

ARTSTRAIN:

developing and supporting young
people's wellbeing

Qualitative research
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for Sound Connections

Quantitative analysis and visual presentation
by tialt // there is an alternative

mytimeactive
artstrain
Making Music Happen For Young People



Overview and brief

[ArtsTrain](#) is a creative music programme designed, developed and delivered by leading social enterprise, Mytime Active since 2008. The programme supports children and young people across the London Boroughs of Bromley, Bexley and Lewisham, targeting those who are not engaged in formal music-making and face challenging circumstances.

Sound Connections was commissioned alongside tialt // there is an alternative to provide ArtsTrain with a deeper dive into their core wellbeing dimensions (Creativity, Motivation, Self-efficacy and Musical communication). The purpose of this work was to support ArtsTrain with reviewing their practice and to help explore what elements of the work help to create an environment for these wellbeing outcomes to take place.

To understand young people's perceptions around their own wellbeing (focusing on a deep dive into each of the core wellbeing areas)

To explore various aspects of young people's creative experiences and how they attribute these different experiences/ phases of development to changes in their individual wellbeing

To work with Music Leaders to reflect on their practice and identify areas of their work that have impact of different dimensions of individual's wellbeing.

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Methodology

tialt provided a deeper dive into existing ArtsTrain data collected from participant-completed surveys. From this, Sound Connections devised a set of focus-group interview questions that built on key emergent themes from the previous report:

- Providing young musicians with valuable creative skills
- Developing self-efficacy and agency in young musicians
- Developing young musicians' motivation for taking on new activities
- Providing young musicians with valuable technical skills and transferable skills
- Building networks and providing opportunities for career progression

This analysis relates to a series of focus group interviews with Arts Train participants during 2021-2022. 45 Arts Train participants and alumni took part in 5 focus groups with members of Sound Connections Wired4Music - a network of young people aged 16-25. Wired4Music members received training in evaluation techniques, and co-devised the questions for the focus groups. The intention was to have young-people led conversations that encouraged ArtsTrain participants to share opinions and views on a peer-to-peer level.

Music leaders participated in an initial workshop exploring models of reflective practice, and potential indicators of outcomes they may observe during the sessions, and then completed a reflective workshop towards the end of the academic year to consider their practice and the impact on young people.

Data from focus-groups and workshop leader sessions was coded using a deductive coding method (i.e. pre-defined codes from the project outcomes and indicators).

To guarantee anonymity of the young people, all identifying features (names, focus group location) have been removed from quotations, however we have indicated quotations (anonymously) from alumni members due to the slightly differing nature of their perspective. Young people from herein are referred to as participants.



01

METHODOLOGY



02

PERCEPTIONS OF WELLBEING

It was really fun because I could express myself through music which I like to do.

Perceptions of wellbeing

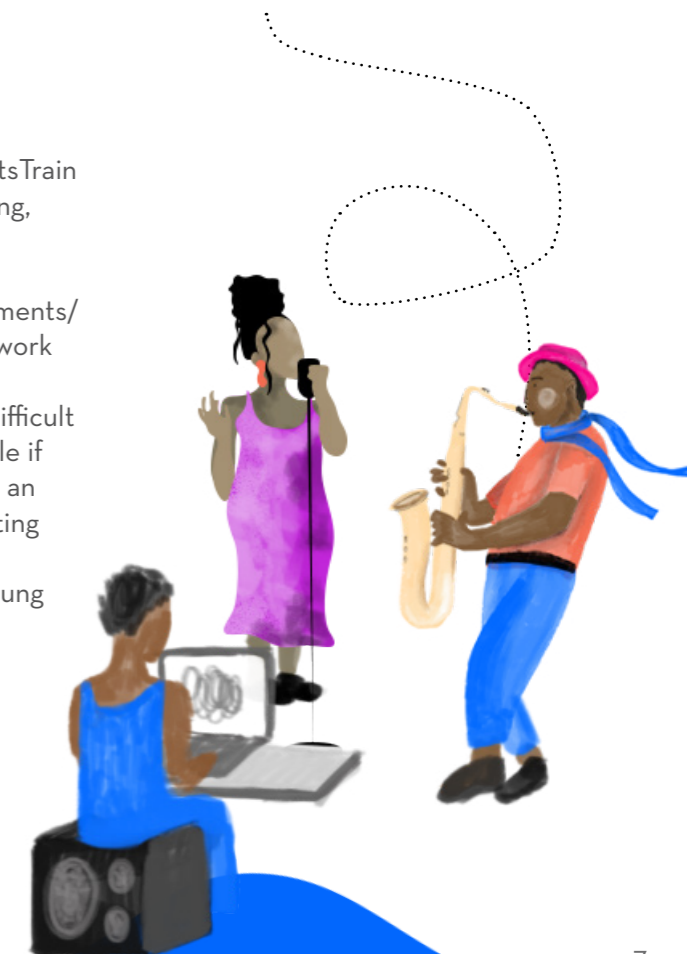
From the qualitative data gathered in this piece of evaluation work, there is very little evidence of negative impact, or of areas of ArtsTrain that didn't work so well. There are areas that practitioners and ArtsTrain will continue to evolve, but this data overwhelmingly suggests that the ArtsTrain programme has a positive impact on all involved – participants and music leaders.

Music leaders did reflect, and urge caution on, overuse of the term 'wellbeing' with participants. They felt it wasn't terminology that participants themselves use, although facets of wellbeing (relaxed, calm, escapism, feeling positive) are more relatable.



There are a number of topics that you come across as a workshop [leader], but you know, over the years that you could bet money on them turning off young people, one of them is anything to do with anti drugs. And one is wellbeing, mainly because I don't think people know what that means. So, you know, when you say, young people will assume that it's like, people don't write songs about well, you know, it's not cool enough of a topic. So I've learned a lot about how to actually approach that. And there's been lots of quality work that's come out from that topic. In addition to that, we have one particular young person at the Bromley academy group, who has been super quiet to the point where it was only the fact that she was actually turning up. That kept us with some hope and belief that she's actually gaining something from doing [the activity]. It's like, she'd sing, but it's like, she's not really trying to be heard. Like he's hiding behind other people's voices, kind of background in herself. But we did some good work with her. (Music leader)

The evidence from the focus groups suggests that the ArtsTrain programme has a positive impact on participants' wellbeing, which they were able to describe in a multitude of ways presented throughout this report. As evidenced below, a willingness to try and a development of mastery in instruments/vocals, increase in confidence and self esteem, ability to work collaboratively and make friendships, and even a regular attendance at the sessions are all indicators of this. It is difficult to attribute causality of this fully to ArtsTrain – for example if a young person's wellbeing is more or less positive during an ArtsTrain session other factors in their lives may be affecting this – however we can make an assumption that ArtsTrain sessions play an important part in the wellbeing of the young people involved.



