

Your Own Music:

Supporting young bands, songwriters, producers and artists

What do we know from previous youth consultations?

The *Your Own Music* initiative (hereafter YOM) involves an element of data gathering from young people to find out about their music experiences and what support they wish for. Interviews by hub partner organisations were originally proposed and in October 2022 the idea of interviews was revised to a survey. To inform the content of the survey or to consider a more in-depth method instead (such as focus groups), we decided to re-visit three previous consultations Wiltshire Music Connect commissioned from Nell Farrally (referred to as TN, TN2 and CMM).

Summary of the three consultations

Name	Timescale	Focus /purpose	Who responded
Take Note Webpage of info and key findings Infographic of key findings (TN)	Feb to June 2016 (report completed July 2016)	The hub's first youth consultation – aimed to cover all aspects of music making.	Online questionnaire: 406 CYP and 20 parents/carers Written questionnaire (through visiting schools, funded ensembles and youth clubs): 284 CYP 6 focus groups involving 73 CYP (schools, youth club, funded ensemble and Riverbank Studios)
Take Note 2 (TN2)	March to June 2018 (report completed Sept 2018)	To update 2016 consultation and a focus on transition from primary to secondary school.	Online questionnaire: 179 CYP and 23 parents/carers Written questionnaire (through visiting schools, a funded ensemble and youth clubs): 122 CYP 4 focus groups involving 22 CYP: a primary school, a secondary school, a funded ensemble and 'Unsigned' at Trowbridge Town Hall.
Creative Music Making Consultation (CMM)	March and April 2021 (summary report and drafts of full report completed in April 2021)	Creative music making – consultation was required as the hub were a partner in a Sound and Music Youth Music bid (the Wilts element of the project was focusing on rural isolation).	Online questionnaire (request to complete via 5 secondary schools who have significant rural catchment area) 39 responses (mostly from Lavington School with some from Royal Wootton Bassett Academy).

Key Findings

Each of the three consultations presented key findings that summarised the main points that arose relevant to the focus of each consultation. The key findings that are most relevant to YOM are further synthesised below.

Styles of music

- Children and young people who are doing lots of music making outside of school have an appetite to do more. They want to explore a wider range of ensembles and performance opportunities, and to try new instruments. Their experiences of music making gives them greater perceptions of what is possible. (TN)
- Pop and experimental are the most common styles of music young people say they create. (CMM)
- Improvising is the type of creative music making which the greatest number of young people say they currently do. A significant majority of young people (79%) say they do improvising in at least one place (school, home or somewhere else). (CMM)
- There do not appear to be any gender-stereotypical patterns regarding the kinds of creative music making young people said they currently do or are interested in doing. Amongst the responses from young people who told us their gender identity, it seems that females and males are equally interested in different types of music making and different styles of music. (CMM) This consideration of gender followed up a theme from TN where some young women felt that gender-stereotyping affected their music making. (TN)

Spaces

- Young people really value having places where they can make music informally with their peers. This includes using practice rooms at school during lunchtimes and using other rehearsal spaces to play in bands. (TN)
- The provision of non-formal music making opportunities, and those which focus on rock and pop genres, is patchy. In some community areas, local providers have replaced music making opportunities which were formerly offered by Youth Centres, whilst in other areas, this has not happened. (TN)

Instruments and equipment

- Some children and young people were disparaging about the maintenance, quality and access to music equipment in their schools. Some young people had high expectations which were not met. One group of young people were frustrated that a recording studio at their school had limited use as there was no technical support to help young people learn to use it (apparently a technician for the studio was not affordable for the school). (TN2)

Performance opportunities

- Young people want more opportunities to perform to an audience. (TN)
- Young people whose musical interests are outside of western classical music and the school music curriculum, feel that they do not receive the same support from music educators as young classical musicians receive. (TN)

Financial barriers

- The greatest barrier to music making which children and young people spoke about was financial – the cost of lessons, instruments and equipment, and rehearsal and recording facilities. (TN)

Finding out about music

- The most common ways children and young people find out about music is from their family, their school teachers and instrumental teachers, and social media. Facebook is the predominant social media site young people use to find out about music – other platforms were mentioned infrequently. Some parents felt that they lacked information about opportunities which are available and that they didn't know how to find out. (TN)

Ways of learning

- Children and young people demonstrate a resourcefulness in finding ways to pursue their musical interests, particularly to expand their music making beyond the core format of individual instrumental tuition. They learn from siblings, friends, tutor books and YouTube tutorials. They value informal musical learning, which for many CYP, is the dominant form of learning second or multiple instruments. (TN2)
- One part of this resourcefulness is children and young people's use of technology – particularly online apps and social media sites for creative music making. Whilst no specific safeguarding concerns arose during the consultation, some of the things CYP said highlighted issues of online safety for young people who are using the internet for music making (for example, using apps and websites where they are too young to have their own accounts, and in one case communicating with people they have met online). (TN2)

Creating their own music making

- Far more young people say that they do creative music making at home, than those who say they do creative music making at school. (CMM)
- Of the young people who took part in the consultation, only a small proportion wish to have other musicians to play their created music and compositions. (CMM)
- The most common way young people share the music they create is with family and friends. At the time of our consultation (during a coronavirus lockdown), only a few said they shared their music through live performance or through sharing online. (CMM)
- Recording music and lyric writing are the skills young people say they most wish to learn to support their creative music making. (CMM)
- It was notable that a few young people chose to tell us that their lack of confidence prevented them from creating their own music, even though this was not something we specifically asked about. (CMM)

What does reviewing existing info suggest we need to find out?

Some initial ideas of what reviewing existing consultation findings reveals in terms of updating and filling gaps in knowledge relevant to YOM are shown below. Additionally, some points below have arisen from discussions about past consultations and the justification for more consultation and a need to understand what has changed since 2016, 2018 and 2021.

Which social media do YP use to find out about opportunities? In 2016 Facebook was the dominant platform but it would be very surprising if that was still the case.

How has the pandemic and move to online learning and collaboration changed young people's creative music making – and have any changes continued beyond the necessity of lockdowns?

Is finding performance opportunities even more challenging – maybe due to pandemic or small venues and pubs closing?

How are young people coping with the cost of instruments, equipment, software eg. what free apps are they using?

Has access to spaces and equipment at school changed – has it deteriorated further or is equipment being upgraded?

What do YP understand by 'improvising'? This was not clear from the written questionnaire in CMM.

Considering elements of the NMPE2, such as increasing access to rehearsal spaces that expand from current core and extension roles, are their gaps in knowledge that need to be filled for a needs analysis to prepare for a new delivery plan / hub lead organisation application?

Some points in the key findings come from a small number of young people's contributions to the consultations and in some cases, come from case studies of one person. Is a greater understanding needed of how widespread the issues raised in the consultation are?

Is there information we need to be gathering from young people now, to reflect back to schools as they create Music Development Plans?

We plan to consult young people further as part of our *Your Own Music* initiative in early 2023 which will help us explore some of these questions.