative and have a go, and the students who had been more reserved in the warm up made up their own notes. (Heather)

So it is possible that group one were more comfortable choosing their own notes while playing alongside peers, versus coming up with a rhythm quickly and sharing it with the group.

Heather asked the group if they liked improvising and all of the children across the groups nodded. There is the potential that there was a sense of peer pressure and that all of the groups nodded along with their classmates. She then asked if the children also liked 'following music and patterns' eluding to reading sheet music, and one child described both as 'good'. This was an important interaction, which conveyed the message that Heather was interested in both forms of music-making and wanted to highlight them as equally valid ways of musicking.

Reflecting on the improvising activity later on, Heather shared:

This worked really well, and most students played with multiple strings and more than one finger. I thought they would stick to the notes that were in the song (G, G1, G2 and G3). But they all used different strings...they were actually playing something more challenging than what I had suggested. (Heather)

So improvising had a positive impact on the children's musical learning, leading to the unexpected outcome of them playing more notes than planned. While Heather had led the previous warm up activity she deliberately chose to sit back and let the children improvise from scratch. The creative freedom this afforded had a positive influence:

Maybe the lack of an example gave them nothing to hide behind, so they couldn't copy what I did and had to make up their own.

### ***Choosing bowing styles***

Heather moved on to another piece students were currently learning (*Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*), which her and the groups played through together. As part of this they recapped on four different types of bowing they had been learning (arco, pizzicato, col legno and tremolo). This enabled Heather to assess their musical progress:

This was a great way to see how much they remembered from the different types of bowing we had discussed previously. (Heather)

Heather then invited them to select one of these types of bowing for the next play through of the piece.

“*You can do whichever bowing you like...what is your favourite sound? Pick which one you like*” says Heather to the group. (Field notes)

Therefore children were able to choose their own style of bowing alongside developing their ‘playing techniques’ (Heather). She considered whether children’s choices would be based on how easy or difficult they found the respective bowing techniques:

...holding the bow is harder so some chose pizzicato which they are more used to doing from whole class lessons; others chose tremolo which I think is harder but more fun because you can move the bow fast. (Heather)

Most of group one chose arco, while group two chose tremolo. The latter was a gradual process as children observed how their classmates were playing and tried it out themselves. As noted, one child

plays tremolo very dramatically and encourages a peer to do the same’ while exploring bowing techniques. (Field notes)

One child was finding the bow hold challenging, so supporting this was the priority for Heather who had been:

trying to correct her little by little each week without spending too much lesson time singling her out. (Heather)

Understandably as the children were beginners, playing skills were the main focus at particular points and this needed to be addressed before the children could then go on to make particular choices.

### ***Sharing musical voice***

Heather ended the lesson by asking the children to share music they like, mentioning that the following week she would bring in some of this music for the group to listen to. After some hesitation, the following music was mentioned by group one: *Running up That Hill*, Kate Bush (which children had heard through popular Netflix series *Stranger Things*), Vivaldi and Mozart. Group two mentioned *Star Wars*, the *Avenger End Game* introduction, *The Legend of Korra* introduction, *Smooth Criminal* by Michael Jackson and *Crazy in Love* by Beyoncé. Heather shared ‘these are all songs that I know and like which is a nice bonus!’, so this activity enabled Heather and the children to find common ground.

It did however take some time for children to share ideas and Heather suggested this was due to their age:

I also think maybe they haven’t got a big awareness of genre, I definitely didn’t at that age. I just listened to whatever my parents had playing. Next time I will start by me

playing some music for them each week from various genres, then after a couple of weeks I'll ask the students for their own ideas. (Heather)

While age is one important factor, another is that some children were not used to suggesting musical ideas and it may have, as Heather described it, 'put some of them on the spot'. Heather discussed some of her favourite music (Taylor Swift and the music from Harry Potter) and this helped spark further contributions:

They maybe didn't think film music was a valid answer, because as soon as I said Harry Potter they got more excited.

This relates to the idea of 'connecting through music' (Mayne et al. 2022: 24), which the authors identified as one important area for promoting a culture of youth voice and participation. This includes incorporating students' favourite music into lessons (ibid.). By doing this, Heather found common musical ground with her group, building trust and relatability between her and the students.

### **Arjun's whole class flute lesson**

The context of Arjun's MMF work was a whole class flute group and a whole class clarinet group, both of which were with year 2 children (5-6 years old). One of the flute lessons was observed for this research. This took place in the children's classroom with ad hoc support from their class teacher and a teaching assistant.

#### ***Reinforcing own toolkit***

Arjun had gained a breadth of experience during his freelance career which included working with diverse groups of children and adults across the country. Enabling youth voice was embedded in his practice and had become, as he put it, a 'staple in planning and evaluation'. He had witnessed the positive impact of enabling youth voice when working with underprivileged young people:

When working with disadvantaged young people I felt that many struggled with having their voices heard in everyday life and, as a result, were not comfortable in sharing their opinion. I observed how my lessons became a wonderful space for them to come out of their shell and realise that their opinions were valid...The theory of why a youth-centred toolkit is so important mirrors a larger framework of positive mental health reinforcement and confidence building, which would not have been obvious to me had I not consciously explored methods of developing youth-voice as part of my pedagogy. (Arjun)

This was built on noticing the positive impact of 'using more choice' (Arjun) within his teaching and facilitation:

I observed that the activities which held the most interest were the ones that the young people could take ownership of. (Arjun)

Therefore, participating in MMF was

less about testing new methods and more about reinforcing the current methods that I use and developing my uses of them within the classroom. (Arjun)

This extended to the theory underpinning the toolkit; Arjun framed his MMF experience as applying 'my own 'toolkit' of activities'. Although he did share the following about the toolkit:

...the end of the toolkit have given me some excellent new ideas to pursue for the future...I think that every music leader should have a personal toolkit of their own; this toolkit has certainly made my own bigger! (Arjun)

So, Arjun highlighted that it was important for teacher's to have agency and develop their own ideas for engaging youth voice.

The following sections describe the key aspects of the observed flute lesson relevant to decision-making including a warm up, composing and the number game.

### ***Warm up: coming up with actions***

Arjun had decided to centre the flute lesson around composing, using the creation of a new group piece as an opportunity to promote creativity but also as an avenue for exploring the various sounds and extended techniques of the flute. He opened the lesson with a warm up directly linked to the subsequent composing task. This involved students coming up with physical actions in response to instrument sounds and extended techniques demonstrated by Arjun and recapping on other actions they had chosen in the preceding weeks. Reflecting on how this related to decision-making, Arjun shared:

This not only gave them new compositional material/sounds to use later in the lesson, it also allowed them to choose how to physically respond to unorthodox contemporary sounds (singing while playing, key tapping etc.) (Arjun)

Arjun had also initiated a clapping game which, in his words, 'acted as a transition between activities'. He felt there was potential to give students a turn in leading this game in the future, noting that 'there was still room to give more choices to the young people' alongside the decision-making his activities had afforded.

### ***Composing music***

Later, the children composed music which drew on 4 different ways of playing the flute. The sounds were represented visually by choices of colours and words, which were placed into a grid on the classroom board. As Arjun described:

Colour corresponded to how we played the flute, the names of people gave us our rhythm. Dynamics could then be introduced through the size of words. (Arjun)

There were several choices to be made and Arjun often opted for group consensus. He also enabled students to make choices

in a non-verbal way by closing their eyes and taking a 'blind vote' to ensure impartiality in choice making...this ensured that peer pressure was not a factor in making musical choices. (Arjun)

This was also an inclusive approach based on the different personalities in the room which Arjun was keen to accommodate:

...how we can get those who are quiet or shy to still contribute an idea to make them feel like part of a wider group? (Arjun)

Reflecting on this gave Arjun further ideas for future lessons, whereby students could vote on the next activity in the lesson, thus shaping the sequence of the lesson. He referred to this as enabling 'moments of youth-choice'.

Similarly to Heather's improvisation task supporting the children's playing skills, Arjun's composing task supported children's control of the flute and practising of rhythms. Importantly in the context of this research, there was a sense of ownership as children got to play back ideas they had generated on the flute. Interestingly, the actions children had chosen to match the sounds Arjun had performed during the warm up were not mentioned by the children:

...it was my hope that the new actions corresponding to the extended techniques at the start of the lesson could have given the participants ideas for the composition later in the session...However, during the composition, participants struggled to remember the 'new' way to play the flute. (Arjun)

So, these ideas were potentially not yet internalised as children had only come up with actions and not played the sounds themselves. It is possible that choosing actions to accompany Arjun's playing was less impactful than the children playing the sounds themselves.

Arjun was interested in making space for separate compositions in the future, and building more dialogue around this:

...create separate compositions where we open a discussion about why we made the musical choices we did...vote for choice of performance directions such as 'Lively' or 'Sluggish' etc. (Arjun)

Evidently, voting was an area that was open for further exploration too.

### ***The 'number game'***

The 'number game' was 'used to listen and focus, giving everyone in the room the choice of when to speak up' (Arjun). While this was not a musical activity, it helped to create an environment where children were able to choose when to participate, developing their capacity to make choices. The game required children to take it in turn listing numbers without anyone speaking at the same time.

## Case Study One Summary

In summary, this case showed that it is possible to successfully engage youth voice in WCET and small group lessons. This was achieved through prioritising decision-making, which is not something teachers associated with youth voice initially. Whether through improvisation or composing, beginner instrumental learners were able to participate in decision-making practically and musically, while developing their playing techniques and practising pieces. Incorporating youth voice did not require significant changes; the majority of activities were already part of Heather and Arjun's teaching repertoire, based on starting points the children were familiar with. It simply required a shift in focus and, as discussed in The Music Lab Toolkit meeting, adopting a conscious approach to creating spaces for students' decision-making. This builds on the idea of creating a 'culture of Youth Voice' (Mayne et al. 2022: 24) as part of the teaching environment.

Teachers valued the space MMF afforded to reflect on their teaching practice alongside using a resource as a catalyst for planning and reflection. The toolkit meeting helped to cement Heather's plans for the lessons, including sharing favourite music, while raising aspects to consider in the future including providing opportunities for students to set their own learning goals. Both teachers had further ideas for how to build on what they had explored in MMF. Their openness to experimenting with new approaches and exploring what youth voice can look like in the context of WCET and small group lessons was an important factor. The music lessons in this case represent many students' first experiences of instrumental learning. Making the kinds of small changes described above can have a significant impact on how students perceive music education and the development of their musical identities.

## Case Study Two: Wolverhampton Music Service

This case study centred on documenting music practices and pedagogies in a 6 week long Wolverhampton Music Service (WMS) music production course Become a Beatmaker (BaB), focusing particularly on how the course enabled youth voice and participation. Connecting to a wider MMF research question on the impact of music-making on young people's lives, the research also explored young people's musical identities, and how these were developed through participating in the course.

The research for this case study consisted of:

- Attendance at the pre-project meeting led by WMS
- Three BaB session observations
- Students creating their own 'Musical Rivers'
- Semi-structured interviews with two BaB students
- Semi-structured interview with lead musician Aman on BaB, MMF and their education and career path.

Young people also had access to a polaroid camera during sessions, enabling them to experiencing documenting the course alongside the researchers. Some examples are included below.

### About Become A Beatmaker

Become A Beatmaker (BaB) is a music production course aimed at 11-18 year olds encompassing 6 weekly after school sessions. Over the 6 weeks, young musicians learn the basics of digital audio workstations such as Garageband and how to create music encompassing various genres with support from music leader and course creator, Aman. Aman, also known as Detonator<sup>6</sup>, is a music educator and producer who brings insider knowledge of the UK music industry. Aman was 24 years old when this research took place therefore providing a valuable young person perspective and lived experience of being a young artist.

The course was originally centred on genres including UK rap, drill and Afroswing and the fundamentals of UK rap subgenres, but all types of genres are welcomed. As music leader Aman shared in relation to the first iteration of BaB:

When we first started...we did market it as a rap, grime and drill course. But I noticed within the first week or two that everyone wanted to do broader things...we had a few girls join the course, which was really good to see. One of the girls was in a rock band, so she might have wanted to do more indie stuff in GarageBand. And then one of the girls wanted to do more R&B style stuff. I thought that was good. I was happy for them to take that initiative and tell me what they wanted to make. (Aman)

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.detonatorprod.com/>

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

 **MUSIC SERVICE**

# BECOME A BEATMAKER

UK Rap, Drill & Afroswing Music Production Workshops

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED  
HOW THE BIGGEST SONGS  
ARE MADE?**

**LEARN HOW TO MAKE UK RAP AND  
DRILL BEATS IN 6 WEEKS WITH THE  
WOLVERHAMPTON MUSIC SERVICE!**

**LEARN FROM ARTISTS  
WITHIN THE INDUSTRY**

The course will be lead by 'Detonator',  
A Music Producer from Wolverhampton that has  
worked with: **Potter Payper, Nafe Smallz, OFB,  
Stardom** & many more!