Some participants described ArtsTrain sessions as escapism for them:

It's a space where you are free to do whatever you want to do without judgment...It's a nice kind of escape if you do have things that are going and if you want to do something creative people push you to do that something creative whether its music or not. So everyone is here for each other. (Participant)

I think it's also very important for your general wellbeing, just in terms of you go to school, a lot of the time you have exams, you have multiple classes a day, you go home, maybe you have to do homework or different things, I think it's also kind of an escape, you have somewhere else to go where you can just allow your frustrations, play some music, make some new friends, have a laugh. (Alumni member)

For others, ArtsTrain provided a release and a relief from other stresses and pressures that they had in their lives:

Honestly, it was just good to have that sort of relief... from the stresses of school and everything. Like you just go and have your little one hour, two hour session. And kind of just forget about things with music. When you're indulging in music you don't really think about anything else apart from the music that you're making. Like you genuinely feel like you're on top of the world. I was going through quite a lot when I was in ArtsTrain and those two hours it was almost like a gift from God, like I can just relax and chill and have some time...definitely [has had] a positive impact on mental wellbeing. (Alumni member)

In a way it's kind of good for our mental health as well cause it's taking us away from our normal lessons that normally stress us out generally and then taken us to something that we generally enjoy (Participant)

I feel like I can just let out everything into the room, it's just easier. It feels good to be in here and when you just leave, you leave with a good spirit in a way...You can go home kind of stressed but it kind of like relieves everything in a way. (Participant)

Some participants described feeling calm, relaxed, happy and experiencing positive feelings as a result of the ArtsTrain sessions:

I feel really calm and happy and quite like I achieved. Like we set out a goal and will achieve it the next session. (Participant)

I guess I feel quite relaxed when I am getting actual help. I mean [when I am] listened to and stuff. (Participant)

This participant explains how they were able to express themselves:

It was really fun because I could express myself through music which I like to do. (Participant)

And this participant that it helped with feelings of isolation:

It makes me feel less alone. Because people like also have social anxiety. And it makes it less difficult to engage, because we each have our own struggles. (Participant)

Others feel positive and energised when leaving the session, in some cases leading to more music making beyond the session:

When I leave here, I just leave with a positive energy. (Participant)

When I go home I write more stuff, when I reach home. (Participant)



03

PROVIDING YOUNG MUSICIANS WITH VALUABLE CREATIVE SKILLS

I'm grateful to have the opportunity to experiment with music and stuff cause you don't get to do it properly in school most of the time and it's mostly a lot of people [who] got to do it as well which is good. (Participant)

Providing young musicians with valuable creative skills



These sessions were vital for me to express my creativity. They provided a platform for expression and gave me the opportunity to develop my talent. (Alumni member)

Participants were reliably able to articulate the creative process that they followed during ArtsTrain sessions. They highlighted a range of starting points: words; musical building blocks and emotions.

Many participants found starting the creative process with mind mapping or passing round paper and accumulating sentences/paragraphs to be an effective stimulus. This grounded the creative process in a medium that they felt comfortable and familiar with, and that was intuitive.

We [brainstormed] around [words] and the word we chose was insecurity. From there we had a few things like what topics and categories you think of when you think of the word insecurity. From there we started listening to songs, getting a bit of an idea of a draft. (Participant)

We each went into separate rooms and we got given a sheet of paper that had adjectives and nouns on it. We made up a metaphor...so that is what we based our song around. (Participant)

I think you [can now] feed off one another and create that flow. I think that was really creative. (Participant)

We didn't have to try hard or think about it too much to be able to write a song, just the first thing that comes to your head always works. (Participant)

This alumni member recalled how the freedom of starting from a visual stimulus was an effective way of getting ideas flowing:



[We would] create music from, like when you post a picture or something, and then like, new ideas from the vibe you get from the picture and what it was like saying to us. And then we literally try and create a piece using that. We kind of were just given a bit of free rein to be as creative as possible and to make pieces. (Alumni member)



Having a 'structured' approach to the start of the creative process seemed important for many participants as it provided a framework for their creativity:

We were just given a base idea of everything to help us get started and then we did everything else from there.
(Participant)

Being given restrictions at times led to me learning my strengths/weaknesses as a creative musician and writer.
(Alumni member)



An alumni member shared how overcoming different time signatures during the creative process helped them in their musical journey a few years later:

We were encouraged to play around with different time signatures. And we were encouraged to try and write a song to this beat, I struggled so much. But later on, I actually travelled to Cameroon, and they were doing these three count signatures, time signatures. I remember I was there and I was thinking I know this, I learnt this in ArtsTrain. It was fun to know that actually, I can try new things, I can fail at it but try again.
(Alumni member)

Participants articulated how they matched lyrics with instruments (or the other way around):

We were creating our verse two and [the music leader] said that he gave us techniques that was, when we were composing the lyrics it needs to be in time and this kind of matched the instruments that you were using... and he said that we can use a kind of replacement lyric and then we can see how that goes with the instruments and we can like switch it up and change it if we don't like the lyrics. (Participant)

They described an iterative process of layering music to construct songs, with the music leaders guiding and supporting. This appears to have had a positive impact on some participants for example:

We sorted out some of the music and it was some improvising I can say on my part but I guess that's what gave it some more authenticity to it... You're putting a lot more effort to it when you're creating something as you go, but it still sounds really beautiful.
(Participant)

Some participants found developing understanding of song structure and theory a valuable part of the learning process.

Even as a songwriter, I learned a lot, how to structure songs, to build songs, how the music greatly impacts the effect of the song.
(Alumni member)

Before we even went into separate rooms we had a long talk about what songs. We made up themes for songs and we wrote down on the white board what was in a song.
(Participant)

These participants explained the gratitude they felt for being able to follow this kind of creative process and express their musicality in a contrasted way from how they experienced music learning in school:

I'm grateful to have the opportunity to experiment with music and stuff cause you don't get to do it properly in school most of the time and it's mostly a lot of people [who] got to do it as well which is good. (Participant)

Being a musician within a school setting you are often restricted to curriculum/school values, with ArtsTrain we were able to (and encouraged to) explore who we were as musicians – both solo and as a group. (Alumni member)

