

# MAKING THE CONNECTIONS



The concept is almost frustratingly simple, says **Anita Holford**. Help community musicians and people who work in youth services and music services to understand and share in each other's training and professional development, and you'll create better informed and more capable music leaders. Research commissioned by Youth Music from Sound Sense – *Towards a youth music makers' network* – shows that making this joined-up thinking a reality doesn't mean re-inventing the wheel

**I**T'S 2010. In a school not so far away a group of music leaders – youth workers, instrumental teachers, orchestra players, and community musicians – have a meeting about a music project with officers from the local authority's Musical Opportunities (previously known as Music Services), Youth Services, and Arts Development departments. They've all met before at regular networking meetings, and although they have different working backgrounds they find it easy to discuss exactly what's needed for the work, and what skills each person can provide.

It may seem like fantasy, but the *Towards a youth music makers' network* research looked at how to break down barriers between all those involved in youth music, particularly between informal education (community music, youth services) and formal education (music services) – and found that the starting point is professional development.

Most importantly, the work provides evidence of the need and the potential for change – from statistical information about the amount, uptake and costs of training and continuing professional development (CPD) in each sector, to in-depth interviews and case studies about people's experiences of trying to get work, the gaps in CPD provision and barriers to doing more of it.

## Towards a Youth Music Makers' Network – finding out what was on offer

The research took place in two pilot regions – the south east of England and east Midlands – and also investigated national initiatives. The aims were to:

- identify gaps in training and CPD in community music, youth services, music services
- identify barriers to accessing training that's already there
- explore ways to increase access and uptake of training and CPD
- investigate opportunities for cross-sector training
- build relationships between informal and formal music education sectors.

Researchers surveyed community musicians and community arts organisations; staff working for youth services and music services; community arts training organisations; umbrella organisations in formal and informal education; PAYP; Connexions

(the youth information service) and arts in education forums.

They used surveys to find out about the amount, uptake, costs and benefits of training and lists of subjects covered and interviews and case studies (see opposite) to find out what people thought were the gaps in CPD provision and barriers to doing more of it.

There were also four networking events and associated marketing and information distribution. As well as gathering evidence about needs, these events gave music providers and leaders from all three sectors a chance to meet and take part in learning and skills-sharing. At least one cross-sector project was formed as a result.

Researchers found four key areas where more was needed:

- Knowledge about what each sector does and how they fit into the overall pattern of music provision

- Understanding about how each sector operates, what the points of contact might be, and the differences of approach
- Opportunities to learn from each other's practice
- Awareness about opportunities that are already available.

And they made proposals for three developments:

- A network and associated events and information to help share information about all available training; broker links; encourage skills-sharing; address training gaps
- Better signposting of information through development of existing information resources and more face-to-face help at events
- The Patchwork a means of validating all types of learning experience, and matching them to projects' requirements.

The time is certainly ripe for change. Music services are becoming more interested in involving more, and a wider range of, young people in their work (see *Common purpose, Sounding Board Spring '03 p10*); Creative Partnerships are exploring more creative and collaborative ways of using artists in schools; and youth workers and youth justice workers are increasingly using artists in their work with young people at risk of offending, in the Positive Activities for Young People schemes (PAYP, previously called Splash: see *Reducing crime the music way, Sounding Board winter 2003 p10*).

But as the opportunities for musicians increase, so does the confusion among musicians about what experience or training they need, and among "purchasers" (all those who use their services) about how to assess if someone is suitable for their work. As Horace Cardew, head of young people's music at Sound Sense, says "At the moment, people don't necessarily know the requirements of a job until they get into it, and they don't know how to get the training even if they do."

Trish Evans, arts development officer for Creative Room in Nottingham (a youth service project funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund), agrees: "There does need to be more understanding and opening up. There's a serious lack of training for artists in areas such as working with young people with challenging behaviour, maintaining professional boundaries, and often a lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities between artists and youth workers."

But the research won't be kick-starting yet another debate about more or different training and accreditation schemes. In fact, it shows that there's actually no shortage of training and CPD for every conceivable learning style, subject, and working context. The real problem for most people, it seems, is being able to find out about and access suitable training from the wide range that's on offer.

**W**HAT'S needed, it says, is for people to open up their training opportunities to a wider range of people who work with young people. "People running training need to change their perceptions about who might be interested in what they're offering," says Cardew. "We'd like them to be aware of the many opportunities that skills sharing provides."