**Wednesdays at 6:00pm to 8:00pm**  
\*Starting in March

**Lessons will take place at:**  
Wolverhampton Music Service  
Grabsley Hill, Wolverhampton, WV2 4NE

**Email:** [music.school@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:music.school@wolverhampton.gov.uk)

**Tel:** 01902 558105

**To register your interest, please email: [music.school@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:music.school@wolverhampton.gov.uk)**

### Become A Beatmaker flyer<sup>7</sup>

The aim is for young people to create their own instrumentals with support from the course leader and peers. In partnership with Beatsabar Music Project, young people also get to work with other local music producers and experience creating music in a professional

<sup>7</sup> <https://wolverhamptonmusicservice.org.uk/become-a-beatmaker-a-new-and-exciting-rap-drill-beats-project-from-wolverhampton-music-service-led-by-detonator/>



recording studio environment, bringing together the music they've created during the course to co-create a group track.

### ***BaB consultation with young people***

MMF coincided with the second iteration of BaB. Before the course began, the Head of WMS (WMS\_Head) and Aman scheduled in a meeting with students from the first cohort to discuss their experiences and consult with them on the next BaB course. The meeting was also a chance for further dialogue between WMS\_Head and Aman. Two young people attended, referred to as Max and Kiran. WMEH's Kickstarter Apprentice (KA) also attended and contributed to the discussion. As part of their work placement, KA ran a survey with past participants to find out their name, year group, how they heard about BaB, whether they wished to take part in BaB or a similar opportunity again, and if they currently played an instrument, sung or rapped. The key discussion points are summarised below.



### ***Access to music equipment***

WMS\_Head asked if the equipment (laptops and headphones) they had provided during the course had been useful and if they were able to work on their music in-between BaB sessions. Kiran and Max found the equipment 'fine' and discussed being able to 'transfer' their music to their own devices:

I think that the equipment we used was fine as we could just transfer our music at home if we have an iOS device and use GarageBand and continue (Kiran)

Yes, it made it easier in iPad because I could do at home as well. (Max)

However, Kiran noted that the software Logic could only be accessed via MacBooks and while it would be 'very useful to continue on that [Logic] at home' he couldn't. To solve this issue, WMS\_Head asked if there would be interest in taking a music service owned MacBook home during the duration of the course. He believed that this was essentially the same as loaning instruments which the music service had always done and that this was therefore a logical course of action:

...when the music service works with the orchestra, we give someone a very expensive French horn, so why shouldn't we give you a computer that you can use to work on? (WMS\_Head)

WMS\_Head referred to being able to borrow MacBooks as his key takeaway from the meeting and this was subsequently put in place. The Kickstarter Apprentice likened the progression from using Garageband to using Logic as moving from the 'creation side' of

music to the 'nitty gritty production engineering mixing side' of music. As discussed later, young people wanted to learn more about music production so putting processes in place to ensure consistent access to Logic was an important improvement.

### ***Working in pairs versus working individually***

WMS\_Head asked if young people preferred working individually (the most common way of working in BaB sessions) or in pairs. Max and Kiran were neutral about this. Aman noted the collaborative nature of working in the studio:

Collaborative work is one of the main parts of music production. We're all introverted characters, but at the end of the day we're all peers... Even if you're not in the same room you can send files to somebody... they can pass on that file to another student. (Aman)

This collaborative way of working shaped the end of BaB; music that students had been working on individually featured in a collaborative track. This can be heard in the WMM Toolkit (WMM, 2022). KA felt that it was useful to work on music collaboratively, especially at the mixing and mastering stage as individuals have a tendency to 'miss out on little imperfections' with their own music and can benefit from a different perspective.



### ***Course and session duration***

WMS\_Head queried whether the course was long enough and if it ought to be extended beyond the six weeks or turned into a year-long course. There was no conclusive response and the group were open to all possibilities. Aman noted that with there being 'so many facets' in terms of the different musical processes explored within BaB, it could always be extended. KA perceived BaB in its current 6 week format as being a musical opportunity that 'opens the doors' for students and gives them 'initial pointers', which they can build on independently after the course. WMS\_Head discussed how these types of changes were partly driven by equipment and staff capacity, so it is likely changes will be gradual.

Aman asked the following question about session duration:

If we were to run Logic Pro sessions do you feel like that two hour session that we had was enough [time] or would you like it to be longer or shorter? (Aman)

Responses to this were mixed. Kiran responded 'I think I need more than 2 hours to be honest' while Max felt that 2 hours was 'enough'. This highlights the range of preferences across BaB students, which is something Aman discussed in his interview.

### ***Authentic learning in beat making***

WMS\_Head was interested in the group's perspective on what an authentic music education experience would look like in the context of beat making. He shared how Wolverhampton MEH shaped authentic experiences for young people who are learning an instrument.



They [instrumental learners] have lessons with an experienced teacher every week all the way through the year. At certain points in the year we put them onto a stage or we do a concert for them. The reason we do that is because that's really authentic, because that's what orchestral musicians do. They rehearse a lot of music and then they go on to perform with an audience. We make sure that they play in a concert hall and that they have to dress up like concert musicians do and that they have a programme and they have an audience. We just try to replicate that so you get the really best most authentic music education you can. (WMS\_Head)

Aman shared a range of ideas including: doing a DJ set through a live PA system, which he noted is how a lot of producers perform; working with local rappers (which had the benefit of promoting good local talent) and 'building connections'; creating compilation CDs which includes students' producer names; and creating backing tracks for council events and local promotions. He noted how these types of activities would widen students' skills and that through doing the above

...you're not just sat at a desk on your laptop. You might have experience learning how to DJ with decks or how to set up a live gig and audio system and stuff like that. (Aman)

Related to being able to work with local rappers and producers, Kiran shared 'it was useful to have PZ around' and Max echoed this with 'PZ was good!'. So the opportunity to work with local rappers was important to the young people and BaB, enabling an authentic beat making experience.

### ***Beatsabar partnership***

WMS\_Head asked if the Beatsabar partnership was useful. Aman believed it that useful and noted the impact of being able to work in that environment:

I think when you actually go to a studio, even stuff like just going through the front door and seeing all the different rooms; it gives a completely different perspective on it. (Aman)

Kiran agreed, sharing 'yeah, the studio helped to understand the production'. This relates back to the notion of authentic music education experiences. The partnership with Beatsabar gave Kiran and Max access to a real world studio and the practices of professional musicians. As BaB has also attracted young people with an interest in other genres of music, KA suggested also using a neighbouring studio which he described as 'typically a more rock, indie-based studio'.

WMS\_Head asked if young people enjoyed working at the music service and the studio and if there were any access issues with this. Kiran shared:

I'm more than happy to work in the music service place and no problem to go to a studio. (Kiran)

While Kiran was happy with this arrangement it was an important question to ask as it may have highlighted access issues Wolverhampton MEH were previously unaware of. Max shared 'I would like to do more of the studio' so this is worth exploring in future iterations of BaB.

### ***Focus of BaB course and sessions***

Aman was interested to know what aspects of BaB young people were most interested in and how much time they wanted to spend of particular areas of learning. He asked Max and Kiran the following:

For another 6 week course how much of it would you like to spend at the computer itself? Would you like to do it as a 50-50 split? Or would you prefer it to be more 'hands on' - learning about the relationship between live instruments and music production software? (Aman)



Kiran and Max responded as follows:

A 50-50 split would be fine but I do think learning about the live production of music would be a really good to do. (Kiran)

I would love to do it again and in the production side. I liked the style of music and I think we need more of the grime theme/music production. (Max)

Evidently the young people wanted more music production experience. WMS\_Head noted this as

broadening it to be more than just making beats on computer - engineering and production in general. (WMS\_Head)

## ***Suggestions for enhancing BaB***

In addition to more music production learning and studio time, Kiran wanted to do more sampling describing this as 'a good thing to do with music making'. Max suggested working with 'more local artists' (Max). All of these suggestions related to building on or increasing the amount of time for existing components of BaB. Therefore the course was clearly resonating with these young people and they wanted more of these types of experiences and learning opportunities.

## ***Engaging more young people in BaB***

WMS\_Head invited the group to share ideas on how to promote BaB to other young people. He had heard of the benefits of young people being able to bring a friend to music sessions and of the power of a friend recommending opportunities as opposed to adults. Kiran and Max commented on the latter, stating 'if friends go and spread the word around it could benefit you (Kiran) and 'yeah, definitely friends' (Max). Kiran also suggested sending them the details so they could share it as well, therefore enabling as WMS\_Head put it, these young people and other previous cohort members to be 'publicists' for the next BaB.

Other suggestions included using Snapchat and Instagram and going through schools but Max shared 'not really Facebook' when thinking of ideal strategies. Though interestingly Max's Mother had seen BaB advertised on Facebook, which led to Max participating. So it is clearly important to promote the course to parents and carers as well as young people directly.

WMS\_Head also wanted to be able to 'get across that you don't have to have any skill before you arrive' and that there would be people like Aman available to help.

What do we need to say on the materials to make that [BaB] feel like a safe space to come and make music together? (WMS\_Head)

Max recommended 'just saying things like "no experience needed"?'. It is worth including this specific phrasing on future materials in order to mirror the wording that a current participant uses.

## ***BaB sessions***

### ***Informal learning practices***

The BaB course emphasised informal learning practices (Green, 2008) whereby young people could learn at their own pace and choose to work on their music however they wished. This is captured in the following field notes from session two.

There are 6 young people sat around the table including 2 pairs and 2 individuals on guitars. A PowerPoint "How to get started with Logic" is on the board alongside images of music tracks. There is an informal, relaxed atmosphere, and it oscillates between being quiet (everyone is wearing headphones, working on laptops, recording passages) and chatty as young people ask Aman questions. Some young

people are recording their songs into the software with instruments while some are using samples on their laptops. One young person has some notes including a chord progression their friend came up with. They share “I need to write the lyrics first” suggesting a confidence and clarity in their own song writing process.

Max, who is participating in BaB for the second time, tells me that his interests are ‘old school rap and 50 Cent’. He is watching music on YouTube. He shares how Aman and a visiting musician from Beatsabar have ‘been helping me produce old school rap and rap beats...getting to know the software and how to place the sounds’. Conversation with a producer from Beatsabar drifts in and out over the music including mentions of ‘rap skits’, the ‘Beatmaker 3 app’ and responses to young people’s music as well as music on YouTube (‘it’s sick man...this is absolutely solid’).

Evidently young people were able to direct their own learning in a way which resonated with their musical interests and identities.

### ***Setting musical goals***

Related to the informal learning practices discussed above, young people were invited to set their own musical goals for BaB and therefore ‘have a say’ in their own learning. Goals included ‘learn how to make beats in Logic’, ‘learn how to record guitar into Logic’, ‘making good music’ and ‘learning from Aman’.

### ***Promoting problem-solving and autonomy***

Aman rarely explained the music software and other aspects to young people immediately. This promoted problem solving, a key facet of creative thinking. This is apparent in the following interaction from the field notes:

Aman checks on how a pair are getting on with their music. They have been using a soul sample from *In My Heart* by Barbara and the Browns to produce a protest song, which links to their music curriculum. Aman introduces the functions of Logic:

Figure out the BPM and what key it’s in. (Aman)

The young people hesitate and laugh appearing unsure of how to do this but comfortable to share this with Aman, who a few moments later follows up with:

Do you want me to give you a tip? (Aman)

Facilitating an environment where young people could figure things out for themselves and only request support if necessary was a conscious approach. This self-directed way of working developed young people’s autonomy (Mayne et al., 2022) and ability to continue working on their music and related software skills individually outside of the BaB sessions.

### ***Supporting young people’s individual musical voice***

Aman felt that it was important for young people to develop their own musical voice and individual expression. Here is an example of Aman supporting Kiran to share his musical intentions, and use existing music to pinpoint what Kiran would like to do.