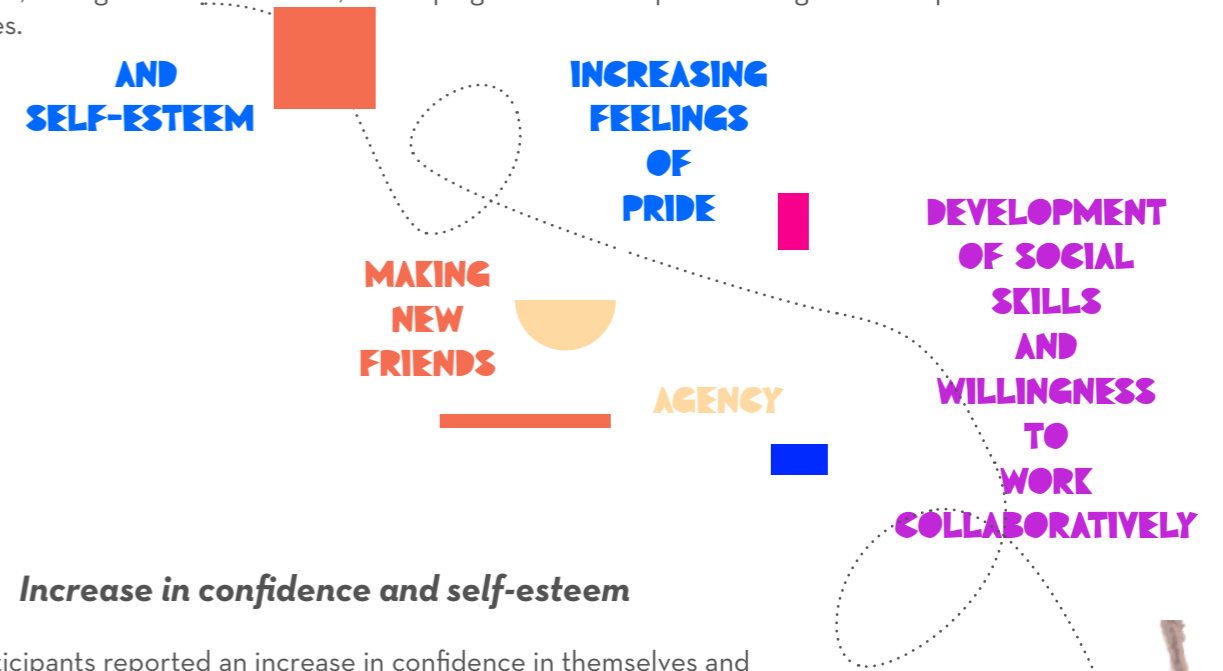
04

DEVELOPING SELF-EFFICACY AND AGENCY IN YOUNG MUSICIANS

I feel happy and proud about what I have achieved and how much a simple thing like creating a mind map can turn into a whole soundtrack.
(Participant)

Developing self-efficacy and agency in young musicians

There is much evidence from the participants' feedback to indicate that their self-efficacy and agency has increased. This has been determined by looking at factors such as confidence to try something new, self-esteem, willingness to collaborate, developing new friendships and being able to express and control themselves.



Increase in confidence and self-esteem

Many participants reported an increase in confidence in themselves and their musical abilities.

Yes, it has definitely built on the confidence and made you, made everyone feel more engaged in music as a whole...and then yeah it makes us stride towards different things and different genres if that makes sense. (Participant)

ArtsTrain is really important, because I met a lot of people there that were not so confident in their abilities, who by the end of the two years were very confident, or were somewhat more confident than they were before. And this confidence is not just translated into music, I think it's translated into life and how you approach life, how you approach different goals, projects as we grow older. I think that's really important, and you don't really get that anywhere else. So ArtsTrain is the place to be.
(Alumni member)



Participants articulated how ArtsTrain helped with increasing their confidence with performing in front of others:

It really just helps you with the confidence as well, like I can't stress this enough. The first time I had a performance, I gotta say, I was so so nervous. [The music leaders] were very reassuring. Now when I got on stage... everything they said to me I remember when I'm on stage and...I'm more comfortable and so yeah, just really helped me with confidence.
(Alumni member)

I am grateful that I am able to do things that I wouldn't have done otherwise like performing. I never would have performed in front of a group of people but now I feel confident to do it.
(Participant)

A powerful emerging theme is how ArtsTrain sessions increased participants' confidence to try, for example a new instrument, different genre/style of music, new collaboration with other participants even if this resulted in (perceived) 'mistakes' or 'failing'. There appeared to be less concern about what others think, and more focus on experimenting and giving things a go:

I also feel that way about improvising because you know when you're singing in front of people you're scared to go flat but [music leader] told us that it's okay to go flat...No one's going to laugh at you here because we are all encouraging each other and being so kind to each other, working together and stuff and I don't really have that fear of embarrassing myself in front of people anymore. (Participant)

Participants had the confidence to try new or different instruments:

Before I've always wanted to play the drums or an electric guitar, but I didn't have the confidence to do it because I felt people would make fun of me. But now I've been doing this club it's been making me think that there's a whole process that everyone else has to go through and work together, as well as working on yourself. So that's kind of also what motivated me to join the band because I wasn't sure at first. So it's kind of opened up a new chapter. (Participant)

So when you tried out the bass just for fun, honestly it actually seemed quite nice and it felt really good. You feel good for yourself when you just pick up a few notes and give them the correct order. Or trying out a new thing even if you don't like doing the drums, let's say you try it out and you quite like it. It's quite nice to do it and at least you've done it. (Participant)

This alumni member reflected on how having the confidence to try something new through ArtsTrain - in this case rapping/songwriting - led to this becoming the musical path that they followed:

I came in as a drummer. And it was because my [school] music teachers did think that I would actually benefit from this programme...And then [music leader], in particular, I remember him saying why don't you rap here and I was really, really nervous about it. And then he was like 'just write a four bar', and then it just ended up being really comfortable for me... and then I did my first performance. And after the first performance, I've always been, I was always quite nervous performing my songwriting and my pieces, in case I messed up. Obviously, as time went on, I transitioned from being a drummer to being a songwriter instead. (Alumni member)

Participants shared how ArtsTrain helped increase their self-esteem and belief in themselves not only as musicians but as individuals.

The project did wonders for my self-esteem. I feel that being able to perform helped to increase my confidence and belief in my musical ability. (Alumni member)

Before this I used to be really shy and didn't talk much to people. The activities they presented to us at the start really got me into talking. (Participant)

Some young people explained how being encouraged to step outside of their comfort zone was a reason for this confidence and self-esteem growth:

A lot of the time we were encouraged to come out of our comfort zones to explore our musical gifts and talents. So even if you felt a bit uncomfortable, you're growing to be more confident in areas that you were not so confident in. (Alumni member)

On the Friday session we all had to write our lyrics on the spot: most of them are freestyles but the longer ones are written down. [The music leader] makes us write lyrics on the spot and take us out of our comfort zone. On your own I suppose you can write more, but under pressure for some reason I do better. (Participant)

Increasing feelings of pride

Finishing with some sort of creative / musical output was important for participants - ending the process with a tangible product that they could feel proud of is a contributing factor for increasing feelings of self-efficacy. Many participants spoke with passion, pride and satisfaction about what they and their peers had achieved during the ArtsTrain process:

I am kind of satisfied because we have done so much and the final product is actually impressive. Like I was thinking well done to everyone for contributing to this big project. (Participant)

I feel happy and proud about what I have achieved and how much a simple thing like creating a mind map can turn into a whole soundtrack. (Participant)

I guess it is...a nice feeling you get after a day of a session. During the time some points obviously you have to really concentrate on what you are doing and have to get the understanding of what you're meant to be doing, but it's nice to have that, and it is nice when you leave to know that you have done all that stuff. (Participant)

I feel proud cause I actually got it done. When I [am] at home my parents are either talking, my brother is annoying me and I just can't finish it off. It's just like here is a better place to do it. (Participant)



Development of social skills and willingness to work collaboratively

Working collaboratively with other participants, often people they didn't know or who they hadn't worked with before, was a particularly important part of the process for developing creatively, but also for personal and social growth as well.

