

Creative Scotland

# Youth Music Initiative 2021-2022 Evaluation

Case Studies

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Consulting



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Cover image credit: A.R.Ts Afternoons Pulse of the Place; Mihaela Bodlovic

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# Canongate Youth: Creative Hub

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the notion – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group – of organisations being able to provide a stable, relied-upon community resource based on strong local partnerships, supported by YMI’s longevity of funding and willingness to fund projects repeatedly.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Andrew Porteous, Project lead, Connor McIntosh, Music tutor, and a number of young participants.*

## Introduction to the project

Canongate Youth’s Music Café (known as Creative Hub since February 2022) received YMI Access to Music Making funding within the 2021/22 reporting period for activities between October 2020 and August 2021. Music Café has been YMI-funded for over 10 years and Canongate Youth have run some form of music provision for the past 45 years.

Music Café/Creative Hub is a Friday afternoon drop-in project based in Edinburgh’s Old Town. The service operates from Canongate Youth’s premises, a large building with games room, pool table, space to make food as well as for music making. As Creative Hub, the project extended its service to enable young people to try new things in the creative arts with the original Music Café at its heart. In addition to providing music rehearsal and performance space and tuition, it now includes a recording studio, dance practice rooms, art projects, photography, and video practice. Tutors specialising in teaching different instruments work with individuals or in groups and with bands. Adding photography and film has extended reach, giving opportunities for non-players to participate, such as e.g., doing photoshoots of bands.

Most sessions are joined by around 40 participants with four tutors plus two music assistants, two volunteers, and a youth development worker and artist. Sessions are run on a first come first served basis, although places are reserved for new and disabled young people. Some young people are referred to the project to help with social isolation or communication issues. Each week,

participants are asked for feedback and suggestions to shape the offer wherever possible. As well as making music, participants are working together on the creation of a mural and this artwork is noted by staff as good for introducing people to the place, getting them relaxed before they join in musically.

Tutors run small groups and some work towards special events such as performances at Halloween and Christmas. The Halloween event involves filming before and during the event, with editing after and a premiere at the Christmas performance. Performance is an important element of Creative Hub and participants enjoy that there are many more performance opportunities than at school.



Credit: Stephen Tierney Canongate Youth / Reel Youth Media

## Acting as a community resource for a wide range of participants based on strong local networks

Canongate Youth has well-established links with the local community, having worked in the area since 1977. Although other third sector organisations come and go, they have provided continuity. This has been supported by the repeat

funding they have received from YMI for their youth offer over the years, which has helped the organisation maintain its music focus.

Due to their longevity, Canongate Youth now have a cohort of young people with whom they have long-term relationships, in addition to a changing local cohort. Some participants have attended for a number of years. Since June 2022, 86 different young people attended the YMI-funded Creative Hub in an 8-week period.

Canongate's Creative Hub operates in an area with high indices of multiple deprivation, and for some young people this is their only access to music tuition. Some local schools are underfunded or under-equipped and consequently, links to formal music education among the participants are few. Local schools see Canongate Youth (and the Creative Hub) as a valuable opportunity to which to refer some pupils to support wellbeing. Whilst school music tutors do sometimes contact the project and bring students along to the Creative Hub sessions in their own time, mostly, referrals are made via school guidance staff.

The focus of the Music Café/Creative Hub is older young people (aged 12 to 18), but Canongate Youth also offer one-off special work (not YMI-funded) with local primary schools, where they have run two singing classes. Staff highlighted that this activity acts as a valuable 'feeder' when the pupils reach an age to join youth projects such as the Creative Hub.

The Hub tries to accommodate what young people want and has built relationships with other organisations in their building and locality to broaden their offer. This in turn has drawn new participants to the project. One partner organisation, Totally Sound, runs a Saturday music project (also YMI-funded) and band members interviewed for the case study cited that connection as their route to the Hub. Participants move across from one project to another, referred by friends or staff, and the partnership is beneficial for both organisations and their communities. Another organisation, Reel Youth Media, runs after school projects where young people learn how to film and photograph bands and music makers at the Creative Hub. Participants can learn photography and video skills at both Reel Youth and Creative Hub and sometimes the organisations partner up to provide more for young people. There is also a good partnership with

Edinburgh Carnival, where some of the bands have played to their biggest audiences – up to 1000 people.

Such organisational partnerships have also helped bring in local LGBT youth to the project, whilst other participants have been attracted to the Creative Hub via collaboration with outdoor and climate change projects. Young people can struggle with identity and with planet destruction – involvement in action can help alleviate associated anxiety.



Credit: Stephen Tierney Canongate Youth / Reel Youth Media

### **Promoting volunteering and traineeships at the project to build confidence and create opportunities**

Project leader Andrew is keen to get young people volunteering and can see the benefits in confidence this engenders. Music tutors also encourage volunteering, seeing participants gaining confidence in themselves and in what they can deliver through helping others.

Young people apply for volunteer roles and are given training to enable them to see what the role involves. Some later progress to becoming youth workers. One former participant, starting at age 11, became a volunteer, then a trainee and is now a full-time youth worker. Another is becoming a music tutor.



Credit: Stephen Tierney Canongate Youth / Reel Youth Media

The project also has two full-time paid trainees. Applicants are often from players who want to teach but lack experience. The project seeks those who are passionate about their work and keen to help – especially those who are disabled. Music trainees have opportunities in running youth work for younger children, for example karaoke sessions for 5-year-olds or teaching basic drum lessons to a group of 10-year-olds. Sessions offered depend on the needs/wants of young people and children.

Traineeships are advertised and local schools, groups and partners are alerted when opportunities arise. Several trainees previously worked as volunteers on the project.

“ I just signed up to volunteer – I enjoy coming here, like to help out, want to do more. (Participant)

## Participation in more ‘informal’ music activity enables social interaction and confidence-building, thereby impacting wellbeing

The organisation works on the principle that self-recognition of change is the most significant sign of progression. Knowing you are heading in the right direction, rather than being told so by others, is a major step.

Wellbeing referrals made by schools initially introduce young people into the space and to socialising with others. Based on this, they may then start coming to the Creative Hub, joining in sessions and performances. In some cases, participants have even formed their own bands. Some bands include young people from different schools and different areas of the city who would otherwise not have met. Others arrive with contacts from school but develop their music in different ways, exploring what they want to learn instead of being curriculum focused.

“ It’s fun here. My dad was like, you can practice here but the neighbours said no. (Participant)

“ I used to be quite unsociable but here you meet people you’re interested in.” (Participant)

According to staff, confidence boosting, building mature relationships and making friends are enabled by attendance at the Creative Hub, supported by tutors and staff. Project leader Andrew’s focus as a youth worker is mental health and wellbeing. Canongate aims to provide a safe space and welcome newcomers, finding that some participants facing difficulties might prefer to talk to a youth worker rather than someone at school or home. Some participants are neuro-diverse, and some participants have experienced past trauma and need safeguarding measures to prevent individuals from being triggered by certain actions or events. One young Creative Hub participant who hadn’t spoken in public for six years joined and played keyboards. She has now progressed, at her instigation, to singing. This was a major step and tutors at school have noticed the positive difference. Both schools and Canongate Youth

recognise that social elements impact on school performance and how fostering confidence enables students to come out of their shell, with positive impacts on individuals. In another example, a participant asked how to make friends and youth workers spent time discussing life and offering mental health support. By the following year, he had a new friendship group, became a punk musician, and now embraces life in a way he hadn't accessed before.

Music tutor Connor understands how enabling young people to cope with social isolation and anxiety through music can impact their lives:

“ Some were very anxious when they arrived – but sitting in a room together, playing together, they start to feel comfortable with each other. All of a sudden, they can go outside and have a meal together and stuff like that. (Connor McIntosh, *Music tutor*)

Performance as well as informal, participant-focused teaching is key to helping young people achieve confidence, a sense of fulfilment, and with it improved mental wellbeing. As such, music tutors focus on achievements through music participation but there is also a focus on confidence and personal development in their tuition too. Potential is seen to grow through regular attendance, with young people acting in a space of their own, learning and developing together, able to focus on what they want to achieve.

“ Informality is a big thing here. People come with requests to learn specific songs. School tuition is more individual but here group work develops naturally – someone wants to learn a particular song on guitar, might mention to a drummer and ask if fancy joining in – sessions build up that way. So do friendships and teamwork. Pushing towards a goal, learning a song or performing, helps that. (Connor McIntosh, *Music tutor*)

“ Learning music here is more relaxed than school. You want to learn and they help you learn, but at school it's more like setting

targets and you're measured by success. Here it's more practical stuff. (*Participant*)

Various projects then bring different teams and groups together. One performance focused on John Lennon's song *Imagine* in order to showcase the talents of different groups, with different instruments taking different parts of the song, filmed by other participants. Recently, participants also held a gig where many who previously were socially isolated were performers front and centre. Staff highlighted that they see participation in performances as helping young people deal with things going wrong: by having to keep moving and keeping up with bandmates, they understand how to recover and learn from mistakes.

### Renewed enthusiasm and a supportive atmosphere post-Covid

Post-pandemic, all participants were desperate to get back to Friday sessions. The project kept in touch via email and in order to restart face-to-face sessions, they ran a week-long event with Totally Sound, which attracted mostly new people. Attendance was slow to come back but is now at record highs.

The team found that many struggled with isolation. Post-pandemic, leaders have noticed more neurodiverse people attending. Andrew believes this serves a major need within their community. They have the skills to bring young neurodiverse people into the provision although this wasn't something they were driving for but rather something that has happened naturally. Now they can tell young people that there are neurodiverse young people within the group, and they can come and be themselves in a safe environment. One example is of an autistic boy who attended but didn't participate, merely enjoying being in the project space. Recently he requested a volunteering role, is now actively participating, and is a role model for others in the group, helping people feel at ease. For others the experience of isolation during Covid has been positive in spurring them on to participate more, now that in-person sessions have resumed.

## Learning gained/ the project going forwards

Staff are keen to develop more and deeper partnerships, for example with Reel Youth Media and Totally Sound. This could enable cooperation on a larger scale or allow for the running of joint services which could extend reach and scale for all partners.

Spreading their activities beyond music tuition and performance has attracted new participants and led many into music in a way hitherto untapped. Canongate see this as a potential area for consolation and perhaps even growth, extending partnerships with non-music related youth organisations in the locality.

## Reflections on YMI

Canongate staff felt highly positive about YMI funding, which has become a mainstay of their income stream over years. In particular, they highlighted the fund's ability to repeat fund, its manageable reporting demands, its helpful, supportive and flexible staff, and its relatively hands-off approach:

“ YMI has lots of amazing elements, they leave us to deliver, they're not hovering over us. They do a good job. (Andrew Porteous, *Project leader*)

However, the team noted as a key challenge YMI's one-year funding cycle, which means that although projects can re-apply, they must do so on an annual basis, leading to insecurity. This, for example, means that the project cannot be fully continuous over the summer and one big challenge is whether participants will return after the break. Lack of continuity means that it can take a couple of weeks to get back up to speed. Running a longer project would lessen that impact.

The project manager also noted the impact that shorter-term funding has on staffing – in terms of staff time to apply annually for support as well as the inability to offer more than sessional contracts to tutors and other staff. A longer funding cycle would enable retention of staff and allow them to plan growth and organisational development. The fact that they have accessed YMI funds for a

number of years has enabled individual staff growth and development, but this is largely unplanned given the insecurity of multi-year funding. One music tutor for example started working with Canongate post-university as a volunteer, building up skills as well as expanding his CV and is now a regular tutor with sessional contracts. He has expanded his music focused role to include youth work and is progressing to managing some projects, taking on leadership roles. This has happened naturally at Canongate.

