



PERCEPTIONS OF
MUSICAL FUTURES AS A
YOUTH - LED PROVIDER

An independent review of stakeholder
feedback from the Disquiet project



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WHAT IS DISQUIET?

In 2017 Musical Futures were awarded funding for *Disquiet*, their first ever project that trains young music leaders in community settings to run their own music clubs. The aim of this project was **to empower young people in Medway and Swale to run and sustain their own music provision.**

Working in partnership with Ideas Test in Swale and Medway, Kent, the project set out to enable the training of six young people aged 16-19 in workshop skills using the Musical Futures approach, managed by Kevin Grist at SparkedEcho.

Trainee music leaders had the opportunity to:

- develop music skills on a variety of instruments
- gain an arts qualification and leadership skills for their CV
- receive a training bursary of up to £300
- learn the Musical Futures approach that is used in schools across the UK and apply it to a community setting
- get ongoing support and coaching while they run and lead music workshops for other young people

The project is funded by a Youth Music grant held by Musical Futures, and in-kind support and cash match from Musical Futures, Ideas Test and Medway Youth Services.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

The intended outcomes, as set out by Musical Futures, were:

1. Young trainees in Medway and Swale develop music leadership skills.
2. Young participants in Medway and Swale have improved access to high quality music-making activity.
3. Musical Futures' reputation as a provider of youth-led music leader training is improved.



THE BENEFICIARIES

6 x young people aged 16-19 who will become trainee music leaders.
36 x young people aged 13-19 who will participate in music workshop led by trainees.

2 x youth workers - one at Strood Youth Centre and one at Ideas Test - who are also trained to support trainees beyond the initial support from Musical Futures.

THE PRACTITIONERS

Kevin Grist, SparkedEcho – Project Manager and Mentor
Anna Gower, Freelance – Musical Futures Trainer
Katie Teage, Freelance – Musical Futures Trainer
Fran Hannan, Musical Futures – Managing Director and Grant Holder
Frances Chiverton, Ideas Test – Youth Manager and Arts Award Advisor
Steph Fuller, Ideas Test – Director
Allan Harris, Strood Youth Centre – Youth Worker and Music Teacher
Patricia Houssein, Strood Youth Centre - Manager

ABOUT MUSICAL FUTURES

Musical Futures supports primary and secondary schools to transform their music teaching. They share the learning systems, professional development, tools and support needed to embrace an ethos of innovative, inspirational and informal music learning in the classroom and in the community. The Musical Futures approach emphasises real-world learning, using methods that are employed by popular musicians and community practitioners outside of formal settings.

Musical Futures is about an approach to learning, rather than a specific musical style genre, meaning that it is sustainable and transferable to a range of learning contexts, both within the UK and overseas.



PERCEPTIONS SURVEY

We invited Musical Futures stakeholders to complete an online survey around their perceptions of Musical Futures, particularly the extent to which they feel that the organisation and its output is youth-led as this held specific importance when delivering *Disquiet*. This survey was circulated before the project and 137 stakeholders participated.

Here are some key findings:

What words first come to mind when you think of a Musical Futures project? *(Top 25 most used words in response, all used by between 5 and 35 respondents.)*