Participants identified how collaborative working often engendered a rich and uniqueness to the sounds they could create:

Yeah I do [like working with other people] because I get to know different styles of music... All different people like different types of music - some people might like hip hop or drill things like that - so you get to know different types of songs and how to write and make different songs.
(Participant)

I think we all have a different kind of sound. Obviously we have all been brought up on different music throughout our lives and obviously we [had] kind of been brought together... Making a song with all of us on it is like a fusion of all the different genres and all of the different sounds that we all have. So it's nice to hear something different rather than something just commercial made just to make it sound like a song has been created.
(Participant)



There is evidence that through ArtsTrain participants developed teamwork skills and knowledge of how to work effectively with others:

Being able to further teamwork. I guess cause sometimes you don't pair with people you don't know very well. But I found out that people have a lot of skills like singing or playing drums, and [by] putting that all together you are able to kind of further our talents, but also with all the other type of people that have different expertise like the cello or singing. I didn't feel scared to ask for help, it was quite encouraging. (Participant)

I think one social skill that I learned was how to deal with different personalities, deal with different characters, when we don't feel like singing, or if they just wanted to have a chat, or if they just wanted to laugh. When you're in those kind of environments with multiple people, who have different personalities, you learn how to, okay, this person, they like to have a lot more compliments, this one likes quiet... And I think that's one thing that I learned how to be in a group setting, and manage different personalities and characters.
(Alumni member)

Some participants talked about collaboration in terms of growth, and helping and supporting each other:

Growth is adapting to new surroundings or new environments. So you just have to grow with. You can't grow by yourself but grow with others. Take yourself out your comfort zone sometimes. (Participant)

Making new friends

ArtsTrain has provided a space to interact with other young people they may not normally have met, and encouraged new friendships:

This space is really nice. It helps you improve your teamwork and social life and helps you interact with others you don't really interact with. I am really grateful for that. (Participant)

I have been able to make more friends and get to know people I didn't know before. (Participant)

Some participants shared how they lost inhibitions around new people:

I found it quite fun cause usually when I am doing a project with other people, I kind of don't like it cause I have to speak. I am a very talkative person but around new people I don't like it, but I kind of found this project really fun. (Participant)

I am grateful for the fact that none of us laugh at each other. Like if our voice cracks none of us laugh we all just say it is okay and stuff. (Participant)

Participants were open about the less positive side of working collaboratively, for example if attendance was poor at a session, or if personalities clashed or inhibited progress:

Because I was at ArtsTrain for a really long time, I've seen when there was a lot of people there, and then when there was a limited amount of people there. So, I mean, I'm trying to look for something to say, to help improve. I wouldn't say it's such a bad thing. Sometimes, there [weren't] enough people there to work on what you would want to. (Alumni member)

I feel like more people can also mean more of a mess...Some people are not as consistent - they don't want to do it as much, and some [do] want to do it and it can kind of get really messy. When you are alone you can...put your own ideas more than [having] to convince others. While 3 to 4 in my opinion is the perfect amount of people to have consistent contribution. (Participant)

Agency

This alumni member articulated how Arts Train helped them to take more responsibility and control:

So, yeah, it really helped me and also just like, and also it helped me to take responsibility... You would just think ok, I know that on Tuesday I'm here. It helped me to [to] commit. I committed to ArtsTrain for so long, I'm still committed. So now, it's just helped me with my commitment and having a responsibility for myself, and also my responsibility towards others as well and being reliable. If [music leader] wants [me] to be here at this time, I know I should be there at that time. I wanted people to be able to rely on me as well. That's another skill that ArtsTrain has given.



05

DEVELOPING YOUNG MUSICIANS' MOTIVATION FOR TAKING ON NEW ACTIVITIES

Meeting likeminded teenagers (especially in regards to songwriting) made me want to write more and better myself when hearing the skills of other people my age. (Alumni member)

Developing young musicians' motivation for taking on new activities

Some of the participants defined their motivation by sharing how ArtsTrain provided an opportunity to get back into music, and to get involved:

I think it's not just me who looks forward to this. Like waking up like aww I am gonna make music with my friends today and it's not just exhausted going to classes and it's something different. (Participant)

I think it's getting back into music cause I personally abandoned it for a while. So it just gave me the opportunity to get back into it. (Participant)

For some, they would like the sessions to be longer and for the project to continue:

Even though we are grateful for the two hours that we get, we could do with more time. At the same time it could be too exhausting to make it longer. It just depends on the day and what is [happening] on that day. (Participant)

I think I speak for everyone when I say we all would really like it if it continued going on. Everyone enjoys coming here on a Friday and doing something together or individual. (Participant)

I feel sad [when I leave a session.] I want it to go on for longer, it feels like it [is] long like when you're not in it, but then it's not long enough. (Participant)

Participants explained how fun, enjoyable and exciting the activities were which can be a contributing factor to motivation:

It was very fun because like everyone already said everyone was really nice and we did some activities to know each other and that was fun. (Participant)

It's a nice feeling that you have done some work for today and it's been fun [and] it's not your usual school life. It's something different. (Participant)

Learning from and observing others increased motivation for some participants:

Meeting likeminded teenagers (especially in regards to songwriting) made me want to write more and better myself when hearing the skills of other people my age. (Alumni member)

I am grateful that we are able to do this in a group and that we are paired with such talented people who know what they are doing and encourage you to help you to do your best. (Participant)

And in this case a friendly competition increased motivation:

We all have different characteristics... If they are genuine - if they are really good at music - obviously it gives me somebody to work with to be in competition with, like a friendly competition. I am competitive if I am working with someone of the same calibre as me. I will try my best to beat them that way I can get better for myself. (Participant)



06

PROVIDING YOUNG MUSICIANS WITH VALUABLE TECHNICAL SKILLS AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

I've learnt that I have improved on the writing skills and a bit of piano skills and also my speaking skills because I am not really keen on speaking to other people. (Participant)

Providing young musicians with valuable technical skills and transferable skills

Participants were able to provide many examples of how they had developed a range of technical musical skills. These included...

Songwriting and lyric writing

(Participant)
Songwriting, I did that a bit so I think I've gotten better at it...I've learnt I don't have to always rhyme so it's easier to songwrite and [I've] also learnt a bit about piano as well and the scales... it's just really cool.