What is your end goal, what kind of beat do you want? (Aman)

Dark, heavy. (Kiran)

*\*they listen to an example\**

Even darker than that. (Kiran)

Related examples from Aman included 'How would that work?' and 'how would that go into the song?' and 'you might want to' positioning young people as key to making decisions about their music. Alongside this, Aman helped young people to feel confident in their own convictions regarding what they considered 'good' music to be with advice such as 'if it sounds good it's good!'. Enabling young people to reflect on and articulate their musical intentions was another practice which supported young people's music identity development.

### ***Happy to ask for help***

Alongside having autonomy, self-directed projects include young people being able to 'decide what they need in terms of support and guidance from others' (ibid.:43). It was clear that the young people had a strong rapport with Aman and they were free to ask for his support when needed. Here are some of the questions young people addressed to Aman:

- Can you listen to this?
- Can I have some opinions from you? What do you think?
- Can I have your help please?
- Can you explain what EQ is to me please?

Can you explain what EQ is to me please?" (young person)

Go into logic, preferences, audio...you can set that in your preferences too. (Aman)

### ***Interview with Course Leader, Aman***

An interview was conducted with Aman at the end of the final session, enabling him to share his music education experiences and beliefs, how these have shaped his pedagogical approaches in BaB and the future possibilities for the course and WMS.

### ***Being the change***

Aman shared how he had felt personally 'disenfranchised' from music at school noting an environment where students had to follow a set 'role' to succeed with learning the music curriculum. He wanted BaB to offer space for individuality and self-expression stating 'I'll try and be the change that I wanted to see'. There had been a lack of synergy between what

was deemed successful in school and what were clear successes for Aman outside of school in the music industry:

They taught me electronic music production at school but I failed that class. The same week I failed that class I had a song on radio. So it doesn't make sense. (Aman)

This is why, from Aman's perspective, a course like BaB was important. He felt that WMS' decision to run it and enable a 'quality' learning experience for aspiring music producers placed them 'leaps and bounds above a lot of other music services' and that the WMS\_Head 'understood the value that could be brought up from the course'.

Interestingly, all of the music educators who were interviewed for the MMF toolkit profiles commented on wanting to make a change based on their own experiences whether negative or positive (WMM, 2022).

### **Facilitator role**

In order to promote a space where young people could take ownership over their learning, Aman adopted a facilitator role and avoided being prescriptive. This connected, for example, to Aman encouraging students to problem solve during sessions as mentioned earlier, which he believed conveyed the following:

They [students] understand that I'm not withholding knowledge from them, but that I trust that they've already got the knowledge; they just need to find it. (Aman)

It was important to support the students and, in Aman's words, 'point them in the right direction' alongside ensuring that they had 'a lot of independence'. This included students developing their own musical voice and Aman shared how this looked in the sessions:

It is completely their voice. The only input I would have on their tracks is 'you might want to change this note' or 'it's in this key'. Apart from that, I won't co-produce anything with them. (Aman)

The same thinking applied at the end of BaB when students were able to co-create a track:

All I'll do at the end is just help to arrange it and mix and master it, and that's it. Everything else in the song is your voice literally. (Aman)

This approach built on Aman's knowledge of what it means to create music in 2022 and there being 'no rules':

I think with a lot of the musicians now in 2022, you'll notice that a lot of the music is cyclical, so it'll always come around. We're in a Renaissance period now where people want to use all of the elements from older music, but they've also got an idea that there's no rules now. Do what you want, make what you want, how you want. (Aman)

### **Collaboration**

Aman hoped to encourage a collaborative spirit between the young people and, in his words, 'show them how we [music producers] collaborate.' He described the end of course co-writing process between the students as a 'round robin' whereby



you [students] take turns making any elements you want and adding which elements you want to the song. (Aman)

This connected back to the notion of providing authentic music education experiences Aman also connected collaboration with BaB's social environment noting the young people's ability to create a sense of community which spanned diverse musical interests.

We had three to four students who listened to punk music, listened to indie music, and were in a band. Then we had students who listened to hip-hop music and just wanted to make sample-based hip-hop. But there was always collaboration between them, whether it would be just having a conversation, everyone talking about school experiences. (Aman)

### ***No musical pre-expectations***

Aman emphasised the importance of not bringing fixed expectations to the course regarding what music the students would enjoy and what they wanted to learn. Aman noted students' interests ranged from old school hip-hop to indie music to drum and bass continuing -

So that's opened my eyes. If I prepared all of my resources for just UK rap that would have left me in no man's land essentially. It would have also potentially put the students off from returning. (Aman)

So, Aman was conscious of embracing all types of music and creating resources which were flexible and adaptable. This built on the following beliefs:

I think nowadays, your relationship with music education will be made or broken depending on how the genre that you're learning is framed...I think if you're being taught a genre that you don't align your values with, you'll have a rocky relationship with music education. (Aman)

### ***Importance of a 'pilot session'***

Aman perceived the first session as a 'pilot session' as it was important for young people to feel settled in and familiar with him and the space. To this end he deliberately waited until the second session to ask young people to share their musical goals for BaB stating 'as soon as they meet me that I'm not going to put expectations on them'.

If I intimidate them in the first week, they're not going to return for the next one. The first one is just a pilot session. I think I think that is important. (Aman)

### ***Becoming more experienced music producers***

Connecting to the WMS\_Head's interest in enabling authentic music education experiences, Aman discussed the importance of having a space outside of school to practice patience. This he noted, is a key facet of being an experienced producer; 'you have to be very patient to produce music'. Additionally, Aman felt that the space BaB offered enabled young people to make mistakes, and that embracing this was part of process of becoming a producer.

### ***Tapping into a new demographic***

Aman was interested in exploring how the BaB students and their lived experiences could inform WMS more broadly.

How could we get these students involved in other elements of the music service, because I don't want to just have a monopoly on the students and say "you're going to only come to my class and do that."...I think once you tap into a new demographic, a demographic that you haven't before, you can really understand what they want and how they want it, and you can cater your whole service to that. I think that would be really interesting to explore. (Aman)

This is an interesting idea that warrants further exploration. It also raises the issue of whether and how MEHs are engaging with new demographics and a need for greater awareness on how this is being achieved across the music education sector.

### ***Music theory***

As will be discussed later on, BaB student Kiran associated learning 'theory' with progressing as a music producer and wanted to learn more about this. Aman responded to this in the context of BaB and the music production world and equated theory with a knowledge of 'chord progressions'. He believed that there was 'so much value' in teaching jazz, soul, neo-soul and R&B chord progressions and that BaB students 'would take more to learning' these types of progressions versus, for example, the types of chord progressions encountered in classical music. From this perspective music theory matters, but will be more worthwhile if it is grounded in particular sound worlds and genres.

### ***Pacing of BaB***

When asked if there were any areas he wished to develop further in future iterations of BaB, Aman mentioned the 'pacing' of the session content:

In the first course I found that students were breezing through the content very fast because GarageBand is very simple. Whereas I think with this [second course], I know there's more of a skill gap and mixed abilities. So some students picked it up faster. Some students started with a prior knowledge of Logic. So it's just catering to that. (Aman)

### ***Schools spreading the word***

When asked about the best strategies for growing BaB's reach, Aman felt that alongside social media 'the onus should be on schools'. He continued

The music service can give the schools all the resources in the world, but if they're [schools] not showing it to the children in the right ways, then the message is going to be watered down essentially. (Aman)

This underlines the importance of clear communication between MEHs, schools and students.

### ***Young People's Rivers of Musical Experience***

In order to explore BaB students' musical identities, young people were invited to create their own 'Musical River', which involved each young person identifying and sharing critical moments that shaped them as musicians<sup>8</sup>. The activity was adapted from Kinsella et al. (2022), and the work of creativities researcher Pam Burnard (for example 2002; 2012) who states that, among many other applications, Musical Rivers provide a means of children 'representing their individual creative experience' (Burnard, 2012: 170). Similarly to students being invited to share their favourite music in Case Study One, the Musical River activity built connections (Mayne et al., 2022: 24) and openness between the students, Aman and the researchers. It underlined the importance of each young person's unique relationship to music, while providing useful context on their musical backgrounds and their musical goals for BaB.

Two BaB young people, Kiran and Max, were invited to discuss their Musical River during individual semi-structured interviews at the end of BaB. Their annotated rivers are included below alongside interview excerpts which expand on their annotations. Their perspectives on BaB are also shared.

#### ***Max's Musical River***



“...my brother's got an electrical drum kit at home. So sometimes I mess about on there and try make some things. And he's got a keyboard, so I put that down...when I was younger, like year three, I used to play the flute, as well.”

**Figure One: Max's Musical River**

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 1 for the guidance young people received on creating their Musical River.

Clearly being able to access his brother's instruments influenced Max's musical journey, although it appears that the flute playing was temporary. BaB was therefore a contrasting musical experience for Max and was something he may otherwise not have been able to access.

## **Max's Reflections on Become A Beatmaker**

### ***Musical learning and next steps***

Max set the following learning goal towards the beginning of BaB:

*By the end of this project I want to be able to make my own beat on Logic and learn how to properly use music making apps. (Max)*

This goal was revisited during the interview. Max shared how BaB helped him to become more familiar with Logic and apps:

*Like now I can go on a laptop and use one of the apps like Logic Pro or GarageBand a lot easier than I would have been able to use it if I didn't do [BaB]...it gets me around the things...what some of the buttons do...how to actually put it all together and everything. (Max)*

Clearly Max was able to achieve his musical goal through participating in BaB. His next steps were 'to look for some apps and try and make some beats' (Max) so there was a desire to continue doing the activities he had experienced over the past six weeks.

Max discussed how he could take forwards his learning from BaB while using his musical instruments at home (as mentioned in his Musical River):

*I can use some of the instruments, like, sample them, and put them into a beat or something. (Max)*

BaB therefore opened up more possibilities for Max's music making at home.

### ***Overall impressions***

Max was positive about BaB, noting how the sessions were conveniently timed and consistently engaging:

*It's [BaB] pretty good to be fair...after school on a Wednesday, it's easy to get there at a good time. It's enjoyable to do, like it doesn't get boring...(Max)*

### ***Improving BaB: more Logic Pro***

When asked if there was anything that could improve BaB, Max responded:

*I'd say actually like using Logic Pro and stuff on the computers and that. (Max)*

As Max had been able to use Logic during BaB, this suggestion was perhaps based on being able to continue building on this and to allocate more time to music production.

### ***Engaging more young people in BaB***

As mentioned, Max found out about BaB via his mother who had seen a promotional post on Facebook. Social media was, in his view, a useful way to reach more young people:

...put it [BaB information] on more social media that young people use like Instagram or Snapchat? (Max)

Having a supportive family network had also been important in Max's case.

### ***Kiran's Musical River***

While Max's memories centred on musical instruments, online learning was a key part of Kiran's Musical River (see Figure Two below). He had used the internet to listen to music aged 8, to find music to rap over aged 11-13, and to learn how to make beats with a MIDI keyboard aged 13. Kiran's personal drive to identify types of music making that motivated him (rather than the piano) and to find online resources to support his learning connects to Lonie and Dickens' (2016) characterisation of young musicians' learning while taking part in a youth leadership programme:

Participants described an approach to self-directed learning that imbued a 'do it yourself' attitude, recognising how to adapt tools, environments and opportunities to meet their learning needs. (p.97)

### ***Getting into music through genre***

Kiran elaborated on how he got into beat making, sharing that it was through genre:

I think the thing that made me get into it [making beats] is finding like a genre first and how to recreate the genre. So a friend recommended a genre, and I was like, "okay, yeah, sure" and I've looked up a couple of videos, and I basically recreated it with all of my own drums and synths and all that. (Kiran)

However, Kiran was keen to take his recreations 'in a different direction' building on the basic musical features of the genre:

I don't really want to like recreate it perfectly. I just find the basics. Once I learn the basics I improve it from there, I make it like my own music.

Evidently Kiran was interested in finding his own musical voice and sound through exploring particular genres.

### ***Kiran's Reflections on Become A Beatmaker***

#### ***Musical learning and next steps***

Kiran set himself the following learning goals for BaB:

1. *To create a beat/learn from Aman*
2. *Learn Logic and tutorials from YouTube*
3. *Be famous/make good music*

(Kiran)

Reflecting on these goals, Kiran shared how BaB had impacted his learning:

And then now, from like, 14 so doing this music course, I've learned more in the last six months than the past, like, one to two years since starting with my MIDI keyboard.