If funding-cycles were longer, staff could have longer, more secure contracts and this would enhance Canongate's ability to retain experienced staff, who are sometimes lost because people need job security. They run a 36-week plan – multi-year funding would enable longer planning and they would go for, say, 100-week blocks. They are therefore keen to explore multi-year funding.

“ I have to go where the funding is. Luckily my girlfriend has a proper job so we can get a mortgage, others can't. (Connor McIntosh, *Music tutor*)

# Limelight Music: Designs on Performance

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the notion – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group – of YMI supporting the creation of links between formal and informal music instruction, impacting formal music tuition and resulting in mutual benefits.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Fletcher Mather, Programme director, Cat Kirk, Workshop coordinator, Gerry Rossi, General manager and director, and Matt Goatley, Project manager.*

## Introduction to the project

Limelight Music has been working with YMI for many years and currently delivers between five and ten YMI projects across Scotland annually, working with around 14 schools. This study focuses on Designs for Performance, funded via YMI's Formula Fund in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. The project is aimed at children in P5 to P7 and delivered in 26 weekly sessions at Addiewell and Stoneyburn Primary Schools in West Lothian, culminating in an exhibition at [Linlithgow Burgh Halls Gallery](#) (virtual tour of the exhibition here: [Designs on Performance | Jo Ganter and Raymond MacDonald - West Lothian Council](#)).

The project merged music with graphic arts, based on a collaboration between Limelight staff and visual artist Jo Ganter, with children learning to create unique musical 'visual/graphic scores' to be interpreted and performed by themselves.

The project was designed three years ago but delayed by the Covid pandemic. During the first year's production (in 20-21), Limelight delivered a 26-week online programme with videos made in-house to take children through to completion. Whilst the results of the online delivery were fair, they knew value could be added by in-person delivery, as originally designed and reverted to this as soon as possible. This year, the programme was therefore delivered in person, as originally designed. Four workshops of 45 minutes were delivered in school each week. During the 20/21 delivery there was however another five-week Covid lockdown during Christmas and schools were inaccessible, so

tuition videos were again produced and made available to the schools to maintain momentum.

Sessions were delivered by a workshop leader and assistant, with the interim attendance of a trainee. In addition, a visual arts practitioner tutored for 12 of the 27 weeks, scheduled at regular intervals throughout the course of the project. Sessions began with warm-up games and songs to relax but also to have time to think about music and what participants like, whether they sing etc. Children then learned rhythms and played tunes using voices, clapping, tambourines, bells, wind chimes, drums and found objects like pens, pencil cases, bowls, cups, sticks, empty plastic water bottles. Working with artist Jo Ganter, they considered what individual sounds might look like and then created symbols for rhythms and instruments. Finally, they drew music pictures for the exhibition at Linlithgow Burgh Halls.

The intention was that the project would culminate with a live performance at the exhibition, but the venue experienced a flood, necessitating a schedule change. Children were not able to attend the rescheduled exhibition, so the project photographed each child and their drawings as a final activity. Each child received their own photo in a card format along with a link to use a mobile phone to play their own graphic score composition which was embedded into the photos using Live Portrait App.

## Reaching and maintaining engagement through playful, informal, creative, inclusive sessions

Limelight work mostly in primary schools and their approach focuses on learning through play and self-expression. Workshop leaders noted that although merging art and music may not seem intuitive, especially for this age group, it was a concept that pupils quickly grasped. Visual artist Jo Ganter joined the project once workshop leaders had introduced the concept and worked on some rhythms. In each session, Jo and the participants created symbols representing rhythms they had invented. She introduced concepts of abstraction, enabling them to think beyond literal graphic representation.



For Jo, this form of collaborative working was special and enabled music to be made from drawings as they were developing (for example, children drew a wavy line and workshop leader Fletcher sang it). She felt that music was a great way to introduce ideas as well as to express emotions. Some children found the music more accessible, others the art. Even the shy kids joined in – normally told to be quiet – but not for this, thanks to the project’s approach which meant it had something for everybody. This was particularly pertinent as prolonged lockdown resulted in some children being more reticent to join in and express themselves, having been isolated for so long.

Sitting in a circle, working together whatever their ability and without the use of written texts, participants gained confidence and self-esteem as well as demonstrating increased concentration – impacts considered as just as important as playing music itself. Tutors found children focused and engaged even in difficult circumstances (such as a very echoey room). Simple instruments such as bells were particularly good at launching involvement even for those who were reluctant to participate initially. Elsewhere, tutors can sit with individual children who are clearly keen to improve but are struggling. In one example, a child with ADHD, who worked with Limelight’s drummer, sat and focused in a way that their teacher had never seen before. For some, simply staying in the room is an achievement not otherwise reached.

“ I’m Katie and I enjoyed learning about music – it isn’t just sound, it’s art. *(Participant)*

“ I’m 9 years old and I really liked Limelight – it was fun and exciting. We learned about different things as well as music. *(Participant)*

Limelight’s staff approach children in a very different way to teaching staff and therefore aren’t perceived as teachers. Workshop delivery methods were playful, enabling children who don’t respond well to formal teaching approaches to participate. This is not an academic approach. There is no musical or artistic theory delivered directly to children although there is theory behind Limelight’s practice. There are no written scores or words, so no barriers for those with

difficulties reading. Limelight tutors don’t know anything about individual children when they join the project and some can be resistant to questioning about issues that touch on home, such as discussions about favorite music or whether they sing at home. While this can be a barrier to progression, for this project, art was a way of bringing everyone on board and together.



Credit: John Wilson Photography

“ I drew this art piece. The first time I did Limelight I didn’t know what to do but once I picked it up a bit more it’s really fun. *(Participant)*

One of the experienced workshop leaders initially had reservations about the project, wondering if it included too many elements. Delivery quickly reassured him and now he would roll it out in each school in Scotland as it’s such a good project and so inclusive.

“ There were no obstacles for the children – they understood and came up with a piece of music but enjoyed being playful too. Using graphic representation children understood if they draw

something it makes a particular noise. (Fletcher Mather, *Workshop leader*)

As workshop leader Fletcher further noted, *“this proves that music can be accessed in so many ways. It’s fun. If they didn’t like drawing, they could have fun scribbling lines that I could sing. Draw a shape and it becomes a sound. Then they understood how musicians would interpret their music. Lots of singing, loads of drawing, something for everyone – that is the appeal of this project.”*

### **Sector development based on training and collaboration between core staff and artists brought in for the project**

Limelight staff are musicians and actors, for whom the visual arts angle and involvement of visual artist Jo Ganter in this project was new. This went so well that they would repeat and extend this alongside inclusion of other artforms in the future.

To support this new element, tutors were trained in key areas prior to the workshop sessions. Similarly, trainees and workshop assistants learned the techniques of producing graphic scores and interpreting visual art into music. This included how to create music and soundscapes; informed using colour, shape and form. A strong emphasis was how to interpret mood, atmosphere, and individual expression. This preparation was key to successful delivery. All tutors were also trained in the creation of digital content, used in the form of workshop videos, when access to the schools wasn’t permitted during periods of lockdown.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, Limelight staff also reported that they learned ‘by doing’ through merging disciplines, led by the artist.

“ Watching Jo, I learnt a lot, about art and different approaches to engagement. (Fletcher Mather, *Workshop leader*)

The project leaders Fletcher and Cat are both actors. One works as a professional actor as well as having worked with Limelight for about 12 years, while the other has been with Limelight for four years, initially starting with a placement whilst studying acting at Edinburgh College. She now combines Limelight projects with youth work at Stellar Quines Theatre Company. Both often work with YMI and feel that they learn something new with each project. They enjoyed this project’s unique learning opportunity of working together with an artist. They noted that the artist worked in a completely different way to themselves but felt this complemented what they do. For example, they noted the calm and quiet approach of the artist in working with very active, engaging children.



Credit: John Wilson Photography

<sup>1</sup> Examples of some of these tuition videos can be viewed here: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eJD\\_ueMwwXa3Php0vKEiVcxuCwMk70Zv](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eJD_ueMwwXa3Php0vKEiVcxuCwMk70Zv)

Likewise, visual artist Jo Ganter says she learned a lot, gaining confidence filming each week and enjoying the face-to-face delivery of the project. She works as an abstract artist who also teaches at Edinburgh College of Art and specializes in graphic scores, a pictorial representation of music. This was Jo's first project with Limelight and YMI, and also the first time in many years that she has worked with children. Her previous experience with this age group was an Artists in Schools project focusing solely on art. This time, working with music to create graphic scores enabled her to support children to invent and depict their own connections, working together and building teams. She enjoyed learning about the different approaches to storytelling through imagery that children employ – some would simply use an image to depict a sound while others used elaborate storytelling to weave a tale within their score.

Lastly, the project deliverers also noted that they gained skills resulting from the need to adapt to Covid restrictions. The project was delivered first online because of lockdown restrictions. Delivery was again broken in the second year by a further lockdown at Christmas '21, resulting in the need to make new tuition videos. Making these was entirely new for Limelight and they learned new skills and methods of working. Now they have these skills they will consider using them as part of future delivery of other projects.

### **Though based at school, Limelight sees low engagement among teachers, resulting in limited opportunities to raise awareness of the impact of their approach**

Limelight work with different schools for each project and are particularly keen to work in areas with high indices of multiple deprivation to ensure their offer reaches those who need it most. To this end, they do not provide after-school clubs but rather aim for delivery during school time, as they want to reach all, rather than just those who *want* to play music.

During delivery itself, there are often few links to the school. Some teachers observe and take notes or help vulnerable students, but Limelight has found that many are reluctant to join in, having little knowledge or confidence with music and feeling too vulnerable to participate. Moreover, teacher workload is stressful, so the opportunity to fulfil other tasks whilst workshop staff take the

class is invaluable for time-poor teachers and Limelight staff understand this dilemma.

However, workshop staff are keen for teachers to join in and see and understand the impact their work is having on the children. Not least, teacher involvement can also offer the encouragement of a trusted adult to those who might feel vulnerable joining in a new project. Usually, prior to delivery, Limelight staff therefore go to meet teachers and impress on them how beneficial it would be for them to join; although recently, Covid restrictions prevented workshop staff meeting teachers prior to the beginning of this project delivery. Even when this is possible, whilst Limelight has seen this interaction encourage some teacher participation, they nevertheless noted that few take up the offer and so do not see first-hand the impact on their students. However, when they do receive teacher feedback, some say how amazed they are at what children learned using informal methods and how children that are less academic can excel, suggesting the value of engaging teachers in these activities in letting them experience the impact of other forms of tuition.

“ The whole team have been fantastic when working with the class. They are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and flexible when working under school COVID guidance, even doing online lessons when we couldn't have visitors in the building. The children have had a great experience with everyone and [we] hope the group continue to get funding to provide quality music tuition with future groups of children. *(P7 teacher)*

In the experience of the workshop leaders, it is very rare for primary schools to offer music education internally, unless there is a teacher with a particular interest or passion for music. Most rely on external providers such as Limelight. Head teachers are sometimes very active but often teachers received no music experience during their own training, and so are not given the skills or confidence to use it as a learning tool. This feels, to Limelight staff, like a key barrier to engagement. Schools may have musical instruments if there is a budget. Limelight does not work with expensive instruments, but with drumsticks, bells, plastic tubes, simple inexpensive instruments playable by all,

instead of keyboards, guitars, etc. In an effort to promote ongoing activity outside of their own sessions, Limelight leaves the musical instruments at the schools for the teachers to use as a means of complementing the project but have not received feedback on usage.