(Participant)

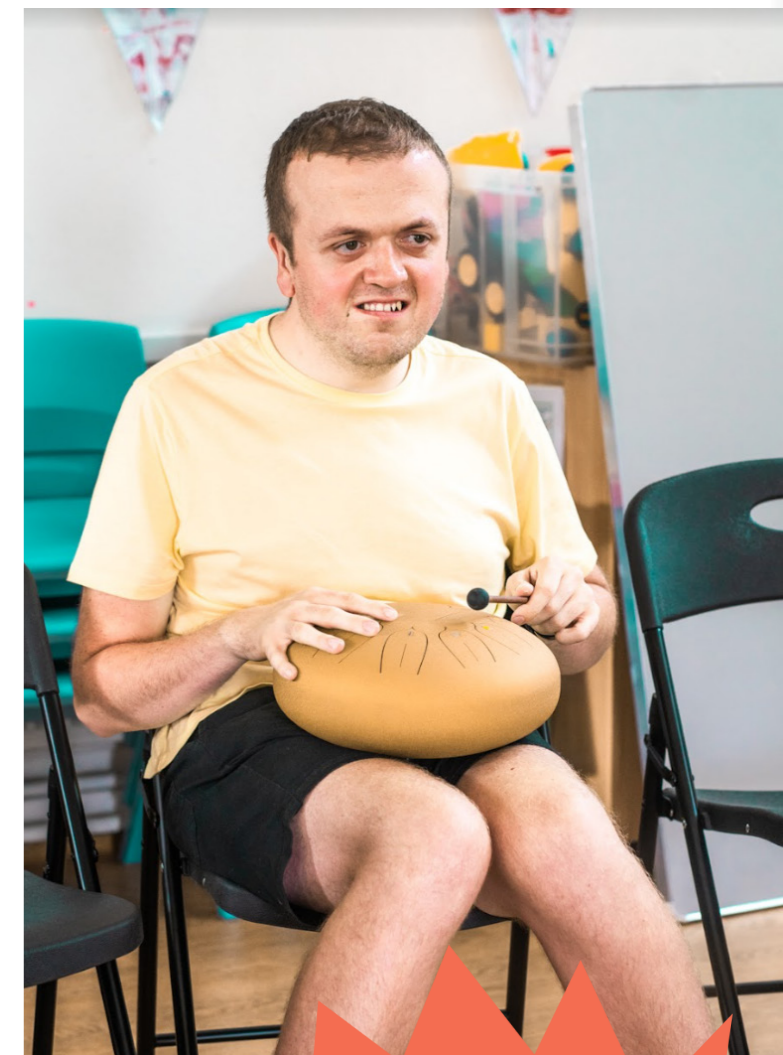
It was a really new experience cause I am not really a good writer in English and stuff so it was writing deep stuff [and] it was really nice writing lyrics. (Participant)

My vocal and my storytelling have improved and I get better getting to do it in parts and it sounds perfect at the end.

Refining existing and developing new instrumental and vocal skills

I have sung before but this has kind of helped me back into it cause I stopped ages and ages ago. So it was nice to bring back an old hobby of mine and just practice it again and then just remember what skills I have. I didn't particularly learn anything new apart from techniques of how to warm up your voice and stuff like that. Which is always good but it's just good to bring back you know old memories and what I used to do. (Participant)

I play piano, guitar and vocals. Piano I am self-taught and I didn't know how to play the right hand and the left hand because I don't think I had the co-ordination. But focusing my mind to it for a whole day, like a whole session, it helped me so now I can actually play both. (Participant)



General musicianship

I can learn more about what things work with certain beats and you can't always go really crazy with things because it sometimes has to be chilled and relaxed depending on the type of thing. Cause normally drumming is just free and being able to do whatever you want. I normally drum by myself but when there is a track, like instead of just thinking of what you want to do you have to think if it would sound good with what you are doing.
(Participant)

Production and technology skills:

I feel really good because I got to learn how to use the controls and how to set up a proper song because I've tried this alone before and it didn't really end so well. I think I know how to do it now because I've been watching [music leader] do mixing and editing and...I feel a lot more confident now.
(Participant)

I enjoyed the producing because it's really interesting to see all the controls and how free it is. There are so many sounds and so many possible ways you can make it sound beautiful.
(Participant)

Improvising skills

I think I am better at improvising now cause... I just [like] feeding off other peoples' ideas... Working with other people you are able to expand on the things you can do and learn more about yourself and what you [can] come up with on the spot. (Participant)



Some were able to share transferable skills that they had developed and that they were able to apply elsewhere either in school or in life:

I've learnt that I have improved on the writing skills and a bit of piano skills and also my speaking skills because I am not really keen on speaking to other people. (Participant)

I learned the importance of communication and teamwork as we were often set group tasks. From these sessions, myself and five other peers formed a music group when we were around 14. I am the only one from the group to still be involved in music and feel that my ability to perform has helped me to deliver effectively as an English teacher. (Alumni member)



07

BUILDING NETWORKS AND PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER PROGRESSION

I think the fact that I have had this opportunity and learnt about how to make music more efficiently and how to make my music if I do want to make something better.
(Participant)

Building networks and providing opportunities for career progression

Some participants were able to articulate how ArtsTrain has increased their general musical understanding and broadened their horizons:

In the choir that I run, before I was actually doing that, we were quite limited to a specific kind of sound...I believe that any song can be sung by a choir. It's just in terms of how you arrange the song that I think that ArtsTrain really broadened my scope. I can see many songs and think actually, OK, this is how I can arrange it this way. This is how I can allow the sopranos to sing here, the altos to sing here. The musicians that I work with, I try to encourage them 'Ok, why don't you play the sixth instead of the five' or 'try things you know', because music is how you make it.
(Alumni member)

We have been doing different genres so it has given us a better understanding of music...In the songs that we made it's not just rapping there is singing, there is different flows. So you get to understand more about people and how they do music and how they enjoy music if that makes sense. Especially through lyrics.
(Participant)



I think it's a really good opportunity to broaden your horizons because this kind of stuff can lead to more job opportunities and wanting to have something in this kind of field because of it. (Participant)

Since the first song that we made to where I am now, I've done different types of beats, different types of songs not sticking to one. I feel like it's leading somewhere in the future. (Participant)

This alumni member now does music leading on ArtsTrain projects:

I do rapping workshops to try and help those understand how easy it can be as well. Because I've been through that process it's allowed me to actually teach it as well. (Alumni member)



Others referenced continuing with qualifications in music through school / higher education:

I wanted to do music GCSE before this anyway, so definitely gonna do it now. (Participant)

I have just graduated from [the] University of Southampton doing a music degree, and my dissertation was a production project in which I wrote, arranged and produced ten pop tracks. Going to ArtsTrain definitely made me feel more accepted of my songwriting and style. Working with different groups in different ways helped me with my ensemble modules at uni, as I was taught how to showcase my own musicianship within a group setting. (Alumni member)