(Kiran)

Clearly being part of the first two BaB courses across 2022 accelerated Kiran's musical learning, expanding on the learning had had begun to pursue independently and through school.

As part of his next steps, Kiran aspired to perfect beat making and learn mixing:

Well, first of all, I just want to perfect making beats. And personally, I think the next step - I really want to try and learn mixing because that is very difficult. It's a hard thing to just get right because there's different steps and there's different ways to go about it. (Kiran)

This explains why there was a particular interest in music production during the pre-project meeting.

Kiran also wanted to learn some music theory and suggested that providing this kind of learning opportunity would be one way of improving BaB. He described being 'really bad' at theory and was interested in BaB incorporating theory 'In a more fun, interesting way' rather than 'the old boring book way' which he associated with the music curriculum. He continued:

If I learned that [theory] I think I could make further progress in music as a beat maker...theory is like really important, because you've got to learn the fundamentals. But at the end of the day, music, if it sounds good, then it's good. But if you learn theory it will be more impressive and more complex...scales and harmonic minor and all that.

Kiran noted that a lack of theoretical knowledge had impacted his experience during the final session of BaB in the music studio:

Just in there [the studio] they were talking about F sharp minor and I was really confused. I didn't know any of that. So, you know, being able to find different notes on the keyboard.

This interest in theory could be traced back to Aman and his musical influences. One of Aman's favourite producers, Preditah, described going to college to learn theory in an episode of Producers House on SBTV<sup>9</sup>:

---

<sup>9</sup> Preditah | Producers House [S1.EP26]: SBTV: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRmJGoZ2Uf8>

I go to Uni because of the theory side of music. You need to know your notes, you need to talk in a musical language about musical scales, about etc. I think that's so important. (Preditah speaking on SBTV. 2012, online.)

So, providing opportunities to build an understanding of theory, in particular harmony, will enable young people like Kiran to get more out of the beat making and studio experience and follow in the footsteps of high profile producers.

### ***Authentic music producer experience***

Kiran valued experiencing being in a studio in the final BaB session:

The studio's really good – you make a lot of memories and it's pretty important. You get to know what it really feels like in the studio and you get to know how to really do it professionally. (Kiran)

This connects back to the notion of an authentic music education experience raised by Head\_WMS, and what this looks like in the context of beat making; the studio component of BaB was an important factor in this.

### ***Engaging more young people in BaB: supportive music teachers***

Kiran heard about BaB through his music teacher:

I got wind of the music service from my music teacher. They told me “I know you're interested in making beats I think you'd be interested in participating in it.” And they said it was free, so you know, what's not to lose! (Kiran)

This shows the importance of strong communication between schools and music organisations so that teachers are aware of and can signpost relevant opportunities to students. It is also worth noting that Kiran and his music teacher had a positive relationship. Speaking of this, Kiran shared:

I'd make beats and all that and they'd come up to me and they'd speak to me and talk in depth...really good one to one conversations. We spoke about really anything about music. (Kiran)

It is likely that the music teacher's interest in Kiran's music and the rapport between them meant that they were able to signpost Kiran more effectively.

### ***Engaging more young people in BaB: friends***

While Kiran heard about BaB through his music teacher, it was a friend who actually convinced him to take part:

Originally I wasn't going to go...but then my friend, [another BaB participant], he convinced me and I think it was a good decision. (Kiran)

Kiran felt that other young people would be more likely to engage in a course like BaB if they heard about it through people they know as, in his words, 'you'll trust them'.

### ***A modern day music service***

Kiran shared an interesting perspective on what a modern day music service ought to focus on:

I think it's about what the youth are trying to create and how they represent themselves through their music. (Kiran)

So, for Kiran a music service was about supporting young people to create music and express themselves through music.



"...that was short lived...I didn't find any motivation from piano. I think it's because the theory was terrible."

"On my 13th birthday, I got a MIDI keyboard because I was pretty interested in music at that time. Then with that, I tried to make beats, but it didn't really work that well. But a little time later I was then more interested and I gathered more information online quickly and I used that..."

**MUSICAL RIVER**

I listened to some Youtube music at 8  
did piano from 9-10 yrs old.  
Made raps in lockdown at 11-13 yrs old  
then made beats at 13 with a midi keyboard from  
my birthday at 13.  
3 - now I try to make beats.

Figure Two: Kiran's Musical River

"And then now, from like, 14 so doing this music course, I've learned more in the last six months then the past, like, one to two years since starting with my MIDI keyboard."

"Basically, I think this is when I was really young and on YouTube a lot. I used to like Bart Baker parody songs. I've always listened to them when I was younger. That was my first introduction to music, I think. I was always binge watching all of them."

"Then lockdown happened and for music lessons they would ask us to make songs or make lyrics and find songs and beats on the internet and I'd rap over that. So I'd make a lockdown rap and I'd even make a song about friends and that would be pretty cool."

## Case Study Two Summary

This case aimed to explore how BaB practices and pedagogies enabled youth voice and participation, and to better understand young people's musical identities. Regarding the former, running a survey (also designed by a young person) and a BaB youth consultation created space for young people to share their perspectives. From this, WMS and Aman established what was working well from a student viewpoint, which included the Beatsabar partnership and studio access, working with local musicians and the timing and location of the sessions. Equally, young people were able to share ideas for future BaB courses including more input from local musicians and further music production learning. WMS\_Head and Aman were able to gauge the popularity of ideas such as a MacBook borrowing system and particular time allocations for different music activities. WMS\_Head described the consultation as 'enlightening' and felt that it had offered some useful insight on how to shape future iterations of BaB including facilitating authentic musical outcomes (for example creating an EP and setting up a live gig). Therefore, youth consultations ought to be a regular feature of projects and involve as many students as possible.

Alongside creating space for dialogue with young people, the process of music making was youth-led; musical goals and learning approaches were shaped by young people and they were encouraged to follow their own musical interests. Aman facilitated an environment that enabled young people to achieve these goals, giving them the space to engage in the beat making process through self-directed learning. This was ideal for a young person like Kiran who had a DIY attitude (Lonie and Dickens, 2016) and benefited from being able to drive his own learning forwards.

While student autonomy was a priority, Aman's facilitative role was key to the success of the course. Enabling Aman, a young local artist with authentic music industry experience, to design and lead sessions had a significant positive impact. Young people respected and admired him, and this motivated them to come back to the space and continue developing their beat making. The fact that Kiran and Max were involved in BaB for the second time is testament to this. Aman's personal music education experience filtered into his own pedagogical approaches. He valued nurturing each students' individuality, building a relationship with them and avoiding prescriptive views of learning.

Exploring young people's musical identities through the creation of Musical Rivers highlighted the diverse musical starting points young people brought to BaB as well as the importance of informal non-school environments including online learning spaces. Building a culture of youth voice includes showing an interest in young people's musical lives beyond the learning site (Mayne et al. 2022: 25), therefore this activity may be relevant to a range of music provision.

A key takeaway from the case was the idea of tapping into a new demographic. Providing informal learning spaces through opportunities like BaB will support WMM's aim to increase engagement with young people.

## **Youth Consultations**

A series of youth consultations were conducted with young people from across a range of WMM MEHs. These involved MMF participants who were involved in the youth-led approaches, and other young musicians who either currently engage with WMM do not currently engage with WMM.

## **Shropshire Youth Council**

A consultation was ran with seven Shropshire Youth Council members, a group of young people who play in Shropshire Music Service's ensembles representing primary and secondary age groups. The consultation took place in conjunction with the group's first youth council meeting and involved an online group interview with the members supervised by the Head of Shropshire Music Service. Questions focused on why they had joined the council, what changes they wished to make and their experiences of decision-making in music education.

### **Shropshire Youth Council members' motivations and plans**

#### ***Giving ideas***

Young people wished to share their ideas via the youth council. One young person linked their ideas to their experiences in a different music centre:

I wanted to join because I'd come from a music centre down south, so I had some ideas for what we could do to get more people involved. (S\_YP1)

S\_YP3's ideas centred on developing more opportunities:

I joined the youth council to help out with Shropshire Music Service in general, to give like more ideas of how we could have more competitions, like the showcase, and have more fun with our musical abilities and things like that. (S\_YP3)

#### ***Cooperation and collaboration***

Some young people wanted to use their role on the youth council to promote playing and collaborating with other groups, for example:

I came to make the music service about a place towards the future and more cooperative between different groups. (S\_YP4)

This extended to being able to perform with other services, which S\_YP5 believed would be a gateway to socialising and performing in large venues:

...collaborating with other music centres and services, is good, because you get to meet a lot of different types of people and you can do like large scale concerts. So for example, somewhere I'd like...I think it'd be good to get lots of people to perform in like Symphony Hall. So you could collaborate with other groups to be able to perform there or somewhere else. (S\_YP5)

### ***Financial and time barriers***

One young person highlighted the potential financial and time barriers involved in music exams and GCSE exams respectively:

...when you're doing things like exams, or competitions with Shropshire Music Service, we've realised that we have to pay for our concerts. And I know we get a lot of good things from that. But I think it'd be, like, nice sometimes to have free accompaniments with your pieces when you're performing. And I've got one more, which is I don't think showcase should be in the week for, like, key stage 4 when they're doing GCSEs because they might not have enough time to practise. But other than that, I think we're doing really good. (S\_YP7)

These were important suggestions which recognised the cost and time pressures attached to young people progressing as musicians.

### **Joining a youth voice council**

#### ***Having a trial run***

Young people mentioned the importance of being able to join youth councils on a trial basis to begin with. For example, S\_YP1 shared the following advice for young people who may be interested in getting involved in a youth council:

Just sit in first couple of sessions that you had and see if you like it or not. (S\_YP1)

S\_YP6 discussed joining the council on the understanding that she could leave if she wished to:

I wasn't sure at first, but then [music service staff member] persuaded me to try it. She said I should try it and that if I didn't like it, then I didn't have to do it anymore. (S\_YP6)

### **Perspectives on youth voice**

#### ***The benefits of young people having input***

SYP\_2 believed that enabling young people to make decisions would result in more buy-in and motivation:

I think people will have more energy and more be more willing to do something if it's something that they have had input or want to do. (S\_YP2)

### ***Youth voice at school***

One member shared their experience of shaping musical decisions at school via a vote:

...we have a vote when there's a big decision to make with music. The last one we did was about what musical we should do and we all chose Matilda...key stage two in the school, so some of the older ones, will gather in assembly and we'll do a vote that's properly counted to see what most people would want. (S\_YP7)

It is possible then that this young person's positive youth voice experiences at school attracted them to joining the youth voice council.

### ***Confidence***

While S\_YP2 believed young people input was important, he noted that the confidence to do this would vary among young people. He was in a unique position whereby both of his parents were music teachers, and he had 'always been involved in music'. He attributed this to feeling more comfortable approaching music teachers and making suggestions but understood that this may not be the case for all young people.

I feel like other people don't have the confidence to do that. It's much easier for me...I don't know how to rectify that but I think that's an issue. (S\_YP2)

### **What Shropshire Music Service means to young people.**

When asked about what the music service means to them, young people emphasised musical and social benefits.

### ***Being able to progress***

I'm really interested in music and Shropshire Music Service is a really big part because it actually helps you progress and makes me actually enjoy it. It's lovely. (S\_YP5)

I've gotten to the point where in music lessons I didn't feel like I was progressing as much anymore. And then that playing in the county ensemble has really helped me improve further, especially as I know, my second instrument. So I wasn't as confident with that. Start off with my first screen, but now I'm very comfortable that. (S\_YP1)

I quite like how, in my music lessons, I have the chance to try lots of different types of music and I really like the variety. (S\_YP6)

### ***Social benefits***

For me it's important because it grows my confidence and it also helps for me to play with other people as I wouldn't have a chance otherwise. (S\_YP7)

Music has always been part of my life, because my parents are in the music service and are heavily involved with it so I'm in multiple different bands. I've met lots of new faces and lots of new people through music, whilst also having a good time making music. (S\_YP2)

Basically I just love music and Shropshire Music Service has a lot of opportunities to join in with things with other people. (S\_YP4)

### **Promoting Shropshire Music Service to other young musicians**

S\_YP\_3 shared that through being in ensembles and bands they would 'hear quite a lot of the news which is really helpful' (S\_YP3).