### Learning gained/ the project going forwards

Interviewees highlighted a number of challenges as well as successes of the project, which they felt provided valuable insight for any potential future projects that Limelight will deliver:

- A key challenge, especially during the early stages of the project, was building confidence and getting students to open up and feel free to express themselves. While a great deal of this early reticence was related to the lockdown periods during the previous academic year, which resulted in pupils not attending school for extended periods as well as severely reduced opportunities for social interaction, this suggests that it is worth building in time to support confidence building at the beginning of the projects.
- The workshop leads felt strongly that if they delivered the project again, they would be keen to collaborate with an artist on a similar basis again. The project benefitted from the expertise an artist brought to the process, enabling children to learn different techniques and to explore abstraction and to use emotion to drive their images rather than simply graphic representation. Through involvement of an artist, students became artists as well as composers. Use of improvisation rather than formal training allowed them to achieve something (a composition) which previously students thought beyond their grasp. The project also created groups without hierarchy and used and learned printing techniques, computer design, colour coding music and use of shapes to represent rhythm. Jo's style of delivery was quieter, more individual and this provided a good contrast to the more forthright, active style used to bring the musical elements together.
- The exhibition at Linlithgow Burgh Halls art gallery was a major success, which allowed audiences to follow visuals and how they are interpreted musically. If there had been no access to an art gallery locally the end focus

would have been different, perhaps an exhibition within the school. In this case, the difficulties of scheduling the exhibition meant that school term ended before the exhibition opened, so Limelight photographed each student with their instruments as a final focus. Each child was given a copy of their photograph and feedback from families was particularly appreciative of this.

Going forwards, the project, as it is currently designed, needs 26 weeks delivery; however, West Lothian schools have indicated that for the forthcoming year they would prefer 13-week blocks. This may mean that Limelight will need to redesign the project in order to be able to deliver further Designs on Performance projects to other schools.

## A.R.Ts Afternoon: Pulse of the Place

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the notion – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group – of YMI providing opportunities for young people to progress, by creating pathways of long-term projects through which young people can move as they older and progress.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Rohan Seilman, Project Leader, a parent of a long-term participant (who wished to stay anonymous), and Laura Thomson, Head Teacher at Victoria Primary School, Leith.*

### Introduction to the project

Pulse of the Place is an open access, out of school drumming project in Edinburgh and Lothian which has been funded by YMI's Access to Music Making for several years. Participants are from P5 onwards, with occasional referrals as young as P3, mostly because of low confidence or poor socialisation. As well as the after-school clubs and band, Pulse of Place includes a Friday session for beginners, and more advanced players run this open group, which brings in participants from across different schools. There are also some out-of-school groups for more senior participants from across schools. Participants often maintain long term relationships with the project, joining in primary and continuing until leaving high school.

'After-school' for this project means right after school to avoid any need for additional pick up and thus enabling participation for all. Although the limited time of the sessions - one hour - makes it challenging to engage individually, tutors provide a safe environment in which participants leave feeling confident to engage after the club or at other times.

The project has operated at some schools for seven years. When coming to new schools, and even at times where established, they run tasters during the school day, targeted at certain years, to encourage sign up. Some pupils join because they want to play drums, others because there is nothing else to do. For project leader Rohan both reasons are okay – they introduce participants to

the drums and to playing as part of a band and all are welcome. The supporting staff on the project are music tutors and lead tutor, Sarah, has very detailed knowledge of Samba and its history as well as its musicality. With some schools they do more complex projects, looking, for example, at links between slavery and drumming.

Teaching is primarily through demonstration and a system of hand signals, starting with simple rhythms, adding in other elements as drummers become more adept. Tutors can see very good improvement over time. Project leader Rohan's forte is engagement rather than drumming and he notes that he is happy to admit when children have become better drummers than he is.

The end aspect is performance and bands have participated in gala parades locally and at Edinburgh Carnival. A.R.Ts Afternoon feels that performance is important and helps change adult attitudes to young people.



Credit: Rohan Seilman, Pulse of the Place – Princes Street Gardens

## Ensuring an accessible project that is open to all

The project works primarily in areas registering high indices of multiple deprivation, though many schools have a mix of students with different backgrounds (such as Tranent and Victoria in Leith). Laura Thomson, head teacher at Victoria Primary in Leith celebrates that the group at her school is very inclusive, with children and young people from different ethnic backgrounds participating and their Ukrainian newcomers all keen to join. For her, music from around world helps foster inclusivity.

“ We recruit a high number of ethnic minorities (17% in a city with 2% in population) [...] I'm an ethnic minority and that gives them a connection. (Rohan Seilman, *Project leader*)

Rohan believes auditioning is wrong for schools and sees barriers created to participation when children apply for instrument tuition and don't succeed. They should not, in his opinion, be made to feel they have failed. For this reason, there are no auditions or fees at A.R.Ts Afternoon. Students self-select rather than being filtered by tutors. Parents who can afford to donate may do so, but this is not linked to participation. Rohan notes that they had been going to New York when the pandemic hit; they are now aiming to do so in April 23. However, Rohan has some reservations as young people will have to contribute to the costs, contravening the free to participate ethos. At the original scheduled time all senior players signed up and did fundraisers, some parents and local businesses also contributed. Classes remain free and Rohan wishes to maintain this ease of access wherever possible.

As young people participate in the project, they have the opportunity to perform as a band, with participants from a variety of schools who have met at the out-of-school sessions. Drumming gives a central communication point, which can be a basis for making friends with other young people they wouldn't meet otherwise.

In one school, the project attracted some of the most difficult kids and one drummer said that he was surprised not to be shouted at and expected strict discipline. Rohan's response was that he didn't want to run a project like that,

the students knew how to behave, and his job was to teach drumming. This worked and turned that band around, and they became self-disciplined.

“ Drumming is an equalizer. Anyone can hit a drum. It's not school – our approach is very different, informal, first names. Failing kids have been turned around by involvement. (Rohan Seilman, *Project leader*)

Although playing together forms close bonds, Rohan doesn't like to call groups 'family' as for many that's not a good analogy. Rohan feels the worst part of the job is when kids in care get moved on and they lose contact. In some cases, they could have remote contact but at times even that isn't facilitated or allowed by the young people's services.

The project also works in additional needs schools where there are a range of young people, some of whom have not previously engaged with any other music-making activities. Of those, some were drawn out of their shell by involvement in the drumming project. These can be small steps, but huge improvements for some children / young people. They have seen some participants demonstrate significant development over the years. For example, one child who has not talked for years after being repeatedly bullied has now passed exams at school and is a competent player which encourages others. He has been with The Drum Club Project since P5 (age 10). He is now 17, has left school and is more confident working with other organisations such as Action for Children, even though still non-verbal.

## Growing confidence is key to progression

When considering progression, Rohan feels confidence is the most important asset. Confidence is transferable and helps in all aspects of life. During Covid, confidence in many was lost and getting this back has taken a while. Rohan feels that there has been a severe impact on young people, with lack of socialisation creating long-term damage. However, A.R.Ts Afternoon managed to maintain some elements of activity, which were successful. For example, they put on a bubble carnival with Edinburgh Carnival, which brought costumes and filmed the groups.

“ We had to change initially, working with class bubbles as there were no after school clubs, so some schools did them in class time. It was different but helped maintain contact. Some venues where we have performed still haven't reopened. (Rohan Seilman, *Project leader*)

While teaching, Rohan reports telling lots of jokes and making silly comments – he's the boss but also the silly one, while the music tutors are more sensible. He knows participant confidence is coming up when he gets comeback on his silliness. This way quiet children become more visible. After he had a stroke, Rohan feels that the kids and project helped him pull through. *“There is no medicine like the buzz of working with young people to drum and play in a band.”* To him, watching confidence and skill grow is a tonic. As confidence grows, they come to talk about other things happening in their lives, usually something that happened at school. He helps build resilience and confidence to enable them to deal with bullying if it happens again. Kids of 14 to 15 years of age especially are dealing with very difficult things in life, and he has seen talking help them with this.

Rohan believes that in this, being part of a band is important. The project thus works to build a band first, and within that to build the individuals. Some will go away and practice between sessions and are able to add grace notes to the complexity of the rhythms, but tutors do not expect them to do that – they do it because they want to progress. This sets a foundation, and they understand their ability / confidence enables them to do more complex things.

The design of the programme includes indirect involvement of the children as tutors listen to what they say about what works and what doesn't work, building towards events that the players themselves have chosen because they would like to play there. They started a youth committee, but Rohan didn't want participants to feel they are attending a “committee meeting” which could be off-putting. This initiative had just started pre-pandemic and coming back it is changing to become a senior group who have ideas and advise what they'd like to do.

## Different age groups come together, with more senior participants supporting younger participants

Primary school groups tend to be all from one school. However, at the open Friday session for beginners, the advanced / senior players support new participants which pupils from a number of different schools attend. Senior groups also come together from different schools, often with very different backgrounds, but seeing them play together tutors feel that these differences are not obvious.



Credit: Jim Nisbet, Ainsley – Make Music Day

One residential group included 36 players from different schools for 3 days – from age 10 to age 17. These were from very different schools, but by the end of the first day, all were mixing, and older participants helped out younger players.

### **Moving participants through the project by creating a foundation at primary school and providing dedicated support to individuals**

Pulse of Place, the band, includes primary as well as secondary school for pupils aged around 10 to 17. Supported by regular funding over the years, this means that the project has created a pathway that pupils can move along within the project as they grow older and progress musically. Many participants stay with the project from primary through to secondary school and beyond. Remaining with the project during the transition from primary to high school offers continuity at a time of great change in their lives.

By going into primary schools, Rohan believes they are giving participants a chance to participate in arts activities and share the joy it can give, introducing them to a world of music that can bring both recreational fun but also potential career development as they progress through school. By enabling participation, they are introduced to music, realise they can do it, and get over any hurdle that auditioning can give through rejection and selection. This is music for all from a young age, and when players attend secondary school, they may have confidence to ask for instrument tuition. Moving on, the project has seen several former participants move into related youth work or music careers, including some who have come back post-school to support the project. Rohan managed and mentored people through work placements from Community Jobs Scotland. One now has an arts job with his church, enabled by voluntary work with A.R.Ts. Afternoon. Another former participant now is a support youth worker with the project, having started as a player at P6 (age 11). Now she is a very good drummer and community worker. In a third example, another former participant now leads Edinburgh Samba School. It's a volunteer post as musical director, but means he is putting together their programme and guiding future direction. He's also a tutor with other groups as sessional tutor (paid work).

Moreover, Rohan and the team put in a lot of work to support individual participants, keen for them to be able to maintain engagement in the project over the years, even where challenges present themselves. This is strongly evidenced by the following example.

#### **One participant's journey over time**

One participant, now aged 15, started with Pulse of the Place in P6 at age 11. Drumming has become *"one of her things"* according to her parents and has been there through the project throughout her education in good and difficult times.

*"These projects are there when things don't go well. They need funding."*

When younger she had stage fright, was shy and self-conscious. Yet very early in her involvement, when Pulse of the Place did a performance at Queens Hall, she was chosen to come on first and chat with Rohan to introduce the audience to the project. This was possible because he had built a rapport with her.