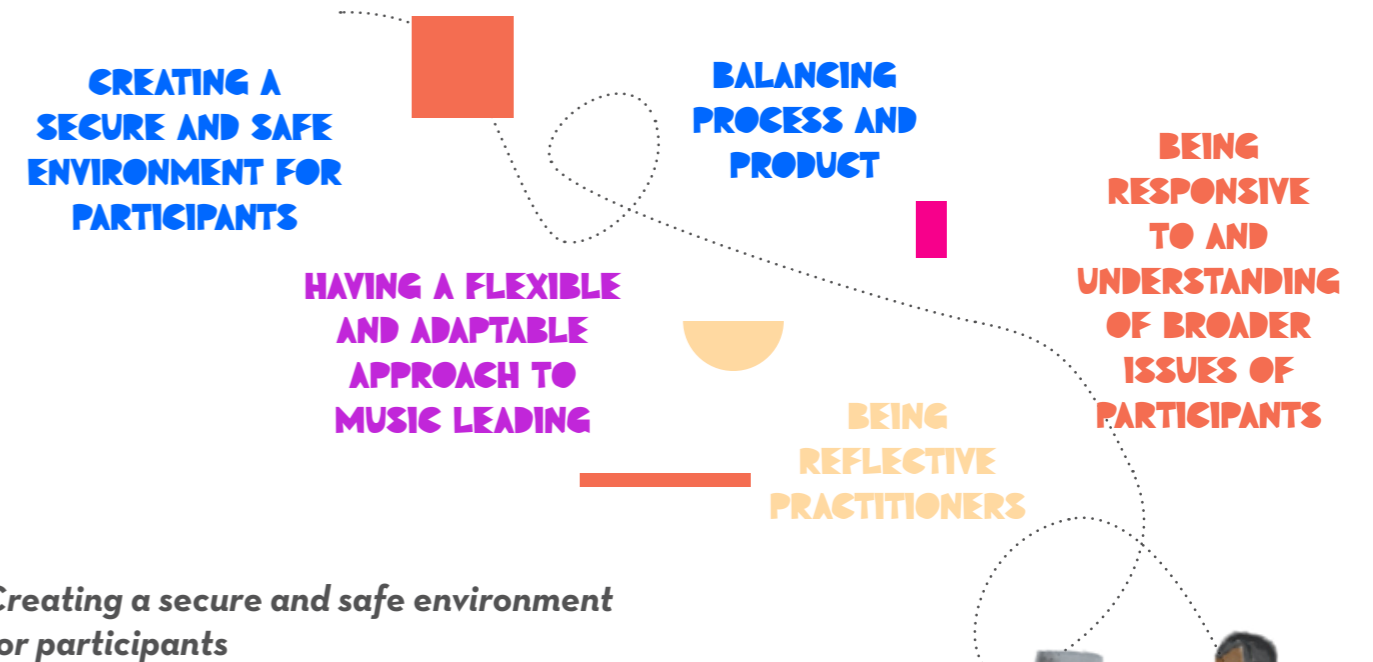
MUSIC LEADERS: REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What I learnt as a practitioner, I think just encouraging them to support each other and making it a really safe space to explore.
(Music leader)

Music Leaders: Reflective Practice

Two remote workshop sessions were held with music leaders. The initial workshop involved exploring models of how to reflect on practice and what indicators of ArtsTrain project outcomes music leaders may observe during their sessions. The second session was an opportunity to reflect on what worked well and not so well, consider why this may have been, reconsider the presentation of the project outcomes and indicators and make necessary adjustments (see Appendix 3).

From these discussions, and from focus group feedback from participants, some conclusions are presented below about the areas of work that are considered to have impacted on young peoples' wellbeing, as well as a consideration of what it is that makes ArtsTrain unique with these key factors being:



Creating a secure and safe environment for participants

Through the ArtsTrain sessions music leaders have created environments where participants feel safe and secure to be creative. This is critical for encouraging a sense of belonging, and for the personal and musical growth of participants.

I always remember them being fun and the tutors always encouraged a low stakes environment where it was fine to make mistakes. (Alumni member)

I think it's beautiful to witness people coming out of their shells and actually... make magic basically [through] the music, and I think is very rewarding to, to watch that. (Music leader)

Finding it, catching it and finding ways to help a young person who might be struggling with their communication, whether it's verbal or nonverbal, because music is a type of communication. They might not want to say anything. And they might just do it all through the music, but making sure there is space for that is it's been challenging at times, I think. (Music leader)

I think, ArtsTrain is extremely important. I think, especially for young musicians, or growing musicians, or people who are aspiring musicians, either. I think ArtsTrain provides an environment in which people can feel safe and comfortable to grow. And even if you don't get it right the first time, you can try try again, and eventually get there. (Alumni member)



What I learnt as a practitioner, I think just encouraging them to support each other and making it a really safe space to explore. (Music leader)

I think it's good like in the environment it is not a case where like you see like anyone laughs at you if you do bad at something. I feel like you can be comfortable in there like the people that are there always reassure you like everything going to be okay. (Participant)

Participants felt heard and held in the sessions by the ArtsTrain music leaders, both musically but also through them taking the time to listen to them about whatever they needed to talk about, as these alumni members reflected on.

We always were able to get on with what we were working on, etc. But it was always a thing where [the music leaders] would literally take time..to actually speak to me...at the end. Literally speak for 10-15 minutes, I remember quite slowly and always get rushed out of the area, because we were literally so deep in a conversation. But even after that, they were just really attentive. Whatever was brought to them they were just so open to listen. (Alumni member)

I think I did feel heard a lot. Especially in that kind of time period in my life, I think in terms of my musical talents I wasn't too confident on my singing. So a lot of the time I'll tell them 'listen, I'm really scared. I don't want to do it'. But [the music leaders will] be like 'you know what, you got to believe in yourself. You can do it'. So yes, I did feel heard. (Alumni member)



The importance of this gradual building of relationships can't be underestimated, as this alumni member described:

One thing that's really good about ArtsTrain is the freedom that's given, I can't stress this enough. It wasn't like teacher-students vibe, it was more like [a] mentor. If you need advice, come to us about music, and also when you're growing up in that age, you need somebody that might not be your mum or father, but they have a lot of experience to give you as well when you're growing up, [who] you can speak freely to. Because I promise you now there's some things that I couldn't say to my parents that I was able to speak to [the music leaders] when they were there, as well as, as a kid growing up. It's just good to have that sort of tight connection with a mentor who can help you with your music and also help you with your life. (Alumni member)

These participants refer to the sense of belonging they felt through ArtsTrain:

So you can obviously speak about, it's like a welcoming area [where] people don't care necessary about your past or whatever. Everyone is welcoming. When I came in I didn't even know the majority of people but they still welcomed me with open arms and respect. It's like a big family of different cultures or whatever and people still understand and they are not neglecting you. (Participant)

I think those two hours that we had, a lot of the time we'd say 'Oh I want to stay I want to stay!' I think it had a really big impact on my wellbeing...when you're in a place that is welcoming, is friendly, is safe. And to have mentors that were really invested, that really gave their time and gave your ear if you wanted to speak to them. (Alumni member)

Music leaders were able to share examples of personal growth of participants that they had observed over time for example:

Some [young] people have that perfectionism trait that blocks [them] from actually trying or doing things because they're like, 'No, this is not good enough'. So [participant] had a lot of that. And it was stopping the process of creating. It was a bit hard as well for her to collaborate with the rest of the group. But week by week, the ice melted. And actually, she enjoyed collaborating a bit more. She studied songwriting, she came one day with a song that she wrote herself...on her iPad, and she came to us and she was like 'I actually wrote a song the other day, and it was really nice'. She connected more with her voice, and with the whole collaboration work that we were doing altogether. When we did the rehearsal before the open mic night, last week, we figured out how much of a performer she is. (Music leader)

Flexible and adaptable approach to music leading

Having a highly flexible and adaptable approach to music leading has been important for nurturing, supporting and challenging participants in a positive way. Music leaders described a range of personal and professional styles, often being responsive to what was needed 'in the moment', involving a range of strategies for listening, coaching, feeding back, refining and modelling.