Shropshire Music Service's website was noted as a useful promotional tool, but it was noted that it had not yet reached its full potential:

I think the Shropshire Music Service website is also good. But like, I feel like we can make that a larger part of the music service and introduce it a bit more to people who haven't seen it before. (S\_YP4)

S\_YP5 suggested an open day:

So you just have one day where all groups perform, and then you have people looking around - they can try different instruments, things like that. (S\_YP5)

### **What Defines a 'Good' Music Service?**

A series of youth consultations were based on building a better understanding of what a 'good' music service is and does from the perspectives of young people who, like the previous consultation, were currently engaged with their local MEH. 13 young people from 3 different MEHs were asked to rank a series of pre-made statements ranging from what they prioritise most to what they prioritise least in a music service. To do this, a mixed-methods, Q methodological and factor analysis (Ramlo, 2019; Stephenson, 1935; Watts and Stenner, 2012) approach was adopted. The three groups, which spanned young people aged 11-18 years, were:

1. Six Wolverhampton MEH BaB students
2. Four Worcestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra students

### 3. Three Sandwell MEH student voice group members

#### The 'Q' process: A brief introduction

The authors of this report produced 18 generic statements of what a 'good' music service is or does (see Appendix 2). Many of these statements were derived from informal conversations with young people and music service professionals, as well as insights from previous research. During scheduled interviews, the young people individually ranked each statement and placed them on a 'Q grid' (shown in Appendix 3). In interpreting this grid, the +2 column represents what the young person prioritises most in a music service, the -2 column symbolises the opposite, and those in between indicate, in general terms, more neutral viewpoints. Following ranking, each young person was then invited to briefly discuss the reasons for their choices, particularly at the extreme ends of the Q grid.

Following data collection, data were then entered into and analysed using PQ Method software. This was so that the ranking of every statement from each young person could be statistically correlated with one another in order to establish more generic and best-fit viewpoints. In keeping with Q methodology terminology, the term 'factor' is used throughout this report and means 'viewpoint' or 'perspective'. So, for example, Factor 1 means the first perspective based on data analysis, and Factor 2 means the second viewpoint.

The findings from each of the 13 young people from 3 MEHs (referred to as 'Group 1', 'Group 2' and 'Group 3') are reported below. Although there were 18 statements, only the four top-ranking statements and the four bottom-ranking statements are reported here. The full rankings for each group, and each generic factor identified, are presented in Appendix 4.

#### Key Findings

**Table 2: Top-ranked statements and bottom-ranked statements by group**

|                                     | <b>What groups prioritised most</b>   | <b>What groups prioritised least</b>  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>BaB students (Wolverhampton)</b> | Group 1: Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.<br><br>Group 2: Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be. | Group 1: Enables me to express who I am through music.<br><br>Group 2: Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces. |
| <b>WJYO students (Severn Arts)</b>  | Group 1: Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.<br><br>Group 2: Provides a wide range of musical opportunities                    | Group 1: Enables me to express who I am through music.  |

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | and experiences for young people.   | Group 2: Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals.  |
| <b>SIPS student voice group (Sandwell)</b> | Group 1: Inspires my love of music.<br><br>Group 2: Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician. | Group 1: Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.<br><br>Group 2: Gives me the information I need to get involved. |

### **Group 1: Wolverhampton Music Service Become a Beatmaker participants**

Six BaB participants (see Case Study Two) completed individual Q grids. Of the 6 young people involved in this group, 2 factors were evident.

#### **Factor 1:**

4 of the 6 young people fitted into Factor 1. **Table 3** shows, as an overall best fit, what they prioritised most.

| <b>Rank order</b> | <b>Statement</b>   | <b>Q Grid best fit</b> |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1                 | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | +2                     |
| 2                 | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | +2                     |
| 3                 | Listens to and responds to my views.   | +1                     |
| 4                 | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | +1                     |

**Table 3: Group 1, top-ranked statements for Factor 1.**

From this perspective, a 'good' music service should provide time for individuals to work on individual, musical goals. This, as the comments below suggest, ensures that enough time is given for work to be completed, and helps create a sense of engagement in developing musically.

- Young person (YP) 2: If you don't have enough time, you can't finish the work.  
 YP3: If you don't have goals in music, it's boring.



A 'good' music service should also provide opportunities for young people to have their voices heard and listened to. This is important so that future musical experiences for young people can be made even better.

YP2: MEHs should listen to see if there's anything better it can do or change to make it more efficient.

**Factor 2:**

2 of the 6 young people had a different perspective and therefore fitted into Factor 2. **Table 4** shows, as an overall best fit, a different perspective of what they prioritised most.

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1          | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.             | +2              |
| 2          | Enables me to express who I am through music.                            | +2              |
| 3          | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online. | +1              |
| 4          | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace.                           | +1              |

**Table 4: Group 1, top-ranked statements for Factor 2.**

Despite *aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be* being ranked top; it was believed that this can be supported by enabling individuals to express who they are through music (ranked #2). One young person said that this can be done through working hard (YP7), and it was also acknowledged that expressing yourself through music is something that many people do these days (YP1).

YP1: That's what a lot of people do with music nowadays.

YP7: If they work hard, they can move on a bit and enjoy it more.

It was also believed that a 'good' music service should help young people access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online (ranked #3). As YP7 comments:

YP7: It could open other pathways and send you on to bigger things.

This is an interesting comment which links with Factor 1; although the overall ranked statements between these two factors are different (shown in **Tables 2 and 3** and in Appendix 5) one common thread identified through the post-ranking discussions is that the young people in Group 1 value how the music service provides them with a pathway to future and better musical experiences and opportunities, something they otherwise may not access.

**Factor 1:**

Table 5 shows what 4 of the 6 young people prioritised least.

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 15         | Is open to different types of music.   | -1              |
| 16         | Inspires my love of music.   | -1              |
| 17         | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians. | -2              |
| 18         | Enables me to express who I am through music.                                  | -2              |

**Table 5: Group 1, bottom-ranked statements for Factor 1.**

Table 3 shows that inspiring a love of music (ranked #15) is less of a priority. In this case, it is believed that this is something that should already exist and is a core reason why an individual might be going to music service activities in the first place.

YP2: MEHs don't need to do that. You should already be inspired and that's why you're going to the Music service.

One person included within this factor disagreed with this. This individual ranked the *inspires my love of music* statement in the +2 column of their own Q grid because, for this person, being part of the BaB project allowed them to connect with and talk to other like-minded people which, for them, helped develop their own musical inspirations.

YP6: [BaB] has provided the space to talk about music with other people.

The statement which was, overall, ranked bottom was *enables me to express who I am through music*. Again, as with the *inspires my love of music* statement discussed above, it was believed that this is something which should already exist through one's own individual drive for developing as a musician.

YP2: I can already do that. I don't need any help with that. I am independent enough to make my own choices.

**Factor 2:**

Table 6 shows what 2 of the 6 young people prioritised least.

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 15         | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians. | -1              |

|    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 16 | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | -1 |
| 17 | Positively impacts my wellbeing.   | -2 |
| 18 | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | -2 |

**Table 6: Group 1, bottom-ranked statements for Factor 2.**

Although this was not commented on during the post-ranking discussions, what **Tables 3** and **4** have in common is that, collectively, what the young people in Group 1 prioritise least is that a music service should give them the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians. This is an interesting finding which may warrant further exploration. In contrast to the views expressed in **Table 1**, the statement *provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people* is not a priority for the 2 young people in Factor 2. Again, from the prioritise least perspective, this was not discussed during the post-ranking discussion, but may warrant further exploration.

Within Factor 2, the bottom-ranked statement was *provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces*. For one individual, this is something that is not needed since they feel this is something they do not need help with.

YP7: It's pretty simple to be honest. Don't need much help with that.

**Group 2: Worcestershire Music Service Youth Jazz Orchestra members**

The second group of young people who were involved in this series of consultations was WYJO. Of the 4 young people involved in Group 2, 2 factors were evident.

**Factor 1:**

3 of the 4 young people fitted into Factor 1. **Table 7** shows, as an overall best fit, what they prioritised most.

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1          | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.                     | +2              |
| 2          | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | +2              |
| 3          | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.                  | +1              |
| 4          | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | +1              |

**Table 7: Group 2, top-ranked statements for Factor 1.**

From this perspective, a ‘good’ music service should support young people in being the best musicians they can be. As the comment below shows, this is considered important so that young people are able to meet, and perhaps even exceed, their potential.

YP1: It’s important to get the best out of your potential. That’s what a music service should do.

This potential might be grown through MEHs providing young people with a range of musical opportunities and experiences (ranked #2) where they are able to learn more about the world of music, develop an even more personal connection with it, and use these as a means for exploring future pathways in music.

YP1: It helps you learn more about music. Having lots of opportunities creates a love for it [music].

YP2: Without opportunities you wouldn’t really go anywhere with music.

**Factor 2:**

1 of the 4 young people had a different perspective and, therefore, fitted into Factor 2. **Table 8** shows what this person prioritised most.

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1          | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | +2              |
| 2          | Inspires my love of music.   | +2              |
| 3          | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | +1              |
| 4          | Creates a supportive and welcoming environment.                                  | +1              |

**Table 8: Group 2, top-ranked statements for Factor 2.**

Although this individual sees the role of a ‘good’ music service differently to their other three peers, this young person also strongly prioritises that a ‘good’ music service *should provide a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences* (ranked #1). For this young person, being provided with different opportunities and experiences helps reduce the feeling of boredom and can, therefore, help inspire a love of music (ranked #2).

YP4: I think it helps inspire you; you might get bored if it’s the same thing over and over again. It’s still good, but you wanna do different things.

### Factor 1:

Table 9 shows what 3 of the 4 young people prioritised least.

| Rank order | Statement   | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| 15         | Is able to relate to and connect with young people. | -1              |
| 16         | Positively impacts my wellbeing.                    | -1              |
| 17         | Is open to different types of music.                | -2              |
| 18         | Enables me to express who I am through music.       | -2              |

**Table 9: Group 2, bottom-ranked statements for Factor 1.**

Although **Table 7** shows that the young people within this factor prioritised that a ‘good’ music service should *provide a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people* (ranked #2), **Table 9** and the follow-up discussions indicate that, from the perspectives of these young people, these opportunities and experiences should not include exploring different types of music (ranked #17). Since these young people in Group 2 were involved in a music service jazz group, this is the musical style in which they want to experience further and gain further opportunities and is a core reason why they attend the group.

YP1: I really like doing jazz and that’s why I’m here.

YP2: I’m part of this because I want to learn about jazz music.

Young people in this factor also did not prioritise a ‘good’ music service as enabling individuals to express who they are through music (ranked #18). This, from one person’s comment, is something which is done by the individual, not the music service.

YP1: It’s not the job of the music service to express who we are. That’s kinda up to you.

### Factor 2:

Table 10 shows what 1 of the 4 young people prioritised least.

| Rank order | Statement   | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| 15         | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.    | -1              |
| 16         | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician. | -1              |
| 17         | Enables me to express who I am through music.                   | -2              |

|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 18 | Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals. | -2 |
|----|---|----|

**Table 10: Group 2, bottom-ranked statements for Factor 2.**

Similarly to the perspectives shown in **Table 9**, **Table 10** shows that this young person also does not prioritise the role of the music service helping young people express who they are through music (ranked #17). Although, in this case, the individual acknowledges that this is something they cannot yet do, they feel that this is something which is a personal trait and not the responsibility of the music service.

YP4: It's different for lots of people. To be honest, I don't know how to express myself in music. I don't think that's a Music service thing; I think that's a personal thing.

**Group 3: Sandwell Music Service Student Voice Group members**

Of the 3 young people involved in Group 3, two factors were evident.

**Factor 1:**

2 of the 3 young people fitted into Factor 1. **Table 11** shows, as an overall best fit, what they prioritised most.

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1          | Inspires my love of music.   | +2              |
| 2          | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | +2              |
| 3          | Is able to relate to and connect with young people.                              | +1              |
| 4          | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | +1              |

**Table 11: Group 3, top-ranked statements for Factor 1.**

From this viewpoint, a 'good' music service should inspire a love of music in young people. As commented on by one individual, the choices of repertoire made by the music service can be of importance for some young people to engage positively in the group's activities.

