

# **Creative Scotland, Youth Music Initiative**

## **Case Study – Gorbals Youth Brass Band**



**“Performing is the thing I like best. When you go for the first time it boosts your confidence.”**



### **About this case study**

This case study was developed as part of Creative Scotland’s evaluation of the Youth Music Initiative in 2014/15. The Youth Music Initiative is a national programme which is in its 12<sup>th</sup> year of operation. These case studies demonstrate some of the approaches used by organisations funded by the Youth Music Initiative, and highlight the impacts of this work.

This case study is about a youth brass band in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. The Gorbals Youth Brass Band (GYBB) was established in March 2012 by two former pupils of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland who wanted to bring brass tuition to inner city areas.

In 2015/16, the project received £15,326 Youth Music Initiative funding for the first time. Before this, the tutors were volunteering their time. The YMI funding will allow the project to become sustainable as tutors can be paid for their time.

This case study was developed following discussions with six young people, one music tutor and one person involved in planning the project.

### **The approach**

The initial aim of the two founders of the project was to bring brass instrument tuition to inner city areas. While studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the two founders of the Gorbals Youth Brass Band entered a ‘Dragon’s Den’ style competition to win funding to start their own music project. They won and the prize money, along with additional funding was used to start the Gorbals Youth Brass Band.

Through their involvement in various music projects around Glasgow, the two founders of the Gorbals Youth Brass Band had noticed that not all primary schools in Glasgow had access to music provision and that there were often no brass teachers or specialists instrumental lessons. They wanted to “bring instrumental tuition to school children that didn’t have the opportunity.”

Although initially the founders of the Gorbals Youth Brass Band wanted to work in an inner city area, they had no views as to whereabouts in Glasgow this should be. The location of the St Francis Centre in the Gorbals caught their attention as it is located

between two local primary schools; one non-denominational and the other Roman Catholic.

There were issues of deprivation, sectarianism as well as regeneration in the Gorbals. It was decided to establish the Band here to promote ideas of inclusive access. Participants for the Band are recruited from both these primary schools.

The overall aims of the Gorbals Youth Brass Band were to:

- introduce young people to brass instruments;
- bring young people together from different backgrounds; and
- give the young people opportunities to perform their new musical skills.



The Band offers free music tuition to young people from P4 upwards. Tuition covers all brass instruments, with young people learning cornet, tenor horn, baritone, euphonium and trombone.

There are links to the Curriculum for Excellence outcomes but this is not a strong focus of their work and lessons plans are not based around the Curriculum for Excellence.

**“We meet the criteria, but we don’t base our teaching or our rehearsals on CfE.”**

## **Funding and resources**

The initial competition prize won in 2012 by the founding members at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland was £300. In addition to this, the Scottish Brass Band Association signposted the tutors to a fund created specifically for developing brass bands in inner city locations. They were successfully awarded £3,300. This money was used to buy a pool of instruments to get the Gorbals Youth Brass Band established.

The Band also received funding from Children in Need in November 2012 for three years. This covered the costs of their rent and travel costs (which for the first six months the tutors were paying from their own pockets). They plan to apply again to Children in Need in November 2015.

The Scottish Brass Band Association also told the Gorbals Youth Brass Band about YMI funding for which they could apply. They applied twice for YMI funding and had been unsuccessful before their third application was accepted in 2015/16. The

Gorbals Youth Brass Band received £15,326 to cover staff costs and continuing professional development training for tutors, which they felt would make their project sustainable.

**“It has made a huge difference to the project and the sector as the band is now sustainable with the YMI funding. The funding will allow us to continue to create and develop opportunities for young people living in the Gorbals.”**

## **Activities**

The Gorbals Youth Brass Band runs during term time, after school between 3pm and 6.30pm on a Monday (for beginners and intermediate) and Wednesdays (for the more advanced pupils). Young people receive 30 minutes of group tuition with a brass tutor, and then all come together as an ensemble for one hour to put into practice their musical skills. Three ensembles run concurrently; for beginners, intermediate level and a more advanced group.

Lessons are delivered by five brass tutors who have their specialty instruments such as cornet, tenor horn, trombone, and tuba.

**“The instrumental lessons are like the bread and butter; they offer structure. The band situation is the application.”**

The brass tutors have an arrangement with both local primary schools whereby they come along and give a taster session to the pupils. This happens when the tutors feel the band needs refreshed, either because of drop-off in numbers or if one age group begins to dominate. The brass tutors play for the P5 pupils and give out application forms to those who might be interested in taking up a brass instrument.

**“(Why did you want to come to Gorbals Youth Brass Band?) I wanted to be like Lisa Simpson.”**

The Band has an intake of around 20 pupils each time they do a recruitment drive at the primary schools. The original tranche of young people from 2012, are now in S1 of high school, but still choose to attend. They do not turn anyone away who still wishes to play.



The young people are then invited to attend the Gorbals Youth Brass Band where for the first few weeks there are no instruments; just games and activities associated

with rhythm and the Kodaly principles. This give the tutors an idea of the young people's abilities as many have never played a musical instrument before, but also tests their commitment to being in the band.

**“It helped to test the young people's commitment to the band – as they kept coming every week even though they were still not yet playing an instrument.”**

The young people are then encouraged to try different instruments to find the one best suited to them. The tutors help steer the young people to choose their instrument, but many have their heart set on playing something particular.