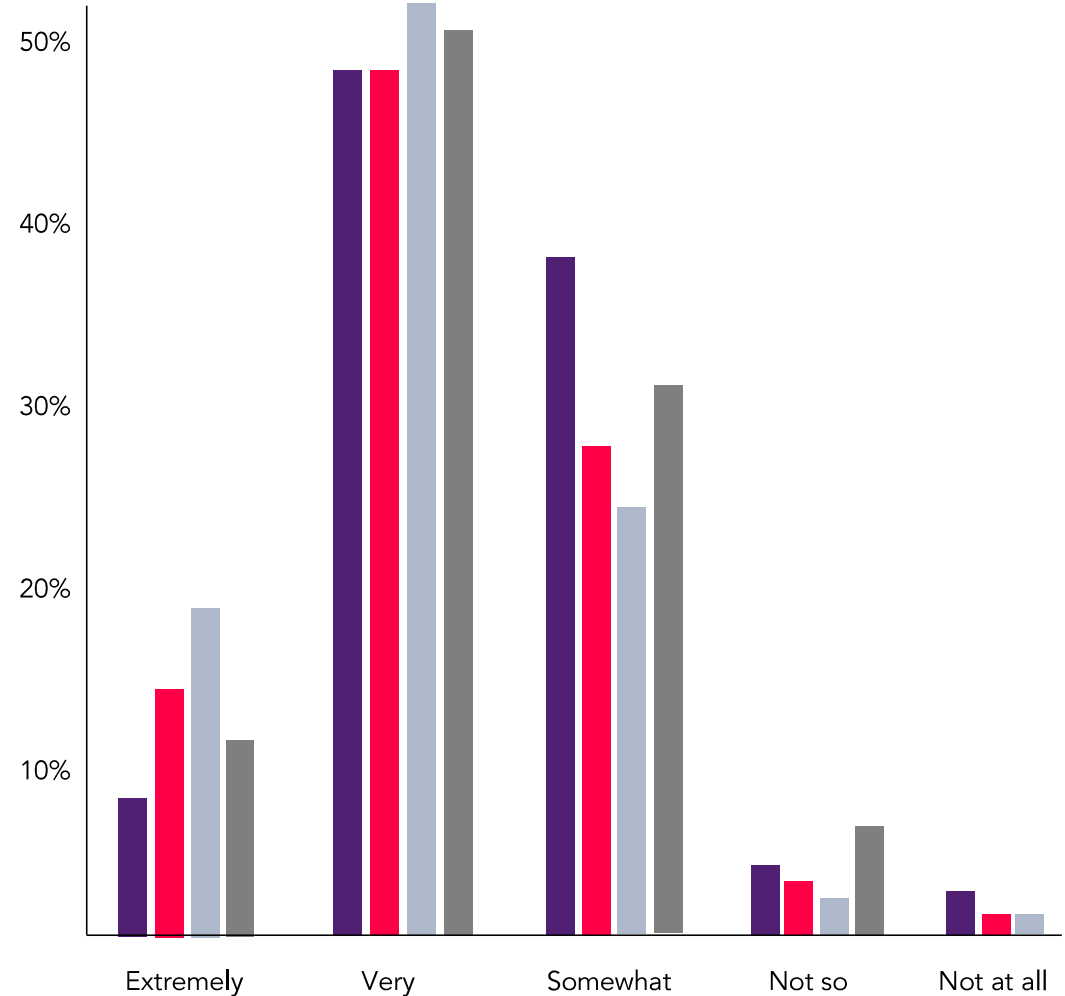
Young People Progressive Youth Projects Inspiring Contemporary
 Innovative Relevant Engaging Enjoyment Fun
 Participatory Music Hands Practical Expensive
 Learning Pop Independent Creativity Exciting Freedom
 Student Led Play Inclusive

How **youth-led** do stakeholders perceive Musical Futures' output to be?

Over half of survey participants feel the resources are 'extremely' or 'very' youth-led, although 12% felt unable to answer, having not used them.

A third of the respondents felt the training and the methodology are 'extremely' or 'very' youth-led, with another third labelling them both as being only 'somewhat' youth-led.

60% describe the methodology as being 'extremely' or 'very' reliable and three quarters of survey participants perceive the offer to be 'extremely' or 'very' honest compared to delivery.



- How innovative is our approach to working with young people?
- How exciting is our model for young people?
- How popular is our approach with young people?
- How reliable is our methodology?

YOUNG MUSIC LEADER FEEDBACK

The following responses are transcribed from audio recorded by Kevin Grist in November 2017 with three trainee music leaders.

How suitable is the space?

[The space] works really well... I think it's a nice environment... I feel I can be comfortable around these people... with the confidence I have now I can project myself.

What would you do if you could see one person is struggling?

I'd usually finish the run through then go out and help them so everyone has the chance to reflect on how they've done.

How do you feel about the video resources?

They've been brilliant... everyone gets to see it on the screen as it comes up.

How do you manage noise and attention in the room?

I just get them to sit down and show them the next thing we're going to do and try and just gradually lower the noise.

How do you ensure everyone in the group has a say?

We go through some song suggestions, if they like them we go with that, if they don't like the song we pick another one. It's me choosing the songs with them, so we do it all together.

What other resources would be on your wish list?

Bass guitars and amps.



How do you keep everyone engaged in a session?

Print out chord sheets... if someone's not doing something try and get them doing something interactive.

How effective are the printable chord sheets?

They're effective.... Very helpful. To start with they [participants] are a bit confused... there's a lot to take in... but once you know it's really practical.