YP1: It's important to actually like the music you're playing. There's no point playing music you don't like.

YP1 also commented on the importance of young people having their voice heard (ranked #4 overall). For this individual, being provided with such opportunities means that MEHs develop a good understanding of what young people like and can look to make suitable adaptations or changes.

YP1: If we never say what we like, the things we don't like are never going to change.

It is worth noting that this activity was run during a youth voice event (see WMM, 2022 for more on this), so this may have impacted where young people ranked of this statement.

### **Factor 2:**

1 of the 3 young people had a different perspective and, therefore, fitted into Factor 2. **Table 12** shows what this individual prioritised most.

| <b>Rank order</b> | <b>Statement</b>   | <b>Q Grid best fit</b> |
|-------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1                 | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.            | 2                      |
| 2                 | Inspires my love of music.   | 2                      |
| 3                 | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.               | 1                      |
| 4                 | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces. | 1                      |

**Table 12: Group 3, top-ranked statements for Factor 2.**

This young person felt that a 'good' music service should support them in finding suitable pathways to develop as a musician (ranked #1). For them, this was significant; through the follow-up discussion, it became clear that this individual has already decided upon having a career in music and sees the music service as an important means of support in getting there.

YP3: Since I want a career in music, I think the music service can definitely help me with my next steps. Support from the music service would definitely help my career.

In consensus with the rankings in **Table 11**, **Table 12** shows that this young person prioritises a 'good' music service in playing a key part in inspiring a love of music. In addition to the comments presented previously by YP1 (Factor 1), YP3 (Factor 2) goes on to say that such inspirations and enjoyment can have an important effect on an individual's performance and progress.

YP3: I think this is important for a music service because if you're playing it, but not enjoying it, you're not going to play it well. Therefore, you're not going to improve if you don't like it. It's important that pieces given out are enjoyable.

**Factor 1:**

**Table 13** shows what 2 of the 3 young people prioritise least.

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 15         | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces. | -1              |
| 16         | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                           | -1              |
| 17         | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online.   | -2              |
| 18         | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.            | -2              |

**Table 13: Group 3, bottom-ranked statements for Factor 1.**

In antithesis to **Table 12**, **Table 13** shows that the other two young people said they did not prioritise the music service in supporting individuals to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician (ranked #18). From their viewpoints, not only is this something which can be done on an individual level (with support from friends and family) (YP2), at the time of the research taking place, YP1 shared that they were too young to consider future careers.

YP2: I don't think this is necessary, but it does help. I think I can do this more myself with my family and friends.

YP1: At the moment [at age 12] I don't have to worry about doing GCSEs or A Levels or anything like that yet.

**Factor 2:**

**Table 14** shows what 1 of the 3 young people prioritised least.

| Rank order | Statement                                      | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 15         | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace. | -1              |



|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
|    |   |    |
| 16 | Listens to and responds to my views.                              | -1 |
| 17 | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals. | -2 |
| 18 | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                  | -2 |

**Table 14: Group 3, bottom-ranked statements for Factor 2.**

In agreement with the findings shown in **Table 13**, **Table 14** also shows that this individual does not prioritise a ‘good’ music service as providing information to get involved in activities/groups. From this perspective, this individual believes that all the necessary and relevant information is more of an individual responsibility and that, given the reputation of the music service, young people are already aware of what the service has to offer.

YP3: It’s often quite easy to find that information yourself. I think the music service is so well-known everybody knows about it anyway.

Furthermore, this young person also went on to say that they do not prioritise a ‘good’ music service in developing an individual’s goals. This is because, as commented on during the post-ranking discussion, the purpose of the music service is to develop more group-based goals where all can progress together simultaneously.

YP3: For me, the music service is not about the individual, it’s about everyone. It’s not about my own individual goals, it’s about everyone moving at the same pace.

## **Conclusion: Consensus and disagreement**

In order to identify consensus and disagreement in rankings, a cross-factor analysis took place. This was useful for providing insight, in general terms, for what the 13 young people from the 3 MEHs prioritise most and least from a music service.

### ***Consensus statements***

The consensus statements are those in which there was agreement among the young people’s decisions, i.e. whether they agreed a statement was to be prioritised most or least. Interestingly, to these young people, having opportunities to have their voices heard was the only statement they collectively seemed to prioritise most for what a ‘good’ music service does, highlighting the relevance and timeliness of the MMF project. Having such opportunities are thought to be important so that young people’s voices feel included and are a valued part of the decision-making process in moving a music service, and their activities, forward. By contrast, however, there were several more statements which, collectively, they seemed to prioritise least. These were: being open to different types of music, positively

impacting on an individual's wellbeing, giving young people the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians, and gives them the information they need to get involved. Although not all of these statements were discussed by the young people (and as a result may require further exploration), a recurring comment relating to some of these statements was that the young people feel that some of these can be done at the individual level, and, therefore, they do not feel they need the support of the music service for further guidance. Whilst this may, indeed, be true, consideration should be given to the fact that these young people were already involved in the music service at the time the research took place, and it could be that different factors might have emerged if young people not currently involved in the music service system were also included.

### ***Disagreement statements***

The disagreement statements are those in which there was disagreement among the young people's decisions. For example, whether some agreed a statement was to be prioritised most and at least one other person thought it was to be prioritised least. Although not all young people agreed, the statements that almost all young people prioritised most were: providing a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people, inspiring their love of music, and aspiring to help musicians be the best musicians they can be. Again, although not all agreed, most young people placed the enabling the music service to express who they are through music statement as something which they prioritise least. Despite the apparent disagreements in where statements were placed, what this shows - supported by the dialogues above - is that young people take part in music service activities for all sorts of different reasons and that, whatever their reason for taking part in an activity, the music service is able to provide them with valuable opportunities in which they can grow as musicians on an individual and personal level.

## Youth Club Members, Worcestershire



*The Music Box at a Worcestershire Youth Centre © Kieran Hunt*

The final youth consultation took place in September 2022 on the Music Box<sup>10</sup>, Severn Arts' mobile music space which provides a range of musical pop up events and experiences in partnership with festivals, schools and community groups across the county. The consultation took place during a Music Box visit to a local youth centre as part of the centre's weekly activity evening for children and young people. Young people were invited to drop in and create their own music on digital equipment (including turntables and an electronic drum kit) with support from a music facilitator. The opportunity to lead a consultation in an unconventional space prompted the researchers to move away from traditional interview techniques. Instead, a series of consultation questions were prepared which were based on musical metaphors, an idea developed by Bresler (2005) which Leavy (2015: 130) defines as

Offer[ing] a model built from metaphors in which all formal dimensions of music can be adapted to highlight dimensions of social experience that may not be fully attended to in traditional qualitative research projects.

While Bresler focused on key dimensions of music such as 'form, rhythm, dynamics, timbre, melody, polyphony, and harmony' (ibid.), in this case the musical metaphors drew on the Music Box space and the electronic music equipment the young people used. The terms provided by Become A Beatmaker course leader Aman (see Case Study Two: Wolverhampton Music Education Hub). For this research, the musical metaphors have also been used 'as a framework for structuring the written representation of research findings', (Leavy, 2015: 130) in Consultation Part Two.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.severnarts.org.uk/music-box>

## Consultation Part One

Introductory questions centred on the young people's familiarity with Severn Arts and their experiences of music education at school.



*Music equipment on the Music Box © Kieran Hunt*

### Music at school

Young people discussed music at school and touched on a number of aspects. Firstly, when asked if they had learnt any instruments responses were:

Not really. (Wor\_YP2)

Some of them [instruments]...on the keyboard for a bit? You don't really get much time on it. (Wor\_YP1)

Time was indeed limited, with music consisting of 40 minutes a week according to Wor\_YP1. Another aspect raised by Wor\_YP2 was a lack of ownership and creativity in their musical learning at school:

There weren't really much, like, personalisation to it. Kind of just, you learned a song, and that's a song. There wasn't any addition or subtraction to it. (Wor\_YP2)

This suggests that opportunities for Wor\_YP2 to develop their own musical voice were limited. Wor\_YP1 appeared to be resigned to music not going well and described this as the norm:

It's music at the end of the day, the teachers are not the best music teachers. They just give us the key words, we get on with it with the lyrics and it doesn't really go well. (Wor\_YP1)

However, having mentioned that his music teachers were not 'the best' he was clearly aware that his school music education had room for improvement.

### Familiarity with Severn Arts

Young people were asked if they had heard of Severn Arts and/or if they recognised the Severn Arts logo. Neither of them were familiar with the name or the logo but they assumed from the name that it was arts-related. For example:

Is it like different types of music or art? (Wor\_YP2)

## Consultation Part Two

As discussed, the following section is based on the use of music studio terminology as metaphors for framing a series of questions.

### Bus

Bus: an audio track which houses signals from multiple other areas. So, a grouping of sounds.

*Bus* centred on the young people's interests and the lived experiences they were bringing with them to the Music Box session, including any events that had been important in shaping their interests.

Football and music were immediately mentioned by both young people, one of whom described their day to day life as 'I'm there with my air pods' (Wor\_YP1). When asked about any memorable experiences or events, Wor\_YP1 mentioned going to the local family festival Sunshine last summer:

Sunshine's probably the best one for me... (Wor\_YP1)

He was planning on going back next year and mentioned enjoying the 'drum and bass' and being able to 'have a laugh with your mates'. Wor\_YP2, who was friends with Wor\_YP1 agreed with this but admitted that in terms of his main interests, 'it's got to be football, that's got to be top' (Wor\_YP2). Wor\_YP1 mentioned 'I like to singalong with it [music], if there are any little raps in there...' but that this was strictly not in front of anyone else:

I just do it myself, I don't think I'm that good! (Wor\_YP1)

### Mixing

Mixing: the art of blending/adjusting levels, techniques, and effects to create a refined and balanced audio signal. \*this can be used in reference to the students becoming more acquainted/adjusted with the software, each other and the teachers.

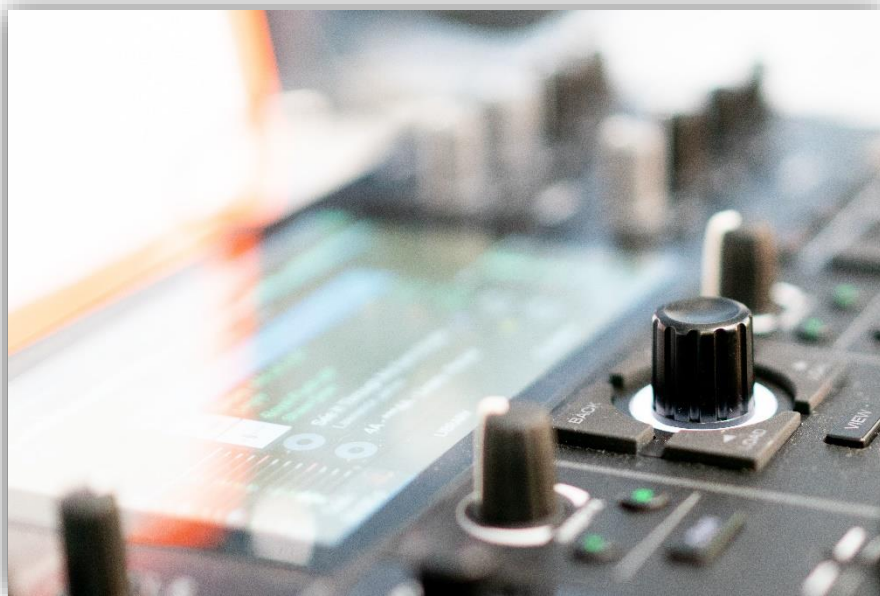
*Mixing* centred on whether music is something young people perceived as important to their wellbeing and their ability to feel balanced. It also centred on whether they use a mixture of music in their lives.

With regards to wellbeing, Wor\_YP1 shared 'I use it [music] when I'm chilling' or to help them to feel more chilled. Wor\_YP2 felt that different occasions lend themselves to different types of music:

If you're at a party you're not really going to be listening to like Adele and that are you....it would be quite depressing! You'll have like drum and bass at parties and then you'll have the sadder songs at three in the morning, sat there... (Wor\_YP2)

Both young people mentioned drum and bass and rap as their favourite genres, with Wor\_YP2 adding:

If it's 3am after a good night out maybe Adele! (Wor\_YP2)



*Music equipment on the Music Box © Kieran Hunt*

## **Rhythm**

Rhythm: a musical element which relates to when different sounds are playing and on what beat, bar or measure. Can be fast or slow.

