

Route 66: Guidelines for delivering music workshops with young people at risk

Introduction

Artswork has produced these guidelines as a free resource for individuals and organisations interested in, or currently delivering music workshops with young people at risk.

Drawing on extensive experience, they explore some of the practical issues and important elements that should be considered when planning music workshops with groups of vulnerable young people. They make suggestions regarding how to get started, enthuse groups of young people and where to find suitable resources.

While these guidelines are by no means all encompassing, it is hoped that they will serve to stimulate thought and identify key areas for consideration.



Artswork

Established in 1987, Artswork is an independent national youth arts development agency, committed to generating creative opportunities for young people aged 12-25, with a priority for working with young people at risk.

Our four main areas of work are:

- Training and professional development
- Publications (inc. Upstart Magazine)
- Research and development projects
- English National Youth Arts Network

Artsplan

This set of guidelines compliments the existing range of Artsplan training courses and publications, covering all aspects of youth arts project management and arts based work with groups of vulnerable young people.

Artsplan is the training and publications department of Artswork youth arts agency, developed to help professionals, volunteers and artists use the arts with socially excluded young people more confidently and effectively. Further information can be found at www.artswork.org.uk/artsplan.

Route 66

Artswork has a wide range of experience in delivering music projects to vulnerable young people. Previous action research projects Music Machine and Music Maker have paved the way for our most recent project, Route 66, funded by Youth Music.

Route 66 is a partnership project operating in Hampshire. Building on the success of previous Artswork music projects, Route 66 aims to work with small groups of at risk young people aged 13-16, using specially trained professional

musicians in informal settings outside of school hours. Support networks and partnership work will enable their achievements to be monitored and recorded in a way that is meaningful to schools or agencies concerned with their formal education and personal and social development.

"I think the group record was the best bit, but it was all fantastic"



Project work has included the Blurb website and music workshops delivered in Andover, Basingstoke, Swanwick and Newport, Isle of Wight. Hundreds of young people have benefited from the week long workshops, receiving a certificate and CD of their songs upon completion. Some young people have formed bands as a result of their involvement, and performance events have been arranged at local festivals.

"It was good to be treated with trust, and like adults. The tutors were very good".

Identifying networking opportunities and cultivating relationships throughout the South East has also been an important part of the project. Advice and support has been given to many individuals, voluntary and professional organisations working with young people and music including: Winnall Rock School; Bishops Waltham Festival; Salmon Youth Centre, London; Homelands Festival; Swaythling Youth Centre. Training and support for new and established tutors has also been important in encouraging their own professional development and employment opportunities.

Context setting

Artswork supports a broad definition of youth culture, and *the arts*. It also blurs the boundaries between the arts and popular culture, recognising that, particularly in relation to work with young people, it is important to remain open to innovative and experimental forms of arts practice.

For the purpose of this document we generally adhere to a definition of young people as those aged between 12-25 years. This age range reflects that with which both Artswork and local Youth Services usually work. However, it is accepted that there are occasions in youth arts work when such hard and fast distinctions cannot be made. It is also important to bear in mind that the generic term "young people" actually refers to a potentially highly diverse group with a range of likes, dislikes, needs and issues.

Project planning

As these guidelines focus on specific issues involved in setting up music workshops with

young people at risk, a good understanding of the benefits of using the arts with young people, and basic youth arts project planning knowledge is already assumed.

However, should further information on either of these areas be required the following Artsplan publications may be of interest:

- **'Working Together:** guidelines for using the arts with young people' - Rosy Prue
- **'Get Sorted:** a guide to planning and budgeting a youth arts project' - Ruth Jones

Artswork also run training courses covering the above subject areas. Details of both publications and training can be found via the Artswork/Artsplan website.



Background knowledge of group

Always prepare yourself by finding out what kind of group you will be working with. If you are working with young people at risk or

disadvantaged young people there are issues that you must address.