In the proposed scenario, a musician would be able to find out about, and shop around, the training provided by music services, youth services, and community arts, to find the combination that's exactly right for the work they do. They might pick a mixture of INSET days on subjects that can easily be learned in a classroom (say, child protection or aspects of the curriculum); one-to-one learning such as mentoring; more ongoing learning about techniques and approaches (perhaps from a community arts organisation); and a few gatherings and conferences where they can share information and network with colleagues and potential employers.

It's not only musicians who would find this

### MORE on the web

Towards a youth music makers' network: the continuing professional development needs of musicians and managers working on music education projects with children and young people is available from both *Sound Sense* and *Youth Music's* websites. *W*: [www.soundsense.org](http://www.soundsense.org) and use the Arts Connect search tool to look for "Towards YMMN"; or at [www.youthmusic.org.uk](http://www.youthmusic.org.uk)

helpful. Ian Richards, Entry to Employment team leader for Lincolnshire Youth Service, who has worked in partnership with community music organisation Soundlines, is typical of many youth workers: "Critically reflective practice means that you are always looking for opportunities to develop – the more the better. [What would be helpful is] specific music training tasters for youth workers, in the same way that it would be good if music workers could take advantage of accredited youth work training. I'd like to see more opportunities to network and share practice, taster opportunities for youth workers, and a skilled mentor might be useful as well."

**T**HE advantages for music services in sharing training are equally simple and valuable: "Music service staff could gain the skills that they need from community music training – workshop methods and music technology were two of the areas that they were particularly asking for help with – and community musicians who want to work in schools could get training, for instance, in aspects of the school curriculum," says Cardew.

Peter Maxfield, community services officer at Nottingham City Council, runs music technology projects in the city, and hopes to set up cross-sector training for both young people and music leaders: "We have youth orchestras, instrumental groups and studios all working with young people in music, but if nobody talks, they don't know what each can offer, and what their expectations are. At a very basic level, some youth workers have no idea of the

going rate for musicians – they expect to pay less than musicians need, because they don't understand the fact that they're freelance."

That's not to say cross-sector initiatives aren't already happening. Shared training between youth workers and artists, delivered by the Unit for Arts and Offenders, is already taking place as a result of PAYP. Creative Partnerships sees CPD as crucial to working with both formal education and artists – although the programmes are in very early stages. And of course many of Sound Sense's area gatherings – particularly those in the pilot regions delivered as part of this research – have attracted musicians and officers from music services, youth services and other sectors. But these are still the exception rather than the norm, and a larger shift in the way that training providers approach their work is needed.

**W**HAT'S also needed is better information about what's available. Once again, the researchers found that it's not more provision that's needed, but better signposts to it. There are already sources of information – such as *Creative People*, the national network of organisations providing information and advice and guidance on CPD in the arts; *Arts Connect*, the web portal of learning resources for artists that includes Sound Sense's own site; *Learn Direct* (and the associated *hotcourses.com*), the database of courses available online and by phone; and the *Arts Advice* website, set up by *Learn Direct* and *Metier* to provide information on courses



### Case Study – Matt Anderson

Case studies – formally structured and recorded interviews – formed an important way of gaining information from musicians in depth. They also provided powerful narratives about the learning journeys musicians undertake: here's an edited version of Mat Anderson's narratives.

I do Brazilian music, technology (that's my son at King Edward Park Nursery, Nottingham in a music technology project for Sambawamba). And Soundbeam, working for community music organisations, orchestras and even a University.

I've had lots of training including Soundbeam, a composers and choreographers exchange; composition tutorials with Jeremy Peyton-Jones (of Goldsmiths College), lots of performance masterclasses (African-Brazilian percussion, Qawwali voice work etc); placements; lots of short courses (both

music and administration) from community music organisations. Then there's reading, networking events, and mentoring sessions. I'm always keen to study workshop methodology – the dark arts of facilitation – in a practical context.

I feel that training should be based on experiential learning – actually doing things, rather than being talked at. Of course it requires imagination and charisma to deliver such training and not all trainers are blessed with an abundance of such qualities.

It's cost £1500 for everything, over a six-year period; if you put them end to end the total time would be about 600 hours. Some of this was bursary money, so the actual cost to me was less.