*Rhythm* focused on how music fits in with young people's routine and when they are likely to listen to music.

Wor\_YP1 shared that they regularly listen to music in the morning:

On my way to college...puts you in a good mood and that. (Wor\_YP1)

Additionally, Wor\_YP1 felt that listening to music with family required a flexible attitude:

When music's on with your family, they're not into your kind of music, so you've just got to go with the flow. (Wor\_YP1)

Related to this, young people shared how they access music and where they get their influences from. The mentioned Spotify, 'what I've heard on Instagram and that' (Wor\_YP2), YouTube and SoundCloud. They discussed preferring SoundCloud to Spotify as the former did not need a premium subscription to avoid adverts.

## Frequency

Frequency: a tone measured in Hz. Speed of vibration and pitch.

*Frequency* was used to ascertain how often the young people listen to or make music. Unsurprisingly based on the responses so far, both of the young people immediately responded 'everyday'.

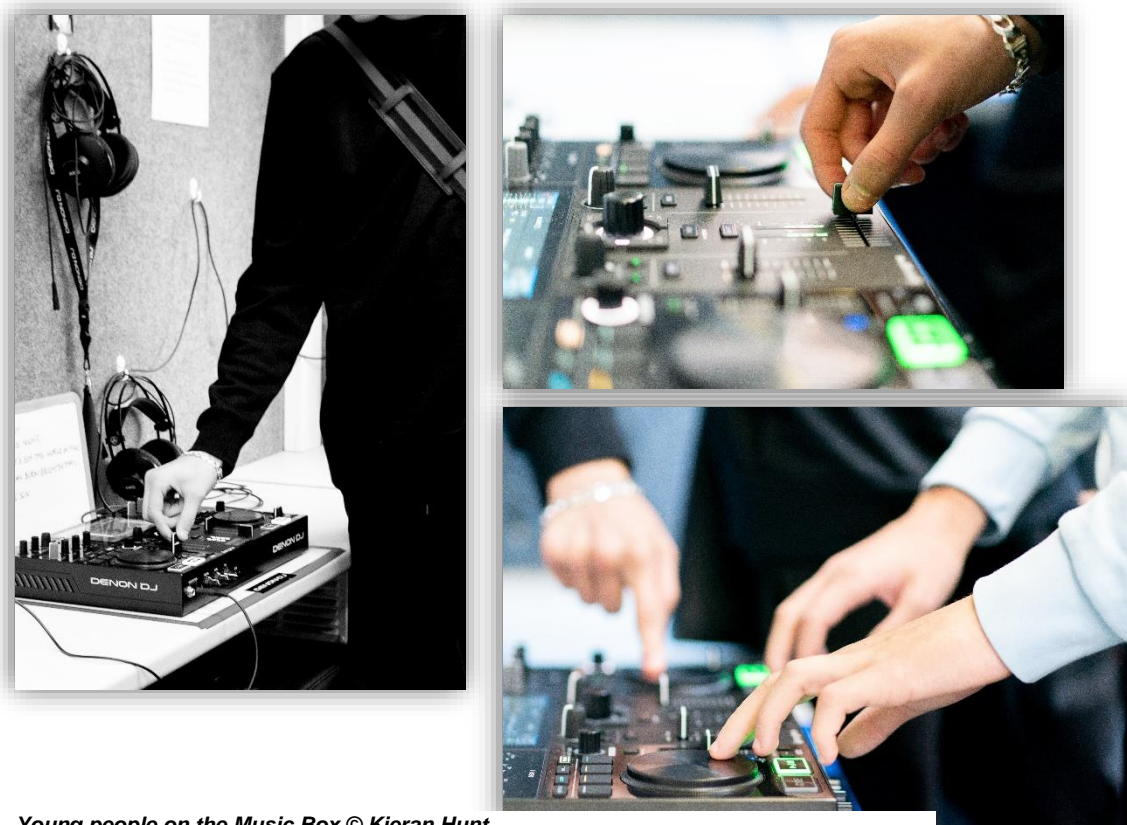
## Envelope

Envelope: an envelope is a description of how a sound develops over time.

*Envelope* focused on if and how the young people's interest in music has changed over time, including if they were more or less interested in music now compared to previous years. Wor\_YP1 believed that their musical interests had changed since they went to secondary schools, continuing:

...that's when all the stuff changed, it's when you've got to grow up" (Wor\_YP1)

Wor\_YP2 described becoming 'a little bit' more interested in music 'as I got older' (Wor\_YP2). Asked why this was the case, they responded 'going out with your mates...break ups...' (Wor\_YP2).



*Young people on the Music Box © Kieran Hunt*

## Monitor

Monitor: loud speakers. A speaker/monitor is commonplace in a studio.

*Monitor* was used as a springboard for exploring young people's youth voice opportunities with questions including 'when did you last have a say?' and 'do you feel your voice is heard?' in relation to music.

Wor\_YP2 felt that there was lack of options in curriculum music and could only recall one lesson when he had an influence, involving being able to select a song to listen to (his choice was *Seven Nation Army* by The White Stripes):

When it comes to school music, the only time I had an option was on my birthday...it had to be like clean...(Wor\_YP2)

The young people noted how they could not use their own music to relax to during break times or during particular lessons:



Musically, you're not allowed to be on your phone at break and that. You can't play any tunes at break you're just sat there. (Wor\_YP2)

Especially when you're in lessons in school like D.T. where you've just got to chill out and focus, I reckon they should let you have on your air pods. (Wor\_YP1)

## EQing

EQing: the act of removing and increasing frequencies within an audio signal.

*EQing* connected to questions concerning opportunities for young people to access and progress in their music in Worcester, and whether there are any barriers to this.

Young people felt it was important for young people to have 'a studio, a place where they can go' (Wor\_YP1) to produce their own music. Both of the young people highlighted a lack of musical role models from Worcester and how this was needed to be able to get people 'in the right mind set' (Wor\_YP2).

You don't really see any musicians coming out of Worcester or anyone big coming out of Worcester. It's kind of the small musicians. (Wor\_YP1)

Just like he says, there's literally no role models that come out of Worcester. That will have a big impact on, like, if you want to be a musician or something. (Wor\_YP2)

Another issue was a lack of big artists performing in Worcester. Wor\_YP1 noted that it would be ideal to have

a lot more idols coming to Worcester...cause all of the big stars prefer like Birmingham or London. (Wor\_YP1)

Building on this, young people were asked what their 'dream' local venue would be to see their favourite artist perform. They mentioned Reading Festival, Sixways Stadium and the Upton upon Severn Sunshine Music Festival.

Financial barriers were mentioned generally and the young people suggested that public funding was not being used effectively:

People put money into different things in Worcester...people that don't deserve it... (Wor\_YP1)

They wasted it on a dramatic golden building...it's the most useless thing I've actually seen...it's just a massive building for books...(Wor\_YP2)

This suggests that young people do not identify with some of the major cultural venues in their city.

## Youth Consultations Key Learning

This series of youth consultations highlighted a number of points for consideration. Here are some key issues voiced by young people:

- Shropshire Music Service's Youth Council were interested in meeting other musicians and performing at large scale events. They wanted to subsidise accompaniments and reconsider the timing of their annual showcase so it did not clash with GCSE exams. They felt that the music service website had greater potential to reach more young people.
- The three groups who ranked features of 'good' music services (BaB participants, WYJO members and SIPS student voice group members) prioritised different areas although there were some commonalities. This reflects the different motivations young people have for engaging with their local MEHs.
- The young people in Worcestershire had not had positive music education experiences at school but music was one of their key interests, in particular drum and bass and rap. They felt it was important for young people to have access to a music studio but that there was a lack of 'idols' from the city and that this was a barrier to young people taking part in music and/or aspiring to be musicians.

## Recommendations

A number of recommendations based on the research are shared below. These recommendations are offered as potential areas for consideration and are not definitive.

### Recommendations for youth voice development

- To extend and build on existing youth voice practice across WMM including gathering and responding to ensemble players' feedback, providing governance opportunities, and facilitating instrument and repertoire choices where possible.
- To continue sharing examples of good youth voice practices and the processes employed at future WMM networking meetings and events.
- To pilot ways for MEH music teachers to easily and efficiently share 1) relevant feedback from their students and 2) youth voice successes so that these can be tracked, evaluated and actioned where needed by MEH Leads, while creating an evidence base for future investment/funding.
- To prioritise regular opportunities for staff to reflect on youth consultation/survey data and data shared by staff in order to identify and act on views where necessary, and disseminate learning.
- To amplify youth voice successes and advocate the need for youth voice and participation work across all levels of MEH organisations.
- To gather young people evaluation data from partnership projects and/or debrief with partners for further insight and learning.
- For MEH staff to receive support and training around devising questions for youth consultations that can be adapted and expanded to fit different settings and contexts.
- To receive support and training around leading consultations with young people including how to be transparent with young people about what they can and cannot do and manage expectations.
- To commit to consulting with young people engaged and not engaged with WMM on a regular basis. This may include setting targets across WMM.
- To explore further collaboration with schools, particularly music coordinators and music teachers, to support youth voice.
- To consider embedding school feedback and youth voice support in partnership agreements.
- To consider how young people can lead on and support youth voice in partner schools, and within ensembles and projects.
- To facilitate spaces for music teachers to come together and reflect on their teaching practice and on youth voice resources and frameworks.
- To continue identifying good youth voice practice and related practices outside of music education and transferring relevant strategies to WMM. This may involve setting up a working group to lead on this including colleagues who have youth voice in their remit.
- To consider developing principles for inclusive governance aimed at adult board members and meeting chairs. For these principles to be informed by young people's experiences.
- To create and regularly review youth governance role descriptions. Ideally these can be created by young people or involve input from young people.
- To create spaces for students' decision-making in music lessons.

- Inspired by The Music Lab Toolkit (Mayne et al. 2022), to consider what constitutes a culture of youth voice and participation in WMM to support staff to promote youth voice in their everyday work.
- To consider developing a collective framework and action plan for youth voice and participation across WMM.
- To consult with young people during projects and gather their perspectives on past, current and future music provision.
- To consult with music specialists on authentic music education experiences and outcomes within particular musical genres and consider how to enable this.
- To invest in new music opportunities (like the BaB music production course) where possible in order to reach new demographics of young people. For opportunities to involve self-expression and music creation where possible.
- To do further research on established and emerging music scenes and potential partnerships in each MEH area to support the above recommendation (or build an evidence base to attract funding) and reach new young people and artists.
- To enable young people to set their own learning goals.
- To loan MacBooks, electronic music equipment and other resources as needed to young people where possible.
- To gather feedback from ensemble players through, for instance, feedback boxes, or through structures such as youth voice councils.
- To regularly ask ensemble members what they prioritise (and do not prioritise) in their MEH so that their learning experiences can be catered towards this. MEHs may wish to use/adapt the statements used in this research (see Appendix 3) and ask young people for their input on these statements.
- Ask young people if and how they have had a say in other areas of their lives. This may highlight youth voice methods young people are familiar with such as voting and help them to share their views.
- To research young people's favourite music venues, festivals etc. and explore the possibilities of providing music making opportunities in these settings. (E.g. Sunshine Festival in Worcestershire was mentioned.)
- To create more talent development opportunities and nurture local musicians.
- To provide a platform for young people to share their voice and build an evidence base to attract funding and investment in areas they are interested in and perceived gaps.

For funders and policy makers:

- To support specialist youth voice roles and provide regular CPD and networking opportunities across MEH areas.
- For MEHs to receive ongoing youth voice funding to enable them to experiment and test youth approaches while maintaining business stability.

### **Recommendations for workforce development**

- For WMM to work in partnership with other music education providers to create a live, digital portfolio of music education roles and case studies.
- To develop more mentoring opportunities between senior and early career MEH staff.

- To work in partnership with community music organisations to identify local specialist music practitioners, and to consult with them on employment terms.
- To consider adapting employment and contract terms where needed.

For funders and policy makers:

- To support more early career work placements.
- To support more staff CPD and training opportunities.