At risk and disadvantaged young people can have many more factors influencing their lives which will have a bearing on your workshop. These should be identified by the partner agency during planning.

The partner agency needs to be realistic about these factors. Often it can be taken 'as the norm' by partners who expect that all workers have similar experience as themselves.

Again, Artswork produce useful training and guidelines covering specific issues involved in using the arts with young people at risk:

- **'Guidelines for using the arts with young people at risk'** - Virginia Haworth Galt

Group size

The ideal group size varies due to many factors, and is dependant on the tutors knowledge, experience and confidence, the support they are given and the type of venues and facilities you are using.

Having clear aims about what you want to achieve and knowing what the young people want to achieve will help inform the group size.

Be realistic. The circumstances of the young people involved (lack of confidence, low self esteem etc) can require a lot attention and guidance.

A group is always made up of young people both more and less confident to show their skills, so a conscious effort to include and receive input from all students is important.

Timetable and session plan

Pre-planning can, and will allow your workshop to run effectively, even if things don't always work out quite as anticipated.

Having a session plan also allows the young people and workers to understand the process of the workshops, how all the elements work together, why they are doing it, and what they will get out of it at the end.

The session plan will also provide a structure to try and ensure good time keeping from participants.

Whilst working within the session plan it is important to have the ability to be spontaneous and flexible, changing the plan to suit the differences/challenges a tutor can face from various students, technical problems and unforeseen events.

Remember:

- **Celebrate** - all successes
- **Concentrate** - always be on time / Plan your journey and workshop
- **Contemplate** - always allow enough time for a de-brief / feedback session
- **Evaluate** - record sessions onto audio/video

"When you approach something creatively, the journey is as important as the destination..."

Anon

Drugs policy

In the organisational and planning process you should ensure that it is clear who is responsible for enforcing drugs/alcohol and behaviour policies. It is good practice that you should be supported for instance by a youth worker/teacher who would be responsible for the young people and their behaviour.

Be aware - it can often be common for host agencies to neglect their responsibilities and expect the workshop leader to police the group.

(See Soundsense drugs policy and article, "Sounding Board", Autumn 2004. ISSN 1464-6730 pg 11-12)



Drinks policy

It should be negotiated with the group prior to workshops (preferably not on the day, this could be pre-work by their contact/support) on what is allowed in the workshops.

Electrical equipment and liquids are obviously a safety hazard; cost of repair from accidental spillage could be prohibitive especially when

using music technology equipment. Most colleges etc. do not allow drinks in any studios.

Also with the link between some young people's behaviour and diet/drinks it makes sense to dissuade young people to have such high energy drinks etc. whilst they are working.

However, it is still important that they can access drinks for refreshment and rehydration. One good option is to provide water and juice drinks (no added sugar) available at breaks only or in a designated area outside of the work area.



How to get started

Giving marginalised young people the opportunity to express one's uniqueness, to discover new abilities, to find their own voice and to tell their story through creativity are effective ways of promoting self-esteem and developing new skills.

Let the young people be themselves, start from where they are, listen to what they say and play, and try not to let your ideas and preferences take precedence, they are exploring their world.

The principle of working together needs to start at the level of the individual, if young people are not allowed to be included in small decisions, they

are not being empowered to take a role in broader participation.

"An essential aspect of creativity is not being afraid to fail." - Isaac Newton

Some tips for stimulating groups

1. Collage/Photos

Get groups or individuals to produce a collage of a song that they would like to write. Give them copies of old and current music/fashion/gossip magazines to cut up and aid them in producing their idea. This helps people visualise their thoughts. You can then explore how they would express their picture through music and lyrics.

Photographs can be used to the same effect.

2. Pop Idol

Start by informing the group they are going to be Pop Idol style judges. Have a sheet already prepared with relevant questions, then get them to listen to and judge a song - preferably one that young people have produced themselves.

Examples of questions you could use include: what is the style of music, how many instruments are being used, what are they, how many people are on the record, how long did it take to record, how would you rate or score the tune and lyrics.