This approach seemed to be a positive way of encouraging participants to develop their skills and confidence without pressure:

I think yeah all the teachers are really nice and even when they do give us criticism and feedback it's in a positive way just to help us make it better. (Participant)

I feel like no one was pressuring us to do stuff and the people were just so nice and they don't make us do something we don't want to. (Participant)

I always felt listened to and valued within ArtsTrain, especially when it came to feedback/what we wanted to get out of the project. (Alumni member)

Music leaders discussed the balance needed between support and encouragement, and stretch and challenge, and this invariably came down to the individual participants' needs. This music leader discussed their high standards with working with young musicians:

In order for the thing to work, if you're drumming for example, you have to attack it with a certain amount of confidence. So there's often like a shy drummer who's kind of newish to it, and not quite bold. And there's often a job, okay, having to kind of gee them up and get them to be a bit more assertive. It's one small thing that I find myself doing because I spot these things...When drums and bass are not doing what they should, I'm just like, 'Nah, this thing has to attack a certain way'. So without it being a thing that we plan for, it's like, 'yeah, that just happened'. I feel like there are lots of these things that as a matter of course, we will just do it. It's good to have the conversation, because that is never something that I make a note [of]. (Music leader)

It's a safe space and you feel confident to be able to just be how you are with each other. Whether you are trying something new or not, you just feel like you just can because everyone is not going to sit there and judge you, they are going to help you. Push you to try and make progress. (Participant)

There was an innate understanding from music leaders about the time it can take for participants' creativity to flow, and about how patience is needed. Music leaders described the 'flow state' some participants reached in sessions, but it can take time for this to happen. Having the flexibility and the time to be able to support this is important. This Music leader reflected on how they judged 'pushing' a participants' abilities, and how patience was particularly important:

It's [about] patience. There was a particular session where we pushed quite hard and I wasn't sure. I've seen situations where young people get pushed too far in a session, and it becomes like a stress and a drama. I didn't want to push [the participant] over the edge. But luckily, we found something that really worked for her. And since she's been very loud, vocally, like, she's really come out of her shell. It's really good to see that. (Music leader)

I always have 100% faith that every young person can get to a point where they can voice what they need to voice, but it takes time. (Music leader)

Central to the ArtsTrain sessions is co-created content with the participants. As described above the creative process starts with their ideas / stimuli and they are able to guide and shape the creative process with guidance from music leaders. This music leader describes how significant this process is for them as music leaders as well as for the participants:

I've said it before the co-creating element, how beautiful that is. Because everyone you know, there's no 'maybe if you have a teaching background... so this is how you do it. Whereas with the [ArtsTrain] workshops there's the co-creating element, which is I don't know, it's just special, because everyone has the input of giving their own ingredients to the making. (Music leader)



Being responsive to and understanding of broader issues

While music leaders don't always have briefing information on any challenging circumstances the participants may be experiencing, they all displayed a genuine empathy towards the participants, and a desire to understand and support them with music. This correlates with some of the feedback from participants presented above about how the sessions had a positive impact on elements of their wellbeing.

Music is personal to some of these young people. Because it's obviously their story, their journey, their outlet, their therapy. And I think we're in [participants] case, when she saw the benefits of collaboration in terms of encouragement, and other key stuff that she could kind of tap into with other young people and the things that she was doing in terms of the performance. We found that she had strengths, hidden strengths, and then it was almost like it was contagious when she knew that she could, whether it's boost their confidence, self-esteem, whatever. It's almost like she tapped into that. (Music leader)

Music leaders discussed how they're seeing the impacts of the pandemic on young people in sessions, and supporting them to find ways of expressing themselves is important:

That whole thing of bringing young people out of their shells is always good. And I think it's been more necessary than usual, in this chapter. I'm not sure if I was aware how the whole world events would affect the psyche of young people, it's kind of become obvious that there isn't a lot of young people who have been more anxious and just haven't needed to find ways of expressing themselves. (Music leader)

One of the most challenging [things] post pandemic, [is] in terms of the willingness to, like the nonverbal and verbal communication. I think the biggest difference for me, I've been running workshops for years now, but is the social anxiety that young people have at the moment. Even within their own circles, even when we break out, you can very quickly see who is confident in communicating and contributing. For me, that one is always like the one that I really want to try and improve on, to find ways to improve on as quickly as possible. (Music leader)

Music leaders described the complexity of participants' mental health at times. Working towards a performance sometimes created anxiety, and it was the supportive and guided approach of the music leaders that gently helped participants through that:

It was clear that some young people were more comfortable performing than others, they took a bigger role and they were encouraged to do that. But everybody was involved, which was really nice to see, and there was just a really lovely energy. They were very supportive of each other. There was a girl who was really anxious, and she had a panic attack. But everybody in the group was really accommodating and supportive of her, which was lovely to see, but I think after COVID and everything, a lot of them are suffering from social anxiety. (Music leader)

Music leaders shared how for some young people, simply showing up and staying in the space was enough of an indication of motivation – even if they didn't actively participate in the session.

I think that the thing that stood out for me was the motivation [of] showing up and staying in [the] space. Because actually, for some young people that can be huge. Just the fact that they turn up, and they come every day, for some of them and they stick around, even just a small amount of engagement is a really good sign that they are getting something out of it. Being able to commit to the project and just be there. For some young people that really do face some serious challenges in their life, we can never underestimate how huge that kind of attendance and retention is. (Music leader)

Poor attendance however could sometimes create frustrations for music leaders and other participants:

We didn't really get the numbers that we would have liked. We had a series of challenges in each session. In each of the few sessions that there were I think we did as best as we could under the circumstances, and the young people got something out of it. But ultimately, it didn't result in the continuation and the growing of the session. (Music leader)

This music leader gave an example of where they needed to act quickly and flexibly to use a creative approach to an existing conflict within the participants:

We noticed that there was a sort of rift between the two schools coming up because of the nerves and the energy that was building towards this big [performance] moment. We sort of quick fire had to find a way to tap into how they could come together, and remind each other that they were a team. We did a quick exercise in the room, super off the cuff, as it often is in [these] situations. We just had a bit of... electric tape... and we threw it out to each person to say something about how they felt about another person, [about] themselves, [and about] what somebody else has contributed to the collective. It was really powerful. (Music leader)