## References

- Becko, L. & Raven, J. (2020) *The Youth Voice & Participation Handbook for Creative and Cultural Organisations*. Published by Sound Connections and Lawrence Becko Associates.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3: 77 – 101.
- Bresler, L. (2005) What Musicianship Can Teach Educational Research. *Music Education Research*, 7:2, 169-183.
- Burnard, P. (2000) How children ascribe meaning to improvisation and composition: Rethinking pedagogy in music education. *Music Education Research*, 2, 7–23.
- Burnard, P. (2012) Rethinking Creative Teaching and Teaching as Research: Mapping the Critical Phases That Mark Times of Change and Choosing as Learners and Teachers of Music, *Theory Into Practice*, 51:3, 167-178.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods In Education*. 8th Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Green, L. (2008) *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*. London: Routledge.
- Kinsella, V., Nenadic, E. and Booth, N. Creativity Collaboratives. Year 1 Interim Report 2022. Birmingham City University. For Arts Council England and The Elliot Trust Foundation.
- Leavy, P. (2015) *Method Meets Art, Second Edition: Arts-Based Research Practice*. United Kingdom: Guilford Publications.
- Lonie, D. and Dickens, L. (2016) Becoming musicians: situating young people's experiences of musical learning between formal, informal and non-formal spheres. *Cultural Geographies*. 23: 1, 87-101.
- Mayne, I. with Raven, J., and Bull, A. (2022) *The Music Lab: A Toolkit for Exploring Youth Voice within Music-Making Practices in Classical Music Education*. Published by Sound Connections.
- Mullen, P. (n.d.) *Music with Children and Young People who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties*. A resource for working musically with children and young people with SEMHD, particularly those excluded from mainstream school. Published by Mac Makes Music & Youth Music. [Accessed here: <https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/file/40581/download?token=Bfi0S4Pn>]
- Nenadic, E. and Booth, N. (2022) *Independent Evaluation: Inclusive Access to Music-Making (IAMM) Project*. Birmingham City University. For Arts Council England and The OHMI Trust.
- Ramlo, S. (2019) Divergent viewpoints about the statistical stage of a mixed method: Qualitative versus quantitative orientations. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 43:1, 93-111.
- Stephenson, W. (1935) Technique for factor analysis. *Nature*, 136, 297.

Watts, S. and Stenner, P. (2012) *Doing Q methodological research: Theory, method and interpretation*. London UK: SAGE.

West Midlands Music (2022) *Music Makers of the Future Toolkit*.

Yin, R. (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. University of Michigan: SAGE.

## Appendix 1: Musical River guidelines

### MUSICAL RIVER

**Your musical river is about what has shaped you and influenced you as a musician and about how bits of your life fit together.**

**Visualize your musical life as a winding river** in which each bend in the river's path marks a critical moment. Think back and **reflect on key moments** (positive and negative memories) that have influenced the direction of your musical life. **What are the first most significant memories, persons, events, or pivotal moments that you recall about your musical journey?**

**Place each important moment on a different bend** along the length of a winding river where each bend represents a critical moment or turning point. **Tell the story** (or recall it in your mind) of this important moment. Label the moment.

Go on mapping your recollections and chart the complete journey of your musical life by **recalling, listing, and labelling** each critical incident on each bend. **Reflect** on the whole picture and see what patterns start to emerge.

Note where and when the watersheds, sudden swerves, turning points, currents, memorable moments, or marker events occur in your development. This now becomes a navigable river representing **a story of what has shaped who you are today**. The purpose is to visualize and draw your own musical journey as a mighty winding river and to reflect upon what has created your path as a musician.

Adapted from Kinsella et al. 2022; Pam Burnard 2012.



## Appendix 2: Musical metaphors

The following metaphors and potential uses/questions were kindly provided by Become A Beatmaker Course Leader Aman.

- **Mixing** - The art of blending/adjusting levels, techniques, and effects to create a refined and balanced audio signal. \*this can be used in reference to the students becoming more acquainted/adjusted with the software, each other and the teachers.
- **Rhythm** - A musical element consisting of when all elements are playing and on what beat, bar or measure. Can be fast or slow. \*This can be used in a sense of asking the students how easily they've found their 'creative flow' within the sessions and what could be done to help that process.
- **EQing** - The act of removing + increasing frequencies within an audio signal. This can be used to reflect distractions or even positive moments that the students would like to expand upon.
- **Bus** - An audio track which houses signals from multiple other areas. This can be used to ask the students how they feel they've progressed so far along their journey (a bus journey), any bumps in the road etc. OR, can be used to explore how they've brought multiple areas of knowledge/skills into this one area (e.g. how they've used problem solving skills in their music production journey).
- **Envelope** - An envelope is a description of how a sound develops over time. \*this can be explored with the idea of how the students may have been anxious/nervous at the start of the course but gradually became more comfortable.
- **Frequency** - A tone measured in Hz. \*the students can reflect on the frequency that they have had the lessons as well as how having a computer to take home led them to work on music more frequently.
- **Monitor** - A speaker/studio monitor is commonplace in a studio. \*The word monitor can be adapted to allow students to monitor their progress as well as new skills they may have learnt along the way.
- **Phasing** - A phaser can be used to delay a sound and create a warped effect. \*This can be adapted to ask the students what their favourite phase of the course was e.g. mixing, adding drums, adding effects etc.

## Appendix 3: The Q-sample statements

A 'good' music service...

1. Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard
2. Listens to and responds to my views
3. Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals
4. Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals
5. Ensures that I can participate at my own pace
6. Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be
7. Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces
8. Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people
9. Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician
10. Is able to relate to and connect with young people
11. Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians
12. Creates a supportive and welcoming environment
13. Positively impacts my wellbeing
14. Enables me to express who I am through music
15. Is open to different types of music
16. Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online
17. Inspires my love of music
18. Gives me the information I need to get involved

## Appendix 4: The 'Q grid'

| What I prioritise least |    | Neutral | What I agree prioritise most |    |
|-------------------------|----|---------|------------------------------|----|
| -2                      | -1 | 0       | +1                           | +2 |
|                         |    |         |                              |    |
|                         |    |         |                              |    |
|                         |    |         |                              |    |
|                         |    |         |                              |    |
|                         |    |         |                              |    |
|                         |    |         |                              |    |
|                         |    |         |                              |    |

## Appendix 5: Complete rankings

### Group 1 Findings: Wolverhampton Music Service Become A Beatmaker participants

Factor 1 (based on the views of four young people):

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1          | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | 2               |
| 2          | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | 2               |
| 3          | Listens to and responds to my views.   | 1               |
| 4          | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | 1               |
| 5          | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace.                                   | 1               |
| 6          | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.                     | 1               |
| 7          | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | 0               |
| 8          | Positively impacts my wellbeing.   | 0               |
| 9          | Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals.                      | 0               |
| 10         | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.                  | 0               |
| 11         | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                                 | 0               |
| 12         | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online.         | 0               |
| 13         | Creates a supportive and welcoming environment.                                  | -1              |
| 14         | Is able to relate to and connect with young people.                              | -1              |
| 15         | Is open to different types of music.   | -1              |
| 16         | Inspires my love of music  | -1              |
| 17         | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians.   | -2              |
| 18         | Enables me to express who I am through music.                                    | -2              |

Factor 2 (based on the views of two young people):

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1          | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.                     | 2               |
| 2          | Enables me to express who I am through music.                                    | 2               |
| 3          | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online.         | 1               |
| 4          | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace.                                   | 1               |
| 5          | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                                 | 1               |
| 6          | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | 1               |
| 7          | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | 0               |
| 8          | Creates a supportive and welcoming environment.                                  | 0               |
| 9          | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.                  | 0               |
| 10         | Is open to different types of music.   | 0               |
| 11         | Inspires my love of music.   | 0               |
| 12         | Is able to relate to and connect with young people.                              | 0               |
| 13         | Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals.                      | -1              |
| 14         | Listens to and responds to my views.   | -1              |
| 15         | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians.   | -1              |
| 16         | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | -1              |
| 17         | Positively impacts my wellbeing.   | -2              |
| 18         | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | -2              |

### **Group 2 Findings: Worcestershire Music Service Youth Jazz Orchestra Members**

Factor 1 (based on the views of three young people):

| Rank order | Statement  | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|--|-----------------|
| 1          | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.                     | 2               |
| 2          | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | 2               |
| 3          | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.                  | 1               |
| 4          | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | 1               |
| 5          | Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals.                      | 1               |
| 6          | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians.   | 1               |
| 7          | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | 0               |
| 8          | Creates a supportive and welcoming environment.                                  | 0               |
| 9          | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace.                                   | 0               |
| 10         | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | 0               |
| 11         | Listens to and responds to my views.   | 0               |
| 12         | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online.         | 0               |
| 13         | Inspires my love of music.   | -1              |
| 14         | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                                 | -1              |
| 15         | Is able to relate to and connect with young people.                              | -1              |
| 16         | Positively impacts my wellbeing.   | -1              |
| 17         | Is open to different types of music.   | -2              |
| 18         | Enables me to express who I am through music.                                    | -2              |

*Factor 2 (based on the view of one young person):*

| Rank order | Statement | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|-----------|-----------------|
|------------|-----------|-----------------|

|    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 1  | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | 2  |
| 2  | Inspires my love of music.   | 2  |
| 3  | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | 1  |
| 4  | Creates a supportive and welcoming environment.                                  | 1  |
| 5  | Is open to different types of music.   | 1  |
| 6  | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online.         | 1  |
| 7  | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | 0  |
| 8  | Is able to relate to and connect with young people.                              | 0  |
| 9  | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians.   | 0  |
| 10 | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace.                                   | 0  |
| 11 | Listens to and responds to my views.   | 0  |
| 12 | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                                 | 0  |
| 13 | Positively impacts my wellbeing.   | -1 |
| 14 | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | -1 |
| 15 | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.                     | -1 |
| 16 | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.                  | -1 |
| 17 | Enables me to express who I am through music.                                    | -2 |
| 18 | Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals.                      | -2 |

### **Group 3 Findings: Sandwell Music Service Student Voice Group members**

*Factor 1 (based on the views of two young people):*

| <b>Rank order</b> | <b>Statement</b>           | <b>Q Grid best fit</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1                 | Inspires my love of music. | 2                      |

|    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 2  | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | 2  |
| 3  | Is able to relate to and connect with young people.                              | 1  |
| 4  | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | 1  |
| 5  | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.                     | 1  |
| 6  | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace.                                   | 1  |
| 7  | Is open to different types of music.   | 0  |
| 8  | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | 0  |
| 9  | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians.   | 0  |
| 10 | Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals.                      | 0  |
| 11 | Listens to and responds to my views.   | 0  |
| 12 | Enables me to express who I am through music.                                    | 0  |
| 13 | Creates a supportive and welcoming environment.                                  | -1 |
| 14 | Positively impacts my wellbeing.   | -1 |
| 15 | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | -1 |
| 16 | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                                 | -1 |
| 17 | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online.         | -2 |
| 18 | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician.                  | -2 |

*Factor 2 (based on the view of one young person):*

| Rank order | Statement   | Q Grid best fit |
|------------|---|-----------------|
| 1          | Supports me to find suitable pathways to develop as a musician. | 2               |
| 2          | Inspires my love of music.                                      | 2               |
| 3          | Aspires to help musicians be the best musicians they can be.    | 1               |



|    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 4  | Provides access to a wide range of venues and performance/creation spaces.       | 1  |
| 5  | Provides a wide range of musical opportunities and experiences for young people. | 1  |
| 6  | Enables me to express who I am through music.                                    | 1  |
| 7  | Gives me enough time to work towards our group-based goals.                      | 0  |
| 8  | Provides me with opportunities to have my voice heard.                           | 0  |
| 9  | Creates a supportive and welcoming environment.                                  | 0  |
| 10 | Positively impacts my wellbeing.   | 0  |
| 11 | Is open to different types of music.   | 0  |
| 12 | Helps me access other music opportunities locally, nationally or online.         | 0  |
| 13 | Is able to relate to and connect with young people.                              | -1 |
| 14 | Gives me the opportunity to spend time with other like-minded young musicians.   | -1 |
| 15 | Ensures that I can participate at my own pace.                                   | -1 |
| 16 | Listens to and responds to my views.   | -1 |
| 17 | Gives me enough time to work towards my individual musical goals.                | -2 |
| 18 | Gives me the information I need to get involved.                                 | -2 |



**For any further details of the research that was undertaken please contact:**

Emma Nenadic: [emma.nenadic@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:emma.nenadic@bcu.ac.uk)