In P7 she became ill and was diagnosed eventually with Crohn's disease. Previously very sporty and outgoing, she had even gone to Liverpool with the drum group without family, demonstrating independence. Illness brought on a very difficult time with low energy at a time just prior to transition to high school, eventually leading to her stopping school altogether due to poor health. Despite her non-attendance at drum club, Rohan would come along to pupil support meetings with her family. His help was much better than that of the school itself. He gave her a drum kit to have at home while ill and one of the young leaders gave her lessons at home. Those weekly drum sessions were special, she had little other contact with young people at a time when that was what she really needed.

*"Rohan is a funny and engaging guy and keeps in contact even with those no longer drumming. He cares."* (Parent)

She was making physical progress, then came lockdown. Online contact kept her in the loop, which was so important. By the end of the second lockdown, she was gaining strength and returned to attending drum clubs



on site. This was a hard time for everyone getting back together and they drummed in carparks so could have social distancing.

Now she is back full time at school and fully participating in drumming groups, helping her with the rest of school by maintaining confidence. Her best friends are from drum club. Previously she was isolated socially while ill, but even then, kept in touch as she could with drumming friends. As her parent observed, drumming *“reaches parts other things can’t. Drumming rhythms tune into the body and heartbeat which is great for mental health”*.

*“My daughter is now taking drumming lessons at school too. Making music is huge for her. It is hard to remember how isolated she was. Now she goes uptown with drumming friends. Some are from different schools she wouldn’t have met otherwise”*. (Parent)

Pulse of the Place support over the years has proven invaluable for this participant. She volunteered as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award. She loves music, is always drumming and now does music production too.

### **Some teachers lack confidence to get involved, although an example suggests that schools understand the value of the project**

Though based at schools, teacher contact for most projects is minimal, as sessions are after school. Even at taster sessions, teachers sometimes do not feel confident enough to join in. Heads and deputy heads are often the exception and through YMI the project has been able to add schools where teachers who they previously worked with have moved to.

One head teacher who has worked with Arts Afternoon for a number of years is Laura Thomson of Victoria Primary in Leith. Her feedback highlights the value of getting teachers to see the impact that the project can have on their pupils. Victoria Primary hold an annual gala and Pulse of the Place has a significant presence each year, adding to the celebratory atmosphere. Laura would be keen to expand the offer at her school to more clubs.

She notes that working with Rohan is a wonderful experience and highlights the project’s ability to bring in and help children grow. Laura says she can see in the children’s faces how involved they are and event participation such as playing at galas and up town is important and helps confidence growth. She reports that teachers have commented on this, too. Pupils are highly enthusiastic about the project. The band has paraded outside school ensuring that the community feel involved. Pupils now at high school return as helpers, working with those from P4 onwards. In another example, one class was so enthusiastic that they now have a drum kit in the classroom

“ He is very good and encourages those who normally don’t attend groups. Those are sometimes the vulnerable kids, those with low self-esteem. Rohan and staff are really supportive, and the child’s growth is amazing. One only regularly attends school on drum club days. (Laura Thomson, *Head of Victoria Primary*)

Laura feels that the children value her engagement in the project and like her to hear them, but despite the strong presence of the project at her school, she notes that confidence levels among teachers to get involved vary.

### **YMI and the future for the project**

YMI forms the total funding for the project other than donations and event fundraising. Rohan feels the funding is fantastic and the idea of YMI is crucial for success: it is about engagement, not excellence. Excellence may come through engagement but isn’t the driver.

Longer funding would be beneficial, and he would be keen to explore the potential for regular funding, which would allow them to plan to work with individuals and schools for longer. Rohan feels that such consistency is important: especially during the move from primary to secondary when all else is changing, working with adults known to students is good, especially for those who might share anxieties they have. In turn they pass the word around that tutors can help.

Moreover, changing adult minds about what young people can do is a major part of what they do and to this end, performances are the 'icing'. Group work is the central part and to maintain this successfully, funding longevity is important.

## Mull Music Makers

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the notion – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group – of organisations being able to provide a stable, relied-upon community resource based on strong local partnerships, supported by YMI's longevity of funding and willingness to fund projects repeatedly.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Laura Mandleberg, Project Lead, Patsy Reid, a tutor on the programme, Marian Lloyd, another of the tutors on the programme, and Gordon Maclean, a long-time partner of the programme in the community.*

### Introduction to the project

Mull Music Makers ('Mull Music') is a project which was set up by Laura Mandleberg and parent charity *Sound Waves*, in 2013. At this time, Laura was a parent of two small children and signed her son, aged five, up for a summer school run by *Sound Waves*.

While not based on the island of Mull, *Sound Waves* organises activity around music education and development for young professional musicians. Their main activity is the Mendelssohn on Mull Festival, which is focused on a week-long mentorship for young professional string players by groups of professional musicians. Alongside this, *Sound Waves* organised an annual summer school for children local to Mull where children were taught music through workshops and a final concert.

Seeing the confidence and enjoyment her son had in taking part, Laura felt she had to start looking for other music activities she could get him involved with and that's when Mull Music was created. Doing more research, Laura saw no local opportunities for young kids to pursue music on Mull. She contacted *Sound Waves* and came across YMI funding and did a pilot workshop to scope out interest and the workshop was fully booked. Now Mull Music is in their eighth year, with seven of those years supported by YMI.

Laura explained that Mull Music had to start from a blank slate, which came with challenges and the need to create a bespoke programme which recognises the lack of similar opportunity on the island. Most kids came with little previous musical experience and with limited access to tutors on Mull. Laura recruited tutors involved with *Sound Waves*' summer school, growing the tutor pool eventually through recommendations. During term time, monthly two-day weekend workshops take place every five to six weeks a year, in addition to a summer school linked to the one created by *Sound Waves* earlier on. Children and young people involved range from five to seventeen years old. Now, Mull Music has a cohort of young musicians which have been with the programme since its inception, who started out when they were about eight and are now sixteen years old.



Credit: Laura Mandleberg / Mull Music Makers

## Bridging geographic and financial divides

When asked if Mull Music targets any particular group, Laura cited geographic isolation as the primary issue for children and young people to access music education and services. The Isle of Mull is on the west coast of Scotland in the council area of Argyll and Bute. With a population of around 2,000 people, it not only has a small population, but people live quite spread out from each other. In addition to geographic barriers, Mull also has areas of social and economic deprivation, that tend to not show up in the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as the island is not densely populated and these areas are therefore not as visible.

Mull Music aims to bridge the geographic and financial divide by providing their workshops for free and working with the Ross of Mull and Iona Transport Scheme (ROMICTS) based on the island, in addition to a hired electric car and minibus. Mull Music pays for these forms of transport to enable children and young people to access workshops at the weekend and lessen the financial strain on parents.

Experiencing the joy of music-making, especially in a group setting with children from across Mull, has been essential to Mull Music's values. Laura noted the social benefits that result from kids coming from all over the island to meet together across the seven primary schools on Mull. Through the project, Laura has witnessed how *"friendships form in front of your eyes"* among students who may not have met otherwise as there is little organised activity encouraging this level of engagement among young students.

Marian Lloyd, a tutor who taught on the project in 2013 until 2016 and then started again in the last year, noted the gap Mull Music has filled in the community's music provision for young people.

“ [Children at MMM] just want to play and play and play whatever it is they're doing. And that is completely different from when I was first involved in music in Mull. I've been involved with Mull's music generally not just Music Makers over the last twenty years. When I first go there, there were a few local people who

were very into local music and kids' music. But there's only one or two of those people [and] when they leave ... suddenly nothing ... The project has provided this continuity which means that on an island where music is so important traditionally ... there is this big cohort of kids who not only play but have an interest in music and [an] appreciation for music. (Marian Lloyd, *Music tutor*)

## Importance of tutors dedicated to keeping the balance between music provision that is dynamic, collaborative, and technically rigorous

Working on the project has not been without challenges, but Mull Music aims to ensure that there is sustained engagement with music education, and tutors have been essential to seeing that aim through. Laura explained that the structure of the project and young people only seeing their tutor every five to six weeks, and then being expected to retain all their learnings and motivation is a *"tall order"* and has continued to be their biggest challenge. But through this challenge, tutors have pulled through to be the greatest enabler of this motivation and engagement, keeping the energy up until the next lesson.

One key element of Mull Music's success is the ability of the tutors to encourage children and young people to be involved in the co-creation of sessions.

“ In each workshop itself there are sessions where the kids are always involved in whether it be writing lyrics for a song or composing ... they do a lot of composing and arranging parts [and] input into that so I'd say that they have quite a lot of creative input in the work at the workshops themselves. That's just the way the teachers teach. It's a thing that they always incorporate into their teaching. (Laura Mandleberg, *Project manager*)

Each year, Laura makes sure that there is a good blend of tutors to make a dynamic tutor pool and to *"keep everything fresh and fun"* while also disciplined.

Finding tutors who can strike this balance has been the key element to success for Mull Music. As Laura explained, learning music is difficult and requires discipline, especially for violin, which is physically demanding, but to keep kids motivated, joy is equally important.

Patsy Reid, a recent addition to the Mull Music tutor team, embodies this balance and does it while ensuring children and young people of all ages collaborate and feel their role in the larger ensemble is valued. She creates multi-part arrangements for beginners up to advanced players, so that while the younger children have open string parts, they are enveloped by the rich and powerful sound coming from the advanced players' parts. So far, Patsy has created seven arrangements, which has taken music-making at Mull to the next level and embedded collaborative working into each tune.

“ The idea is that I say this to the older ones, when we're not here, you can take charge, and you know you can each assign yourself to a group, and you can really help the younger ages. (Patsy Reid, *Music tutor*)

Vanessa, another tutor who teaches alongside Patsy, also approaches her teaching with a focus on enhancing dynamism. Vanessa teaches through a Dalcroze eurhythmics approach to music education, incorporating movement into music theory before introducing young children to visual representation or reading sheet music. This method allows young children to absorb their learnings through movement, building muscle memory and expanding teaching to accommodate both visual and more physical learners.



Credit: Laura Mandleberg / Mull Music Makers

### **The importance of balancing local and modern traditions of Mull to strengthening the youth music sector in the community**

Achieving a balance between exposing children and young people to the traditional texture of music and genre specific to Mull and Scotland and different genres and styles of technical music performance is difficult but key to Mull Music's approach to music education.

“ Mull has a really rich history of music and so being able to tap into that through the violin or fiddle is really powerful and

important to give young people a cultural reference to where they're growing up. (Laura Mandleberg, *Project manager*)

Patsy sees Mull Music as achieving the perfect balance between nurturing an appreciation for both practices. It does this by working with tutors like Patsy and Marian who are trained in classical violin technique, while also actively encouraging young people to be a part of their local cèilidh.

### **Building trust and communication with parents has been vital to ensuring children and young people achieve progression in their music education**

To ensure a project like Mull Music supports young people's progression, Laura highlighted the importance of ensuring parents believe in the value of their child's music education.

Laura credits her understanding of parents in part due to her own role as a parent. She noted that even the timing of an email and communicating an awareness and understanding of what the week may be like and expressing appreciation for their role in their child's music education are crucial to making sure parents, like their children, are supported by Mull Music. Without this commitment from parents, Laura said that kids have little chance of progressing as that time between each workshop and lesson is crucial for development and provides the practice needed to progress.