A lack of accreditation in my training has never stopped me from earning a living and doing well at my work, but that isn't to say that accreditation is superflu-

ous in any way. In fact I suspect that people like me help to perpetuate an unregulated system that can seem like a closed shop to newcomers.

I spend about two or three days a year on my CPD at present. Ideally it would be five days, but it costs me to take a day out for CPD. Artists struggle to earn money: giving up earning opportunities in order to train is a disincentive. Bursaries should cover lost earnings. After all, salaried individuals are still paid their wage when they are sent on a course.

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*Above and p 13 music leaders from the Inner City Youth Movement, Nottingham, helping young people to develop their skills at the Attic recording studio*

and careers in the arts. What's needed is for the information to be better tied together, more relevant, better targeted (through networking, face-to-face advice and marketing), and more easily accessed by everyone involved in youth music.

All this joining-up and better signposting to resources should help musicians of all sort become better at what they do. But, as director of Sound Sense

Kathryn Deane says "Just as we need to ensure that providers can deliver adequately, we can't afford to have purchasers who can't buy properly. We need ways they can find out if a musician is any good at their job".

Yet again, the researchers don't take the easy line of demanding accreditation for all. For one thing, they found that purchasers, let alone providers, were at best ambivalent to its value. For another, they were concerned about the impact on diversity in all its forms of such a move.

Time to roll out the researchers' secret weapon. *The Patchwork* is a pretty straightforward solution, which is developed in concept in the report. It's basically a grid of the different forms of work, settings and groups, which would be matched to sets of skills, competencies or areas of knowledge, and the ways in which these can be achieved. Musicians would have control of their own learning, but they would also have a responsibility to hold baseline skills, reflect regularly on their learning, and understand where they are on the Patchwork at any given time (and what that enables them to do or not to do).

**A**LTHOUGH all this work will take some time to develop, the recommendations of the research are already being acted on. Sound Sense is looking for funding to work with musicians and purchasers to put together sample Patchworks and associated materials, and to research and test a set of baseline skills. They are preparing a plan to improve the availability of CPD information. And, in collaboration with

the Youth Music, they are hoping to move ahead with joint formal/informal sector training sessions, as described in the report.

Youth Music is similarly committed to developing programmes that tackle learning and skills development for music leaders. As a direct result of the research it has appointed Rachel Gardiner to the new post of national learning and skills coordinator. Her remit is to support the development and implementation of Youth Music's Learning and Skills Programme.

There is also help at hand for purchasers who need to find musicians and other artists sooner rather than later. *Artscape*, the national web-based directory of artists in formal education, is being developed by NAWE (the National Association of Writers in Education) in partnerships with Sound Sense and other colleagues. It is the first directory to include information on quality issues: entry is conditional on musicians providing a clean and recent CRB disclosure, evidence of engagement with CPD, valid insurances and two references.

**W**HERE might all this joining-up lead? In the long term, perhaps to a light-touch network, similar to the two piloted as part of the research, with all the relevant sectors be involved in its planning and delivery. As well as sharing information through regional events and web-based resources, such networks would feed information to Arts Connect, CreativePeople and Learn Direct so that they could provide more relevant information to music leaders. Eventually the network could have a wider role in advocacy and research – for example, working out how freelance musicians might fund their CPD including making up for lost earnings.

If the shift in training and CPD that Sound Sense's research proposes is achieved, the music leaders of the next decade will certainly be more confident in their skills, better able to plan their professional development, and better equipped to work with a wider range of organisations. The research has proved that the opportunities are there, as well as the desire to work together. There's no need to re-invent any wheels – just to make better use of what's already out there.

## LINKS

Towards a youth music makers' network was carried out by Sound Sense, the UK development agency for community music, and funded by Youth Music, which funds and facilitates music-making for young people who might otherwise lack opportunity.

**Sound Sense**, 7 Tavern Street, Stowmarket  
IP14 1PJT: 01449 673990 E:  
info@soundsense.org.uk  
www.soundsense.org

**Youth Music**, One America Street, London  
SE1 0NE T: 020 7902 1060 E:  
info@youthmusic.org.uk or  
ymrachel.gardiner@virgin.net  
W: www.youthmusic.org.uk

**Artscape** www.artscape.org.uk  
**Creative People** www.  
creativepeople.org.uk  
**Arts Connect**: www.arts-connect.com  
**Learn Direct**: www.learndirect.  
co.uk