Feedback from the group after each song is "judged". It can be useful to flip chart the answers that are given. See if all the young people can agree on what the genre is.

This exercise can help in many ways. It 'judges' the

ability and interests of the young people, as well as providing insight into their expectations i.e. how long it takes to make a tune, is it realistic etc.

It also helps to develop their listening and appreciation skills by getting them to view a song from a different position, and start thinking about structure, instruments and how the lyrics work with etc.

3. Mind Mapping

The key principles of mind mapping are:

- image
- association
- imagination

As an exercise mind mapping stimulates and frees the creative process of the brain. Using a simple version of this can easily produce ideas for writing lyrics.

There are three rules to mind mapping:

1. always mind map in landscape
2. never use straight lines
3. Only use single key words or images (more effective 'idea-triggers')

Individuals/groups are given 6x coloured pens and a sheet of A3 paper and asked to place it in front of them 'landscape'.

In the middle they are asked to write a phrase or word which is relevant to their life.



Next draw five 'branches' from the circle in each of your colours. At the end of those 5 branches they draw a picture or word that comes into their head when focussing on the first word, no matter how unconnected it must seem.

Then concentrate on each branch or colour strand and extend it again with additional branches and repeat the exercise. This exercise will continue for five minutes, by which time everyone will have several branches extending to the edge of the page.

If you follow the process of mind mapping the end result can be a starting point to song writing, by exploring how the words and ideas could be used to structure a song.

Remember:

Let the young people be themselves, start from where they are, listen to what they say and play, and try not to let your ideas take precedence - they are exploring their world.

The principle of working together needs to start at the level of the individual, if young people are not allowed to be included in small decisions, they are not being empowered to take a role in broader participation.

4. Rythmic Phrases

Think of a rhythmic phrase e.g. tongue twisters you can demonstrate with different rhythms, genres, or word plays. Using different methods to describe rhythms can be a useful way for young people to identify and engage with different beats, and remember how to reproduce them.



Lyrics

Some thought and discussion needs to take place prior to workshops as to the strategy for dealing with the lyrics which young people may write.

For instance young people will write about what effects their lives, and this can get very personal. Any form of art can become a powerful vehicle for expression, and there is the possibility of young people disclosing vulnerable, intimate details which may have to be followed up.

You should already ensure you have a child protection policy in place before you begin any direct work with young people. If this belongs to the partner agency then ensure you are familiar with procedures before embarking on any work. Make sure you have discussed and decided with the partner agency what the process is for any type of disclosure.

Child protection

Arts Council England have collaborated with the NSPCC to produce some excellent generic child protection guidelines entitled 'Keeping Arts Safe'. These can be downloaded free of charge from www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Artswork also runs the specialist child protection course for those working within youth arts "Creating Safety", which covers all aspects of child protection, including a unique 'safe touch' element. Again, there are specific issues to be aware of when working with vulnerable young people, and Artswork's 'Using the arts with young people at risk' training and guidelines may also be of use.

How do you deal with 'contentious' lyrics?

Swearing/sexism/misogyny/homophobia/racism/criminality - young people will write lyrics that challenge. Once again ensure you have a strategy for how to broach this with the young people.

It is easy to alienate and lose a group if you are critical of something they have expressed. Think of positive options - like exploring a radio edit, how to make a different version. Talk to them about who they would perform it to, and whether they would perform it in front of their family or friends for instance.

Often the lyrics and stories are a metaphor and the important story is within.

Practical issues

Always try and ensure you have at least one visit to the venue you will be using to assess its

suitability and to conduct a risk assessment.

Make sure you identify any issues and ensure they are raised and dealt with by the partner agency and/or venue.

Public liability

Ensure that you are covered by either:

- the host organisation
- Or (more likely)
- the agency or organisation hiring you

If you are hiring a venue from a third party it is likely that you will have to provide public liability insurance. You can however join the Musicians Union, under which you are covered for public liability.