“ Knowing your parents and valuing them is really important. And having somebody to coordinate communication with parents is important. Someone that knows the community is really important. I don't think this project would have lasted this long if there wasn't somebody in the community [who] knows it really well [and is] sensitive to what's going on. (Laura Mandleberg, *Project manager*)

Marian Lloyd also emphasized the importance of parents' involvement with their children's music education. As a Suzuki teacher, Marian explained the

importance of violin technique to progression, and therefore the importance of practice to progression. She highlighted the importance in acknowledging parents' sacrifice of their time to make sure their children get to the music workshops, which for many is far away. Marian has addressed this need by physically involving parents with violin practice, teaching them how to hold the bow and tune the violin to help their children during practice periods at home, which has resulted in more parents being more engaged, although engagement is still challenging and not always successful.

### **Learnings from the pandemic**

With the pandemic came challenges for Mull Music's delivery, but they were able to adapt to the change, offer greater provision previously not possible due to geographic barriers, and maintain high levels of engagement. Laura noted that the blended approach to the workshops, with lessons online between in-person sessions “works really well” and has been increasing engagement enabling Mull Music to “hit the ground running” when everyone meets in-person. A silver lining of the pandemic was the ability for Mull Music to offer individual online lessons for kids who have always been taught in groups, giving them more contact time. For some children, this proved to be a successful way to diversify and make more dynamic types of engagement. Marian Lloyd likewise noted the opportunity afforded by the pandemic for tutors, most of whom are based in Edinburgh and Glasgow, to dedicate more time with students.

Coming back together from the pandemic, Laura noticed that many of the children had lost a lot of confidence particularly around performance. She noted that it took a while for even kids who had performed well at previous workshops to “come back out of their shells”. But again, this challenge was met with an adapted approach to Mull Music, testament to its bespoke nature, with the programme having a couple of big performance events to bring back the joy of performance. In one example, Mull Music held a community cèilidh in the local village hall, and when asked who wanted to play, some of the older players who had been with the programme from the early days played in the cèilidh band for those dancing. Laura found this a particular success noting that:

“ There was a drop in even young people attending let alone the music aspect and to have young people playing at the cèilidh and hosting the music side of it ... you're really feeding into the investment [put into the project] ... that's what you want, isn't it. You want to go to a cèilidh [where there are] homegrown musicians and they're young and they're at school and holding their own in the cèilidh band. That's just so nice to see the kids get to that point where they can do that. (Laura Mandleberg, *Project manager*)

### **The importance of bridging partners in the arts embedded in local tradition to strengthen collective impact of music activity in Mull**

As a community-led organisation started by local members, Mull Music values and continues to actively extend its relationships with local arts community projects. Over the years, the programme has partnered with national organisations such as the Scottish Ensemble, the National Youth Choir of Scotland, the Benedetti Foundation and Children's Classic Concerts.

More locally, Mull Music promotes the activities of the local Fèis Gaelic arts festival and engages in activities of the Mòd Gaelic arts competitions. Uptake in entries to the fiddle competition of the local Mòd had declined to virtually zero prior to the project. However, since Mull Music has been supporting the development of young fiddle players on the island, there is now a much higher number of young people who have the experience to enter. Laura continues to encourage as many young people as she can to enter as they can to *“play a part in keeping [Mull's] tradition alive.”*



Credit: Laura Mandleberg / Mull Music Makers

Laura and another of the parents involved with Mull Music Makers are also engaged in Mull Music Partnership, working with the local authority with partial funding by the YMI Formula Fund to deliver their YMI project, also a partner of Mull Music Makers. Laura and her colleague have undergone training to teach music to full primary school classes. Both programmes are linked in their joint effort in *“maximising the reach of music education through upskilling members of the local community.”*

A key community partner for the past few years has been Gordon McLean, the former musical director of the local art centre. He has previously led the Scottish Ensemble residences co-organised by Mull Music which were very successful. Gordon described the impact of bridging the community of the Arts Centre with Mull Music as essential to building the audience of music lovers and expanding

the appreciation for music to young people on Mull. Gordon has in the past worked with young people in Mull who have gone on to become professional musicians and has introduced them to people to widen opportunities.

By making links with different activities engaged with the arts and particularly music, Mull Music has been an essential element of keeping alive the rich music history of Mull by ensuring young people are at the helm of music-making.

“ The first few years [of the project] you're still breathing life breathing music into the communities; you're bringing families together through music ... I suppose now ... because the a lot of the kids are fully fledged performers ... in the summer you see kids busking at the ferry or busking down in Tobermory ... there's more music around ... that's really one of my personal aims to start with was to give kids the opportunity to learn and experience music [but] also for the community to feel the benefit of that ... to keep music alive and musical traditions alive into the future. (Laura Mandleberg, *Project manager*)



## The EC sessions

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the notion – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group – that music education and non-formal music-making sessions create a space for bonding, friendships, and mutual support to flourish among young people, providing positive impacts to overall wellbeing. This case study was also chosen for its involvement of youth participants from different age ranges to capture the notion of easing transition to senior school.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Jess Abrams, Project Lead, David Hannah, a former participant on the programme and a current student at Edinburgh College, and Corey Dodds, a current participant in the project.*

### Introduction to the project

The EC sessions is a music project aimed at young people in and around east Edinburgh and East Lothian, where the majority of participants come from. It is based at the Milton Road campus, which provides a range of courses including Music, Music Business and Sound Production. Jess Abrams, the founder and project lead of the EC sessions, is a lecturer in Community Music and Music Education at Edinburgh College. This role enabled her to work closely with the college and access the rehearsal spaces and recording studios. While based at the College, Jess independently runs the course with co-lead Iain Bruce.

Created in 2019, the EC sessions aims to give young people the opportunity to play, compose, and record original arrangements. While it does not target any particular groups of young people, it aims to be inclusive and provide additional support for those with disabilities or other barriers through ad-hoc additional resources. Jess highlighted how the free transport in the area has also greatly contributed to breaking down the barrier of physical access, allowing young people in East Lothian to engage in the sessions more easily.

### Facilitating organic opportunity for progression through working in a music community, feeling a sense of belonging, and building confidence

While the EC sessions does not formally organise its activities around a clear and formal progression of youth participants into further study or the sector, being based at Edinburgh College affords participants with a natural pathway into music education if interested. Edinburgh College provides the EC sessions with equipment and access to the recording studio for young people on the project. Jess noted that having sessions take place at the College creates a sense of “ownership and a sense of belonging to the place without the formalities attached to it”.



Credit: Jess Abrams

David Hannah, one of the first participants to hear of the project when it was being piloted, is one of those participants who has progressed into further music education. They now study guitar performance at Edinburgh College, with the aspiration to work in the music industry when they graduate. They said that it was Jess who encouraged them to look into music as a career and helped them write their application to Edinburgh College. They recounted how recording in the studios during the EC sessions influenced their aspiration to look for work as a session musician following graduation.

David noted not only the technical and collaborative skills developed on the project, but the confidence it built in their ability to contribute creative input into songs and sessions and express themselves.

“ EC Sessions has helped me a lot with just general confidence. Not even just the musical aspect but it [has] definitely helped me just be able to talk to people and just get out of my shell a little bit more. And it [has] definitely made me realise that I have a voice ... if there's a decision being made. (David Hannah, *Former participant*)

This element of confidence-building is an aspect of the EC sessions Jess also touched on:

“ When you're part of the recipe – you're not the whole flavour – but you're one of the spices ... that's kind of what I feel these projects are about. They foster a bit more confidence. They breed a sense of belonging and community that then enables them to maybe go out and do that elsewhere because it's just a bit of confidence-building and basically learning to communicate with people that aren't the people they've always had in their lives. There's suddenly these new people including adults having respectful equitable dialogues with people who are older than you ... [it's] a thing that a lot of young people don't get a chance to do very often. (Jess Abrams, *Project lead*)

Being a part of the Edinburgh College community has also created an opportunity for young professionals not engaged in the EC sessions to be a part of the project and continue to develop their career. The EC sessions has two opportunities for young musicians / music educators: paid traineeship positions given to recent graduates from Edinburgh College; and volunteer opportunities for students on placement from Edinburgh College and currently completing the Honours degree in music in partnership with Kingston University. Student placements are able to observe the EC sessions and reflect on what they have learned to help design some of the sessions and do research around approaches to thread through their studies. Beyond the technicalities of music education and methods, Jess reflected that she hopes that through this opportunity, they also gain a “*greater understanding of the underpinning values and principles*” involved in the craft. Having current Edinburgh College students on placement has been especially helpful in allowing project participants to hear from and work with someone who is only slightly ahead of them in their music-making path.

### Continuing to grow a musical community online

After six months of in person regularly weekly sessions, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the EC sessions had to move online. But despite the challenges with online delivery, Jess found that continuing the sessions online enabled the group to stay connected throughout the pandemic. She highlighted how she experienced the community growing even more through the year they were online.

One element of online engagement that worked particularly well was an informal space via Zoom to check-in about how young people were feeling about the music they were learning and playing.



Credit: Jess Abrams

While participants made connections through playing music as a group, this space to talk about the music and listen to others about the feelings they had when they heard a song were key to building stronger emotional connections:

“ The space we create in our team is open and warm. I think that kind of hidden silver lining of COVID was this coming together and what we called the ‘EC hang’ which was at our normal time on a Wednesday on Zoom where we always checked in. It created a kind of throughline through COVID ... we shared so much music and ideas around music and how things made us feel and because music just elicits emotion it elicits connection. So those bonds are formed through playing music together but also through the space in between where we'll be chatting about something like 'What do you think this song is about? What

emotion, what kind of feelings does it elicit? What images does it elicit?" (Jess Abrams, *Project lead*)

Coming out of the pandemic, EC sessions participants expressed a greater eagerness to mutually support each other. The community created by the online group during the pandemic continued to grow in-person, with a stronger sense of intimacy and bonding among the young musicians.

“ When we went live again, there was such a sense of coming back, togetherness and one of the things I noticed that I hadn't noticed before COVID when we came live again was ... when we were in the big space together what I noticed more was participants teaching each other and helping each other with parts ... rather than turning to us and that's what you want, you want to make yourself unnecessary in a way that that community can continue without you ... there was an intimacy that came very quickly when we went back to live that wasn't there before. (Jess Abrams, *Project lead*)

Online spaces of informal discussion continue to complement in-person sessions, with the EC sessions continuing to use their WhatsApp group, on which Jess says a “*a lot of [their] community takes place*”. Jess highlighted how these different spaces provide space for:

“ The kinds of interactions [on the group] symbolise the kind of friendships that would not have existed otherwise ... Part of my job is to create an environment whether that's in the WhatsApp group or in the physical space ... of openness and welcome. (Jess Abrams, *Project lead*)

## Facilitating musical exchange and encouraging group learning to enhance musicianship

The EC sessions' ethos is around developing musicianship by learning from fellow musicians and exchanging genres, techniques, and ideas to widen one's musical horizons. Jess noted that one major impact of the project is its ability to encourage collaboration between young musicians with different styles and encouraging musical exploration:

“ The freedom to explore music with really good musicians both the participants but also our team are really good musicians ... [Also] getting out of one's comfort zone so you know when the thrash players end up playing a bit of soul funk with the guys who sings more rap and you get these bizarre little collaborations of things but it's great (Jess Abrams, *Project lead*)

The two participants interviewed recounted that they also felt the project developed this sense of wider appreciation for different music styles and even enabled them to incorporate different genres into their own arrangements. David highlighted how the EC sessions has “*definitely made [them] more open-minded to a lot of types of music*”.