How well do you think you've helped young people create their own music?

Quite well I think! We've had a bit of fun making different things.

Some people come here [sic] and didn't know any chords and have actually learnt how to play chords on a guitar.

If you were to do this again how would you go about it?

If I was going to do this again I'd find a song on YouTube and make them change the song a bit, rewrite the lyrics.

And do you think it's helped participants learn about music theory?

I've definitely learnt from it. I didn't know anything, and now I've got more of an understanding, playing the keyboard and stuff.

I've learnt more about drumming. It's good to come to a place where there are little kids who can teach me stuff as well as me teach them stuff!

So it's been a really shared experience?

Yeh definitely!



WHAT WORKED WELL TO TO SUPPORT YOUTH VOICE

Based on interviews with key staff members from Musical Futures and Ideas Test, with direct experience of Disquiet.

RESOURCES

Use of play-along videos was very successful which can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the young people are used to using YouTube so this felt natural. The blog also worked well for young people to refer to throughout the project. Having ownership of a space instilled ownership in participants over the whole project. Arts Award worked as a 'strategic milestone' and a way to encourage young people to record their achievements – is an 'obvious route to recognition.' As well as physical resources, the regular staff working on the project contributed to its overall success. The local knowledge of the Project Manager was invaluable and the project worked best when there was significant 'buy in' from youth workers at the venues.

ENGAGEMENT

Attendance on this project was good (better than average). The participants involved have themselves become an established group and now find their own performing opportunities (open mics, gigs etc) together. They are still using physical spaces from Disquiet to rehearse in. New friendship groups developed between young people from a range of backgrounds and abilities and the project received some really positive parental feedback around this. Some of them have gone on to volunteer for Ideas Test – a great example of resultant social development.

PARTNERSHIPS + DEVELOPMENT

Youth Music have awarded Ideas Test further funding as a direct legacy response to the project. Good relationships have been developed with Kent Music throughout, who resourced the project further Jan-April by way of a staff member and have offered space for a continuing club on Saturday mornings. This relationship has 'transformed Disquiet from project to programme'.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT YOUTH VOICE

ARTS AWARD

Arts Award is potentially seen as 'token' and not adding value for young people. Key staff suggest a more music specific alternative to Arts Award that would have more buy-in from them.

RESOURCING

A lot of key staff members changed roles or left organisations during the course of the project at Musical Futures, Ideas Test and Strood Youth Centre. A result of this was a lack of ideal admin support which is a risk factor that needs to be considered. Getting dedicated youth workers at any given site to commit to the project is always a 'threat' as there is an inevitable cost implication, but the project's success relies heavily on this person in each instance. The future of this type of work would rely on schools and youth centres to source their own funding to buy in training from Musical Futures, while being able to access the toolkit for free.

SCALING UP THE MODEL

Scaling up to other groups could happen most efficiently by way of the toolkit and videos, and training via Skype method could be used again and monetised. Where possible, capitalise on opportunities to perform being something young people want and don't get across the board in school or college. The 'just play' methodology could work well with all ages, as well as across arts forms. Creating a map of local opportunities / potential creative journeys was also put forward as an idea for development by a key staff member.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been drawn up in light of all of the feedback and data collected.

- DEFINITION + CLARITY

Capacity should be determined from the outset – success relies on committed youth workers in the given settings. The spirit of collaboration is good for future projects, particularly to involve music hubs and Music Cities.

(A Music City is a statement of intent by the music community, local authorities and others to work together to support and develop the music sector and music economy in a city, town or region.) Clear agreements need to be in place early on though, as the methodology built on experience could easily be hacked or diluted.

- YOUTH VOICE + EVALUATION

More feedback from young people is needed around how they feel about skill sharing - are they empowered to 'teach' in their own style in their own words? This could be quite crucial to their own enjoyment and the effectiveness of the skill share. More strategic use of evaluation would benefit the project design, benchmarking the journey that each young person takes with the Musical Futures model from the beginning - not just the end result. Timing for programme delivery is critical and might not be universal - decisions need to be led by young people.

- BUILDING NETWORKS + SCALING UP

A national model with local delivery will require a deeply established network as all engagement is driven by local partners. Any future funding will need to allow for the time it takes to build these relationships and for development of practitioners to a high standard. Consider the long-term support for newly trained facilitators; if the project is being scaled up, the access to ongoing and updated guidance must be made simple.



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