As well as individual lessons and band work, the group are encouraged to perform together at a number of events. Each year, they attend the brass band championships in Perth and in May 2015 they performed at the City Halls in Glasgow as part of the BBC Tectonics event.

**“Last week we went to the City Halls with the BBC and we played to open it. It was a bit scary, I was shaky before the performance, but after I was excited.”**

The young people have the chance to influence the type of music they learn to play, by requesting particular pieces of music from the tutors. The young people are committed to the Band and the tutors said that in the early days, the young people took it upon themselves to go fundraising. They played their instruments at a local supermarket to raise money.

**“At the very beginning the young people went fundraising for the band themselves – we didn't ask them to do it. They just presented us with a bag of cash. They had taken their instruments to the Co-op to play and raise money.”**

## **Support and training**

From 2012 to early 2015, the tutors were all volunteers. They were mostly friends of the founding members from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. All dedicated their time for free. The YMI funding received in 2015 was felt to be important as there had been no opportunities before to explore continuing professional development with the volunteers who want to do more around community education.

The Band has also received support from the Scottish Brass Band Association as it is an associated member.

Both primary schools have also been “really supportive” in helping recruit more young people.

## **Impact on children and young people**

The Gorbals Youth Brass Band has only recently begun to introduce monitoring and evaluation practices to its work. It received training from Children in Need (one of its funders) on how to collate and present information. It recently conducted some questionnaires with the newest intake of young people. This asked about their

musical experience to date and questions about their confidence when they first came to the Band. A follow up survey was then conducted at the end of term to measure any differences. Overall there was positive feedback from the young people.

**“One girl still finds expressing herself difficult. When she began, she rated her confidence as a 1, and now it’s a 3. It might not look like a significant improvement, but for this girl, the project is really was boosting her confidence.”**

The brass tutors review the information and make changes to the programme based on feedback where appropriate.

We spoke with six young people directly after their instrumental lessons for this case study. All were very positive about their experiences. The young people particularly liked performing and meeting up with their friends each week.

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Young people said that taking part in the Band had made them happier as it gave them somewhere to go after school, but had also increased their confidence and their self-worth by learning new skills and performing.

**“I used to be really shy and not do anything in front of others but the tutors just encouraged me and told me that no-one would laugh and everyone is the same, and it boosted my confidence.”**

Tutors and teachers believed they had witnessed a change in the young people, in that their attitude to music making, as well as confidence and self worth has improved. They had also broadened their horizons more generally through their involvement with the band. Some had never travelled outside of Glasgow before they attended competitions in Perth and Ayr.

**“When they started they would say ‘I can’t do this....I just can’t’. They were just low in self-esteem but it’s massive what they’ve achieved and to see the benefits has been amazing.”**

The tutors also spoke about the camaraderie that exists between the members of the band. Despite coming from different schools, they all mix well together now that they have made friends.





## **Impact on deliverers, the music sector and wider community**

The Gorbals Youth Brass Band is one of few brass bands which began independently and was not borne out of a senior band creating a junior section. It was described as a “flagship” band, with good links to other brass bands in the area.

The Band has also helped to change the image of brass instruments among young people. The young people indicated that they were interested in attending the band initially because it was “different” and something “new” for the area.

**“It was different. There’s nothing like this in the Gorbals.”**

The young people mentioned to us their aspirations to continue playing their brass instruments and some had considered a career in the music sector as a result of their positive experiences at the Gorbals Youth Brass Band.

**“When I’m older I want to move up to trumpet.”**

**“I might open a music store.”**

The families of the young people also recognised the benefits of their children’s involvement in the Band. The young people told us that their parents like to come to watch them perform and can relate to some of the musical pieces the young people learn, and practice at home.

**“My dad likes it when I play Scottish songs – he’s very patriotic.”**

**“My mum cried when she saw me perform at Perth – it was so embarrassing.”**

## **Successes**

Key successes of this programme include:

- the increased confidence of the young people, particularly when performing on stage;
- increased young peoples’ interest in brass instruments; and
- bringing together young people from different backgrounds and have them work together as a team.

It was felt that the dedication and commitment of the volunteers has been the key to all of these successes.

**“No-one was paid and so it has been down to their determination.”**

**“We go to different schools, but we’re friends now.”**

The young people said that one of the great things about the Band was that they could take their instruments home to practice. When they joined the Band they were effectively ‘gifted’ an instrument. This has helped inspire the young people to practice at home.

**“It’s great that we get to take home the instruments and practice. I’d find it tricky if you couldn’t take them home.”**

## **Challenges**

The Gorbals Youth Brass Band has found it challenging to engage the parents and families of the young participants. There are some young people who have been attending the project for some time, whose parents the tutors have not met. However, the tutors are working hard to engage parents by inviting them to attend events and concerts. The tutors have discussed having a stall at school parent’s evening in order to meet with more of the parents.

## **What next?**

There are plans to expand by introducing a percussion element to the Band – particularly drums, which they believe may attract more young men to the band. However there is a storage issue. It currently has a shared cupboard space at the St Francis Centre, but this is becoming unsustainable. Ultimately, they would like to have their own venue.

The Gorbals Youth Brass Band is working towards entering some young people into solo competitions where parents and teachers from each school will be invited to the performances.

It would also like to launch a summer timetable to keep some activities going over the school holidays. Currently the Gorbals Youth Brass Band is a term-time arrangement but they would like to keep the young people engaged over the summer too.