Corey Dodds, a current participant on the EC sessions who has been a part of it since its inception, noted how playing music conjointly with fellow emerging musicians resonated most with them and was the key value in the EC sessions as compared to music education courses at school. In one example, Corey described how in the EC sessions, participants had to work in a group on areas where each participant had musical weaknesses and how this practice was essential to their ability to improvise. They also felt that learning from other musicians with different musical backgrounds and experiences helped them pick up different techniques and share ideas. This exchange has influenced Corey's own practice with his band outside of the EC sessions.

“ Before I used to only be able to write certain types of music and now I feel like I'm more well-rounded in that kind of aspect. And the stuff I wrote now with the band that I'm in, I find there's a lot more diversity in the songs also. (Corey Dodds, *Participant*)



Credit: Jess Abrams

## Plans for the future delivery of the EC sessions

While the EC sessions tries to attract young people from Edinburgh and East Lothian, there has been difficulty with communicating the value of the project to schools, and this is an area for future and further focus. While engagement with schools in East Lothian has been positive, in part due to the EC sessions' partnership with the Head of Instrumental Instruction and the new East Lothian Youth Music Forum, engagement with other schools in Edinburgh has been challenging. Jess noted that there may be a misperception from schools that projects like the EC sessions would be “*replacing versus enhancing or that*

*[their] approaches don't always reflect scholastic musical education approaches*". Moving forward, Jess expressed her aim to encourage more uptake in the EC sessions through schools:

“ I think it's about the language we use perhaps when we're talking to our counterparts in the formal sector. But I think ... we need to allocate more time for going out there and selling the project (Jess Abrams, *Project lead*)

Looking to the future delivery of the project, Jess envisions the EC sessions to take on its own life at Edinburgh College, where it is within the remit of Jess at the College and becomes a student-run project, with Jess at the helm overseeing and training tutors. She hopes it can incorporate bands, composition, and recording, and that *“there is this vibrant community”*. As Jess emphasised, her evaluation of the impact of the project is in the ability for young people to teach each other and mutually support each other's learning, because as she noted, *“that's what you want, you want to make yourself unnecessary in a way that that community can continue without you”*.

# Renfrewshire Council: Beat Buddies Music

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the links between formal and informal services, schools and YMI projects, and how these types of services mutually strengthen youth development – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Katie Rush, Project manager and Renfrewshire Council member, Graeme Barclay, tutor and founder of Beat Buddies Music, and Melissa Murdoch, teacher at West Primary.*

## Introduction to the project

Beginning first as a taster session and pilot collaboration in 2020, Beat Buddies Music ('Beat Buddies') and Renfrewshire Council have worked together in the past two years to provide children and young people in schools with music education that provides students with a space for self-expression, learning, and release through music. Founded by Graeme Barclay in 2020, Beat Buddies Music is an organisation aimed at inclusive and enjoyable musical activity for children and young people and offers services across nine local authorities. It is founded on four essential pillars: *“believing, enjoying, achieving and transforming”* through music education.

Prior to founding Beat Buddies, Graeme was Head of Music Service for South Lanarkshire for ten years. Deciding to transition towards a freelance career, Graeme founded the organisation and was soon approached by Mark Traynor and James Cunningham from Renfrewshire Council to see if Graeme would be interested in delivering a pilot project to bridge music provision and learning for some of the most deprived schools in the area.

Before Beat Buddies, the Council had trialled a couple of instrumental music projects within West Primary and St. Mary's schools, but the engagement and uptake levels were low. Where Graeme attributes Beat Buddies' success in engaging students is in the inclusion embedded into its delivery and the nature of it being *“targeted”* and *“bespoke”*. As Graeme described:

“ We were mainly targeting those schools with a high SIMD so enabling pupils who would never really have the opportunity and experience [to] learn those skills, hear different types of music. (Graeme Barclay, *Music tutor and Beat Buddies founder*)

Katie Rush, YMI Project manager and member of Renfrewshire Council, described how Graeme's approach is adaptable and accessible, and how it makes learning music simple, yet effective:

“ Graeme would use just what's to hand in the classroom so sometimes it's just that they're [using] body percussion [or] tapping out a rhythm or beat on tables, again using and accessing any percussion equipment that schools have ... that's part of the reason why it's so accessible and works well in these remote sessions when everyone was at home. (Katie Rush, *Project manager*)

Graeme explains that within the first three weeks of providing the course, he encourages the children to *“make themselves the instrument”* so that the barrier of buying instruments which can oftentimes be expensive, is broken down and *“the children truly understand that [music] is something we can do”* with anything they have available to them.

## Learnings from the pandemic – the importance of being inclusive and building trust

In its pilot year, Graeme had the challenge of delivering Beat Buddies to Renfrewshire schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Scottish lockdown period. He adapted his approach by creating weekly videos for students to learn along to across four schools in Renfrewshire involved which focused on music theory and percussion. Katie emphasised the vital role Beat Buddies played during this period and the *“importance of having something during that period of the young people's lives”*.

During the pandemic, Graeme noted that despite its inclusive nature and ethos, working with children and young people living in areas of high social and economic deprivation requires a heightened sense of attention and sensitivity to the realities of children's home lives. The Council provided all students with the necessary laptops and technology to access online activity. However, Graeme recounted how, in an effort to integrate physical, outdoor activity into his sessions, he encouraged students to carry out their music activity outdoors. He then realised that some students did not have warm enough clothes to comfortably engage in the activity. He quickly adapted his approach, gently suggesting that students could do the activity either outdoors or indoors, whatever was preferred. In this way, Graeme learned that building trust with students requires mutual respect and non-judgment to ensure students feel heard.

Transitioning to in-person activity the following year in 2021-22 brought its own challenges with engaging with the young participants, with mental health at the forefront of these challenges.

“ When we got back on site the barriers then turned to ... more mental barriers. Low self-esteem, anxiety are all really prevalent amongst the young people ... from that isolated setting that they were in for the best part of a year ... there was a real sense of low resilience levels and the way that you could tell that was children would just crack ... they didn't have that ... mental ability to deal with [small things]. (Graeme Barclay, *Music tutor and Beat Buddies founder*)

Graeme addressed students' low self-esteem levels through setting *out* “ground rules” to define Beat Buddies' activity, with making sure one was putting forth their “*best behaviour*”, a “*responsible behaviour*” and enjoying activity that was the “*best fun*”. Looking back on that period during September 2021, Graeme measures the achievement of Beat Buddies' ethos and its progress on improving confidence levels on the culmination of the programme in a student performance in December 2021:

“ If you take that picture as being ... at the start of September 2021 to December 2021 where all those children performed on a stage to the rest of the school ... they gladly and willingly and proudly [went] onto the stage. (Graeme Barclay, *Music tutor and Beat Buddies founder*)

This increase in confidence is something widely recognised not only by Graeme, but by participants as well. As Katie stated:

“ What we've seen reported both from staff from Graeme, from the young people themselves is obviously they've been developing their skills their awareness of music but [also their] confidence in certain scenarios for example that kind of performance situation. (Katie Rush, *Project manager*)

In 2021-22, delivery returned to in-person and was given to the same four schools to ensure children's music education had sustained impact and benefitted from a sustained relationship between Graeme and the participants. Coming into its third year, Beat Buddies will be benefitting four new schools to enable other students to share in the opportunity to experience music activity in schools.

### **The relationship between schools, the Council, and Beat Buddies is crucial to ensuring a unified and focused vision**

Beat Buddies operates within a framework of cohesion and complementary music provision, to enhance learning from other courses, not replace it. As Graeme explained:

“ [I and Renfrewshire Council] have a chat at the start prior to entering and my fundamental priority is to ensure that what I do within Beat Buddies Music does not compromise in any way what music services do and it needs to support absolutely what

the instrumental music services do and grow that" (Graeme Barclay, *Music tutor and Beat Buddies founder*)

Delivering its activities in a school, the way Beat Buddies approaches music provision is inclusive of not only all students, but teachers as well. The head teacher first gauges and guides the project, selecting the groups of children Beat Buddies would be delivered to each year. Then Graeme would first have an introduction with the classroom teacher and describing Beat Buddies' activities. He emphasised, however, that he would not have an in-depth discussion with teachers and their perceived needs within the class *before* meeting the children in the class, to avoid bias and judging students before truly engaging with them.

“ I would ask [teachers] if they had any topics that they were working on with the class and then we would tie that [in] ... that then means that they could build that into their ... classroom setting ... They want to be involved because they are seeing a different approach to learning that's really engaging the children. (Graeme Barclay, *Music tutor and Beat Buddies founder*)

Melissa Murdoch, a Primary 6 teacher at West Primary School since 2020, noted that having Beat Buddies in her classroom was a “*brand new experience as a teacher*” especially as a new teacher. Working in a diverse school in an area in the first quartile on the Scottish Multiple Deprivation Index (SIMD), Melissa was interested to learn about how children would react to Beat Buddies.

The children's engagement with the programme happily surprised Melissa who described how students took Graham's teaching about harmonies and rhythm “*on board and [in] their stride*”, attributing this to Graham's enthusiasm about the session. Melissa observed how her students were motivated about what they learned and talked about the session all week, eager until the next Beat Buddies session. The enthusiasm for Beat Buddies even spread beyond those taking part, as Melissa described how younger siblings of students experiencing the project would ask their teacher when they would have a chance to be a part of Beat Buddies.

The Beat Buddies method of teaching music also taught classroom teachers, like Melissa, about ways to tie in their own lessons to Graeme's approach of learning music through movement and body percussion. Melissa recounted how she would incorporate lessons on rhythm into her teaching around times tables, encouraging them to see patterns similar to how rhythm and beats were a pattern. When learning French through a song, Melissa said how children would note similarities in the rhythm to a song they had learned with Graeme on Beat Buddies, saying how:

“ It was just those little sparks that even myself [I] hadn't really thought about and yet the children had in their own minds made that connection. (Melissa Murdoch, *P6 Teacher*)

This feedback is reflective of the wider impact Katie described the project as having on teachers across the local authority:

“ Feedback that we've had from classroom teachers being involved watching learning from [the lead tutor] over that period of time that he [has been] delivering but [not] only have they gained more knowledge, but also the experience, confidence and increased skill to then feel that once our project has finished, they are happy to possibly incorporate some of what he [has] taught ... that's the kind of follow-on which was great and hasn't been done in any formal way. (Katie Rush, *Project manager*)

Beat Buddies' impact extends beyond music provision into developing the confidence levels and motivation of young children in schools. One example illustrating this wider impact is in the progress of a group of young students Graeme described as the “The Success Squad”, a group of 14 students who were particularly struggling in school and were identified by the school as in particularly vulnerable states, and who he got together in their own Beat Buddies session. Graeme described this experience of working with them:



“ We created a small and wonderful group called 'The Success Squad' ... they were seriously struggling ... they really were on a bit of knife edge as to [where] they might progress within school ... the school highlighted that the music project was a major factor in turning that around [raising] their levels of confidence [it] raised their attendance at school ... every Monday morning they were there (Graeme Barclay, *Music tutor and Beat Buddies founder*)

Key to ensuring this impact, Graeme says, is mutual respect between children, classroom teachers, and Graeme himself. As he reported, “*I have utmost respect for the children and through that they then have a mutual respect for me*”. Through classroom teachers involving Beat Buddies’ music sessions into their teaching of other subjects, children in turn respect their teachers. This, Graeme explains, is when “*the magic has struck and within that what you then have is a three-way triangle of respect*”.