MU members are insured personally in respect of legal liability that may arise following injury or damage to members of the public. The limit of indemnity is £10,000,000. This policy is only operative whilst the individual registered member is performing rehearsing or auditioning either solo or as part of a group band or orchestra and/or whilst teaching either at the member's own home or in a public place including transit there to and there from.

For further information on public liability or suitable insurance companies contact Artswork.

Circuit breaker

Saving lives and saving you money - a circuit breaker is an essential piece of equipment which will enable you to protect both your clients and

your equipment. Many practitioners take electricity and their equipment for granted, but there are a few things you should remember:

- if you are delivering workshops in other people's premises you can't guarantee the supply and fittings are 100%
- young people can sometimes be inquisitive, clumsy, destructive and forgetful - a great combination when using electrical equipment
- moving equipment round from place to place, into and out of transport etc. can easily result in damage. If you are using your own equipment you should be regularly checking all plugs and leads and have all equipment PAT tested on an annual basis



Fire exits and talks

Ensuring participants are aware of fire exits and procedures is something which is quite often overlooked by staff of the venues that you may be delivering in. Where possible it is better to get one of the venue staff to briefly talk to the group about the fire procedure. However, you still have responsibility for the health and safety of your group, therefore if this is not possible:

- Acquaint yourself with the fire exits and routes, don't assume that your client group will know where to go in the event of the alarm going off. You could be in big trouble if you follow young people who may not know where they are going.
- If you are working in a space, for instance a studio, where you may not be able to hear the alarm make sure that you identify a worker to be responsible for checking your group if an alarm is triggered.



Hearing

There has been an enormous amount of research in the past couple of years into young people and their hearing. The research shows that an increasing amount of young people's hearing is being damaged. This is due to many factors:

- Better, cheaper and louder personal music equipment.
- The increase in music in restaurants, pubs and public places.

- The increase in youth clubbing and even the humble car stereo has increased to what could be a club on wheels.

Couple this with what is an increase in the 'litigation culture', court cases against authorities, and it would be neglectful and dangerous not to address this issue.

Notices informing young people about the dangers of loud music should be posted in any project with a music making facility. Ear plugs should be available for all users of a project, including workers, as well as handouts about the effects of loud music.

It is advisable to ensure any pre-project training, includes a talk highlighting these dangers and the importance of offering ear plugs to participants. You should also check that you are using the appropriate type of equipment for the space in which you are working, and not set up a rig big enough to run Glastonbury within a youth centre coffee bar.

30% of musicians suffer from MIH - music induced hearing loss. There are many good web sites that have information, links and advice - some of which are featured below:

- www.hear-it.org
- www.josaka.com/Content/2000/Hearing-Care.htm
- www.youth.hear-it.org/

Resources

The following is a list of links to related websites that may prove of interest or use when running music workshops with young people at risk:

- www.musiciansunion.org.uk
- www.metamusic.org.uk
- www.musicstree.net
- www.blurb.org.uk
- www.youthmusic.org.uk
- www.thedjproject.com
- www.platformone.org
- www.musicmanifesto.co.uk
- www.childrenandradio.org.uk/links.htm
- www.musicstank.co.uk
- www.cmeabaysection.org/resources.html
- www.15megsoffame.com
- www.audio-recording-center.com
- www.childrenuk.co.uk/chukmar/adverts/russhouse/rhp.htm
- www.enyan.co.uk

Arts Councils:

There are four national development agencies for the arts in the UK - England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Information on regional contacts are available from each organisation:

- England - www.artscouncil.org.uk
- Wales - www.artswales.org
- Scotland - www.scottisharts.org.uk
- Northern Ireland - www.artscouncil-ni.org

Youth Arts Development:

Artswork - Offering training, consultancy, publications and advice. A wide range of experience in setting up and running youth arts

projects and working with young people, especially music. Visit www.blurb.co.uk.

Also run ENYAN (English National Youth Arts Network) - free and paid membership available.



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