# Scottish Brass Band Association: National Youth Brass Bands of Scotland

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the notion – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group – of YMI providing opportunities for young people to progress, by creating pathways of long-term projects through which young people can move as they older and progress.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Carrie Boax, SBBA President, and John Boax, SBBA Education Officer, as well as podcast extracts from 'SBBA Speaks'.*

## Introduction to the project

The National Youth Brass Bands of Scotland (NYBBS) were originally formed in 1958 by the Scottish Amateur Music Association and have been run by the Scottish Brass Band Association (SBBA) since 2011. Today, the SBBA's youth work is primarily run through the YMI-funded NYBBS. Participation offers young brass and percussion players aged 9 to 22 the opportunity to perform challenging, exciting and diverse brass repertoires while receiving guidance from an expert tutorial team.

NYBBS comprises three bands: The senior NYBBS is the premier-level youth ensemble and demonstrates the extraordinary musical talent involved. It was the first brass band to play at Edinburgh International Festival and has since toured internationally. In addition, NYBBS run the National Youth Reserve Brass Band, designed to nurture young musicians who are on their way to reaching the high standards required by the premier level or waiting for a vacancy to arise. Thirdly, the National Children's Brass Band of Scotland provides an opportunity for young, less experienced musicians (aged 13 or under) to enjoy playing in a full band of like-minded enthusiasts. The band is an introduction to the wider world of brass band music and highlights the opportunities within this for aspiring players.

The majority of participants also play in local brass bands – both existing and new start-ups, within and outside education – which SBBA support in a variety of ways. Players play with their youth community band, senior competing bands and school / university ensembles as well as attending YMI-funded regional NYBBS workshops and masterclasses.

This year, NYBBS ran their biggest ever camp with 150 children from all over Scotland taking part in a NYBBS summer course at Strathallan School in Perthshire. COVID-19 restrictions meant they could not operate as they would have liked in 2021; however, they did manage to hold the camp in 2021 with some restrictions and were proud to be the only music camp to run that year. It felt important to maintain the momentum.

In addition, YMI funding enables the team to run a free Easter course.



Credit: Jim Doyle

## Impacting tutors and the wider sector

A significant change for the sector is how NYBBS has opened opportunities for young people to be involved in senior brass bands. Brass bands are often felt to be lower in band hierarchy than orchestras or pipers but now many more people are opting to play in them.

“ The most significant change is empowering young people - our young ambassadors - to make a direct impact on the brass band movement; I love to hear and see them contributing effectively and watching them grow and develop socially and emotionally. (Carrie Boax, SBBA President)

SBBA also have youth band start-ups in areas where there is no brass band and YMI support buys instruments to support these bands, which in turn develops the sector locally.

SBBA's Education Officer, John Boax, is a peripatetic brass instrument music teacher and sees the impact NYBBS involvement has on his job. It means he can understand and influence what is happening in the outside world as well as within schools, and so understands routes for development. He sees which local bands are doing well and how those that didn't invest in young people now realise they must do so. NYBBS is unique in that it is run by Scottish tutors and taps into the sector while developing tutor skills in working with young people as a band, rather than via individual tuition.

John believes he has learnt and developed his skills through enabling young people's journeys and progression, helping and supporting when he can, alongside all the NYBBS tutors, as they focus on developing the band first and foremost and within that, the individual players. To support such learning, all temporary SBBA officers attend meetings to share best practice in relation to YMI delivery.

SBBA also organises sector learning events. In 2020, SBBA's *Festival of Learning* for adults and young people working with young musicians for example took place virtually in January 2020. A day of workshops took place

looking at a variety of topics, including “Mental Health and Well-Being”, “How to produce a Virtual Performance” as well as Masterclass sessions on performance techniques by eminent musicians. Around 75 delegates attended.

## Giving young people a voice within the NYBBS

SBBA has 14 “Young Ambassadors”, who are often recruited at NYBBS and fulfil roles throughout the year such as event registration and engagement with local bands. SBBA sought to open new avenues to listen to young people, get them involved, give them ownership of the event and learn from them. One ambassador is on the main SBBA committee ensuring young people have a voice in all aspects of SBBA's work. The SBBA Education Officer delivers mentoring to encourage, support and develop the skills of the “Young Ambassadors”. Workshops funded through YMI have enabled youth groups to engage eminent musicians to deliver sessions that apply to young students and adults who work with the bands.

SBBA “Youth Speaks” Podcasts are run and were founded by two young people, Laura Carter and Iona McVicar, now 23- and 24-year-old and in senior bands. Producing monthly podcasts has upskilled them. Iona, a talented musician from Campbelltown Brass who won the SBBA Young Composers competition, is now working at the BBC, with podcast production skills a major contribution to her recruitment success. Laura and Iona contribute to NYBBS's social media, Facebook, and website, talking to celebrities in the brass band world, interviewing and talking to young players. It is hoped that the next generation of young players will take over the podcast running as the current producers move to other roles.

Both producers have had long-term involvement with NYBBS and grew their podcast series after hosting a roadshow online during Covid. The roadshow was a Covid response after a senior learning event was held in January 2020 and the SBBA team realised they needed an equivalent for young people to give them a voice and maintain enthusiasm when live performance was not possible. The experience was so successful that in the future, the roadshow will run parallel to the *Scottish Festival of Brass Weekend* in November alongside young people's participation in that event.

Within the 'Youth Speaks!' work, SBBA has supported the development of The Wellbeing Charter, organised by young people for young people, arising from conversations around the mental health of musicians. The podcasts are one avenue to explore these issues.

### Driving wide-reaching engagement through the Young Ambassadors, education, open 'taster days' and collaborations

It is rare for any of the attendees at NYBBS main events not to have played in a band already. However, availability of brass bands across Scotland varies between regions. Some areas are better than others, sometimes because of historic involvement in mining communities, including Campbeltown, Dalmellington, Borders, East Ayrshire, whereas others historically have not had any bands.



Credit: Jim Doyle

Local bands are often formed through education – either teachers start bands or point interested musicians to a local band. Local bands sometimes play complex arrangements, bring that into the learning environments of schools and in turn, develop their repertoire.

A significant challenge, according to John Boax, is making the brass band scene cool and President Carrie Boax and the Young Ambassadors have done great work contributing to that. SBBA want to move with the times, not be stuck in the past and to ensure young people shape the future. Bands until recently were male dominated but that is changing. The Young Ambassadors are central to these changes and are expanding understanding of what the SBBA does by spreading the word that there is lots of support for bands with access to the best halls and best adjudicators.

As such, NYBBS is important to the whole brass band community: young people join local brass bands, spreading their enthusiasm and knowledge across the country. Those already involved in local bands come back from camp buzzing and feed into the established system. Others may have performed in ensembles and bands for the first time.

“ We are an inclusive organisation and don't turn anyone away, there's a place for everyone who is a brass or percussion player who wants to come along to the ensemble and learn from the very best of musicians and tutors. They benefit from the fantastic role models of in-house staff and our family approach, young ones look up to and listen to the older ones. (Carrie Boax, SBBA President)

SBBA supports youth bands with workshop sessions aimed at new recruits. New youth bands in Cupar, Broxburn and Cowal are examples of this success. This is enabling NYBBS to bring in some young people who may not otherwise have had similar opportunities.

“ YMI projects are a godsend. It enables us to reach out to young people, especially young people who would not otherwise get

the opportunity to do something in music. (John Boax, *SBBA Education Officer*)

SBBA also holds open ‘taster days’ to drive recruitment to NYBBS. At this year’s open day taster, among others three 9-year-olds for example came along who were very quiet and reserved to start with but by the end of the 4-hour session were buzzing and looking forward to coming to NYBBS.

Other ventures such as collaboration with Dalmellington Health Practice has supported children with asthma and other respiratory diseases<sup>2</sup> and resulted in many players moving across to local bands, including Dalmellington Youth Band.

Overall, SBBA President Carrie Boax feels that what NYBBS has done, not only for the participants, their families and staff but for the Brass Band Movement itself through driving such engagement and thereby increasing interest in this movement, is the biggest impact.

“ NYBBS, like brass bands, is a true family- from aged 9 to 22 years of age, they love it. It is wonderful to watch them grow and develop and the standards of our three NYBBS bands not only grows every year but given that we have young people who want to attend that can come from places outwith the UK and the Isle of Man such as Germany, France, Switzerland, Cyprus, New York proves that we are widely known and clearly desirable. (Carrie Boax, *SBBA President*)

### **Progression through YMI-funded NYBBS links young players to local bands, international competitions, and careers**

Alongside playing in their local bands, participants attend YMI-funded regional workshops and masterclasses. For example, The Borders Youth band held three workshops for all Borders-based players to come together in Galashiels with a view to performing as the Borders Youth Band at the Scottish Youth

Festival of Brass (also funded by YMI) in November in Perth Concert Hall. NYBBS Principal players are also invited to play at events, including the Scottish Open Brass Band Championships where elite bands from Scotland, England and Norway compete.

NYBBS see a high proportion of continuing players – starting in the Children’s band and maintaining involvement, sometimes through education to careers. For example, of those playing in the senior band in 2016 the majority are still playing, one playing trombone for Halle, one conducting and one now working at BBC. Other senior band alumni are working with orchestras or playing in brass bands, many going to RCS or Salford or Cardiff.

“ We are professional in our approach and work hard to ensure that we provide the best experiences for our young players; ensuring they are of quality, insightful and inspirational; using the best role models that we can. It is such a privilege to lead and work with all involved in team SBBA. (Carrie Boax, *SBBA President*)

### **Bringing likeminded young people together in a community through enjoyable experiences**

NYBBS involvement has a strong social aspect. Some young people might find themselves the only young member of their local brass band, so coming together to spend a week as one of 150 like-minded young people introduces them to another community and expands their interest group. At NYBBS and other courses, young people come together, play together, meet socially, meet people from all over the country, make music and make lifelong friends and develop lifelong skills. At the camp, young people thus have access to top musicians enabling skills progression, but also to community development.

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<sup>2</sup> Brass instrument playing is known to be good for strengthening lungs.

Laura, podcast producer, asked players at NYBBS to give her one word on what involvement meant to them and responses included: Family. Awesome. Inspirational. Musical. Friendship. Fabulous.

“ The atmosphere at NYBBS is always incredible. So many likeminded people, all in one place, all making brilliant music together. (Iona McVicar, *Podcast producer*)

For Education Officer John, first timers to NYBBS show the most significant impact and by the end of the course are “*usually raving about the possibilities*”. They meet players from all over and look forward to meeting again to play together as well as to socialise with like-minded people. “*Their eyes are opened to the possibilities within the brass band world which they may not have ever heard about locally.*”

Coming back after the pandemic was tough and performance-wise there had been a gap. Many players had not returned to bands so the importance of NYBBS grew to draw in new people and get those who left to return. The social elements and friendships established through NYBBS are vital to success and had to be nurtured in different ways such as through the roadshow.

### **Challenges to progression presented by cost and lack of FE opportunities**

The system of charging for instrumental tuition was difficult and brass bands funded by YMI helped young people to be able to gain tuition. SBBA wanted to remove barriers but when charges came in, the dropout rate was huge, many schools struggled, and priorities had to be made. As charges for Local Authority Instrumental Music Services were taken away, participation opened again, but then the pandemic hit.

One way of tackling the challenges of inclusivity has been by offering bursaries to young people, especially those in living in areas of high deprivation, to enable them to attend residential courses such as NYBBS and free workshops. SBBA use promotional leaflets and taster sessions to spread the word about availability of bursaries. Success stories can be found in the continued growth of

youth bands such as Cupar Beginnings, Cowal Brass and Broxburn and Livingston Youth.

Both Carrie and John are concerned about the lack of pathways from grass roots to Further Education and beyond. Carrie notes “*We have worked to support bands in Edinburgh and to a lesser extent Aberdeen, but still unable (even though I have actively tried since 2013) to be recognised and work in partnership with Glasgow based FE providers.*” Brass Bands are still not well represented in the Universities and colleges where music courses are offered. They would love to have a brass band course in Scotland in one of the universities and have been lobbying for a long time. The Scottish community tend to lose young people to the south where there are courses and also tend to lose people at RCS as they go the orchestral route, there being no brass band option at RCS.

### **Hopes for the Future**

Going forward, SBBA is keen to grow the feeling among young players that the bands are theirs, encouraging them to take ownership and to be more vocal and central to local band development.

“ To continue to work in partnership with YMI to ensure young people have no barriers to making music and developing their social and emotional wellbeing. To allow our young people to appreciate that there is more to a career in music than just playing- as wonderful as that is. (Carrie Boax, *SBBA President*)

They would like to see the senior course separate to allow for expansion. Their current camp venue limits involvement to 150 and a separate course would enable expansion and further enable inclusivity, widening their work to areas where brass is not so prevalent such as Stornoway and Orkney. Making the net wider is the aim.

At present, YMI is the total funding for SBBA's youth development work. The organisation has no staff costs and is a non-profit organisation while other youth orchestras have employees and are funded on a more long-term basis. They

get support for individuals, but not for SBBA itself. They have found YMI supportive and helpful.

“ As costs for all things rise, we truly appreciate every penny of funding that we have received from YMI. We are unique, in that the majority of our ‘workers’ are volunteers (like myself) with a passion for promoting music making amongst brass and percussion players in Scotland. (Carrie Boax, *SBBA President*)

More money and more stability would, of course, be welcome. Musical directors have planning meetings at NYBSS – thinking about the future, how to do more, but funds are limited. All involved want to grow what they do and take all three bands further afield to open their eyes about the brass band world outside Scotland, across Europe. The senior band had the opportunity to do so, and it benefitted many players.

Ultimately, they aim to make banding world in Scotland a better place.

# Dumfries & Galloway: Songwriting Project

*This case study was chosen to provide further insight into the notion – as highlighted by the initial grantee focus group – that music education sessions create a space for bonding, friendships, and mutual support to flourish among young people, providing positive impacts to overall wellbeing. This case study was also chosen for its involvement of youth participants from different age ranges to capture the notion of easing transition to secondary school.*

*The case study is based on interviews with Mel Henry, Project manager, Grant Dinwoodie, YMI tutor, and Morag Davies, LAC team.*

## Introduction to the project

The Songwriting Project was first introduced to schools in Dumfries and Galloway as a way to address the barriers of care-experienced young people in accessing the council's core YMI projects. The Songwriting Project targets provision for Looked After Children (LAC) – those in the care of their local authority – most of whom are in late primary school. Mel Henry, Project manager and member of Dumfries and Galloway Council recounts how from the beginning, the project was broadly *“based around songwriting but left really open-ended, for the young people involved to take [it] in the direction which they felt suited their needs and interests”*.

The project involves a working collaboration between the LAC's team within the Council and the lead tutor. In collaboration with the Council, the LAC division identified care-experienced pupils who would benefit from the project and who then engage in the project at school. The project activity is run by Grant Dinwoodie, the lead tutor, and Morag Davies from the LAC team on the project. Grant and Morag work as a team, with Grant leading the music composition and songwriting helm with Morag providing the additional social and emotional support for young people on the project.

Being well-known as a musician and drama schoolteacher in his local area, Grant was approached by Mel Henry at Dumfries and Galloway Council to be a part of the project. Grant Dinwoodie is a musician by training, learning to play the accordion when he was twelve and eventually playing with a professional orchestra and gigging across the UK and Europe. With his 25-year experience in music performance, Grant has a passion for music-making which translates to his work with children on the Songwriting project.

From the start, Morag *“was really keen to get involved”* in the project. She attributes her enthusiasm in part to encouraging the young people chosen to take part in the project. As a project which started out as a short piece of work from April to the summer holiday with only four students, Morag has seen the project develop into a year-long project in the following year with greater impacts on the wellbeing of the young people involved.

## The importance of co-creating sessions and being flexible with the needs of young people

When he first became involved in the project, Grant recalls how it was a new experience for him and was challenging in that he did not know the backgrounds of the young people he was working with and how to approach songwriting with them. As a trained musician, Grant explained the two approaches to songwriting – the “mechanical” and the “inspirational” way – and that the key was to strike the balance between these two approaches. When he first engaged with the class however, he realised that the young people might need a bit of extra assistance. Grant learned later that what was essential to young people's engagement was learning what music *they* enjoyed and what resonated with them:

“ I knew that was going to be a challenge. But I figured out that – and I wish someone had told me years ago – my first lesson was discovering what [music] they liked, understanding what they listened to. (Grant Dinwoodie, YMI tutor)



As a music educator, he learned the importance of “*reading the room*” and how to change class plans “*to cater [to] that environment at that particular moment*”, noting that this was the most important thing to do to gain the attention and spark the enjoyment of young people in the project.

Alongside this approach to engagement, Grant also preceded his courses with one essential lesson to his students: that in songwriting, “*you can’t get this wrong*”. He says that young people’s understanding of this idea framed the rest of the project and “*opened up that engagement*” of young people on the course. Grant recalled how he explained to his students:

“ Your writing comes from you. As long as you’re comfortable with it, it’s like drawing a piece of artwork, we can’t get this wrong. But we want to make you feel like it’s complete ... if they can’t get it wrong then they can just do it and [feel like] it’s not going to get judged. (Grant Dinwoodie, *YMI tutor*)

Through this approach, Grant encouraged his students to lead on what types of music they wanted to write their songs to, from lo-fi to heavy metal to Scottish folk.

Mel also highlighted the vital role of co-creation in the Songwriting project having the effect on students that it did, from the point of view of students themselves:

“ Young people reported that the main benefits from the project to be that they had control over how it was shaped and developed throughout the weeks as well as being listened to, being in a group with people with similar life experiences and having a safe environment to share these through song. (Mel Henry, *Project manager*)

To begin each songwriting session, there is a back-and-forth exchange between Grant and each young person, working through their creative visions for the song and trying to express the best way to bring the words alive. Grant

encourages the young people to phonetically express the beat and tempo they envision for their song, and then Grant plays a chord to “*try and work with their rhythm*” to achieve the sound they are aiming for. Some young people will come back to Grant the following week with lyrics and melodies they have created throughout the week after the session, and which Grant transposes on the guitar threading lyric and melody together. Encouraging young people to take the time to work through the lyrics *and* rhythm of their song is essential to young people’s sense of ownership and empowerment:

“ The reason why I don’t take it all on myself is because it becomes my song and I would write my own songs ... So I try for them to take the lead in most things ... we work out [the harmony] through numbers and we work it out together [until] we get to the end of that song. (Grant Dinwoodie, *YMI tutor*)

Creating a loose structure around the project while ensuring young people take ownership and responsibility for their progress is key to the project’s success.

Grant noted the challenges of retaining young people’s attention to the teaching but shared that creating the long-term goal of recording the songs at the end of the project enables young people to have a goal to achieve and feel like their work and songs are “*actually going somewhere*”.

### **Songwriting as a form of music-making that creates space for both enjoyment and addressing trauma**

Using songwriting as the medium of music-making with the young people on the project was essential to the impact it has had on young people. Morag highlighted how the project “*gives these children an avenue to write things that they would never [have] written a story [about]*”. One young person on the project wrote about the bullying they have experienced, while another student wrote about the passing of their brother in the previous year. Both Grant and Morag reflected on the challenges of listening to these stories, navigating the appropriate response, and the delicacy in transforming this experience into a song:

“ I’m there as a guidance so I might say well can we push the story on ... you can hear the narrative running through the song, but how do we collect it? What’s the feeling? (Grant Dinwoodie, *YMI tutor*)

In one instance, a young person on the project wrote about the feeling of always being picked last and not having any friends to play with. Grant described how he navigated this situation, acknowledging the vulnerability of students sharing these stories while also giving the song, and the young person, “*a bit of hope*”. He asked him what he loved to do and suggested they integrate that into the song as well. Grant shared that this young person was someone that was very shy and never expressed the desire to sing; but by the end of the project, they were singing their own song.

““ It’s a gradual process ... [it’s about] trying to work with their feelings and how they’re feeling that day ... And I try [to] take it each week as well getting them to understand music in general. (Grant Dinwoodie, *YMI tutor*)

Morag’s emotional support for young people who need additional attention was an essential part of the project. Grant describes how Morag was “*completely immersed*” in the project, actively encouraging the young people in their songwriting and providing additional support to some of the young people so that each could have time for individual attention. She, alongside with Grant, worked together to ensure young people were engaged in a way that did not invade their space but provided them with encouragement so that “*they feel they can grow with that and enjoy themselves*”.

## How creating songs and lyrics lead to creating connections

Before the project started, the young people involved were closed off from the process as songwriting and learning it as a group, was something many of them had not done before. By the end of the project, Grant observed how “*they were*

*caring for each other’s artwork they were caring for each other’s songs and helping each other [with] backing singings*”. In nearly every group, young people were helping and motivating each other, in some instances volunteering to help with the singing if there were multiple parts or more vocals needed in a song.

“ The fact that the kids are recognised for their songwriting ... response from their peer group is amazing and it makes their confidence just boom. (Morag Davies, *LAC team*)

One young person created a complex musical theatre arrangement and lyrics but felt shy to perform it. A group of other young people on the project volunteered to help sing it with him and record the piece as a group. Overall, the camaraderie and mutual support demonstrated by participants in the project gave it the feeling that everyone had created and accomplished their work together. As Grant highlighted, “*You can feel it, they’re all creating something, they’re all encouraging each other*”.

Morag emphasised this mutual support that developed between young people on the course as well, noting the empathy and support of young people towards the young person who had lost their brother in one example:

“ They’re ten or eleven. For them to accept what she [has] seen and to try and help her ... the camaraderie and friendship-building is really interesting [to see]... they look out for each other. (Morag Davies, *LAC team*)

By the end of the course, Grant felt that not only had they made stronger connections with each other, but with him as well. Having him come in week-to-week strengthened students’ respect for Grant as a teacher as they came in more committed to the project and its aims with a greater understanding and appreciation for Grant’s role in helping them.

## The power of music in increasing motivation beyond the session

Outside of the music classroom, young people who were a part of the project gained a sense of motivation and confidence which encouraged them to take part in other areas of their learning. Mel emphasised the impact of the project in providing young people with a reason to come to school through the sense of self-worth and self-expression they gained from the project:

“ Another huge positive noted by teaching staff was the school attendance of young people increasing. They were keen to come to school to see Grant and participate in the YMI project.  
(Mel Henry, *Project manager*)

Creating a bespoke project, led by young people and nurtured by support staff who celebrate their differences has been a key factor in their wider development. As Grant reflects:

“ I think you've got to be quite adaptable to their needs and what kind of characters they are and understanding body language and you know ... not being too rigid ... try to figure out different ways to get them to enjoy it. That's what I love about it – I love that they're all different and they all learn in a different way.  
(Grant Dinwoodie, *YMI tutor*)

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