Music leaders have tried strategies for checking the mood of the room before and at the end of a session:

At the end of our sessions now we check in at the end, and we ask them to find a word or an emotion to describe how they're feeling. There's no judgment about whether it needs to be a positive or negative thing, just what do you feel in this moment, what you've gotten out of it. I find that it's [a] really useful quickfire way of evaluating the genuine mood of the young person. Because it can be hard when you've got a large group, I think to really pinpoint every area, it's hard to know when the mood shifts for each individual. You get a general idea, but it can be hard sometimes to really pinpoint, especially the quiet voices. (Music leader)

Balancing process and product

Participants discussed how proud they felt when they created a musical and/or creative output, whether that was a song, performance, recorded track etc. Music leaders spent time discussing that while they always planned for a physical output, for various reasons this wasn't always possible and could be a disappointment for all involved. Therefore considering ensuring the high quality of the process was as important to music leaders as the high quality of the creative product.

A lot of times when I go into the sessions, I always want something like a physical outcome [like] a finished track that we're working towards. But what I find a lot of time [especially] working with SEND young people, that might not be the case, because there's a lot of variables or a lot of things going on. So instead, my session plan has gone out the window, because instead of getting end products, which will be a track, it will be more about engagement, and what [benefits] they get out of it. So I don't know if that is classed as something that didn't go so well. That's a very fine line. (Music leader)

As a producer, there's that innate desire to produce a thing, to come out with the trophy, to score the goal, but actually, oftentimes [it] is just about how one engages and kind of changing one's expectation to see what's actually happening in the moment. Rather than sticking too fast to the plan. (Music leader)

Being reflective practitioners

All music leaders were able to reflect on their practice and were open and curious to learn with and alongside other practitioners and the participants.

Words music leaders used to describe their experience leading ArtsTrain sessions were (in alphabetical order): creative, fulfilling, inspiring, joyful, learning, original, rewarding, satisfying.

Some described the peer-to-peer learning opportunity ArtsTrain has provided:

I took this job straight out of uni and before then I was used to being taught. It was a real kind of challenging thing navigating being front and centre leading, guiding young people, showing them what to do and supporting them. I almost felt like I had a bit of impostor syndrome because I still felt like a young person that needed help myself! So, it's been quite amazing learning from, you know, more experienced workshop leaders and, and [me] just gaining the confidence to do it on my own. (Music leader)

I've been fortunate enough for the years that I've worked to have good practitioners who have different skill sets than me to be able to tailor it. So it actually does work. (Music leader)

Even the process of reflecting together stimulated some realisations about their own practice and how it could be improved:

I just this minute realised, upon reflection, the very idea of performing can [really] freak people out. We take it for [granted], but yes, of course, performance, that's why you're here. But there may well be things that come into my mind that basically mean, Ok, we can kind of check in on this thing called performance and kind of gradually open up that as an idea that by the time of performance happens, [it's] less and less frightening [for participants]. (Music leader)

This music leader shared how much they benefit from learning from participants:

It's always good to learn what kids are into, and it always surprises me. I often feel like the old man in the room, but then they bring up music that they like that was kind of hip when I was a kid. So that's always good. It's nice to have that kind of interaction with young people. (Music leader)

Reflecting on project indicators

Appendix 3 is an illustration of indicators of the four project outcomes that as a group the music leaders agreed were behaviours they observed over time with participants. The purpose of this is as a framework for planning and reflecting, however it is not a ticklist of elements that should be seen every session. It could be used in future as a contributing tool to evaluation practice.

ARTSTRAIN PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK DATA ANALYSIS - KEY FINDINGS

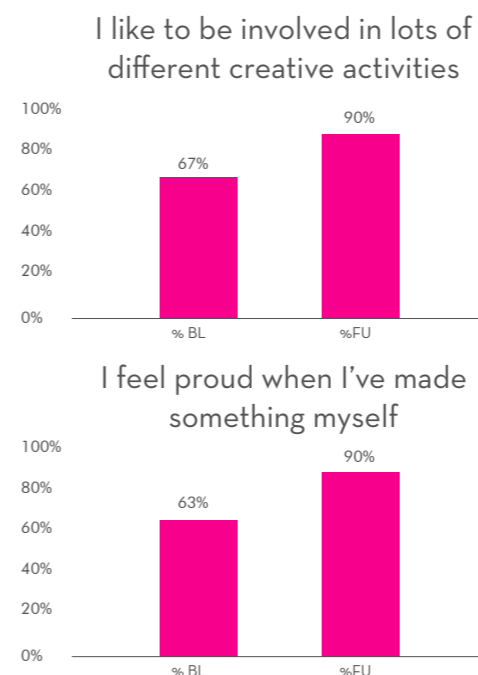
This analysis relates to ArtsTrain participant surveys in 2019-2020. From a total of 166 participants across 15 projects, 88 provided baseline data (53%) and 51 provided follow-up data (31% of all participants, and 58% of those returning baseline surveys). These response rates are sufficient with a confidence interval of 7.1 at a 95% confidence level (i.e., the reported differences are accurate +/- 7%). This means all of the changes reported are statistically significant.

All proportions represent 'Net Agreement' - this is the total proportion of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with a statement, minus those disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This is generally regarded as a more realistic representation of sentiment within samples.

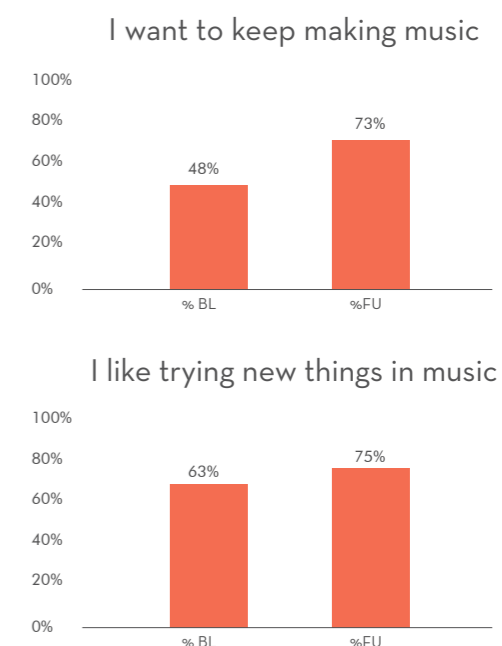
The survey items relate to different dimensions of wellbeing and are linked to the activities taking place (i.e., rather than asking about generalised mood, life satisfaction or general mental health). This seeks to focus the analysis on the specific competencies and psychosocial development that the activities are seeking to affect. The elements explored include self-perceptions of creativity, motivation, self-efficacy and agency (i.e., control) and competency (i.e., technical ability to make music and ability to collaborate to make music). These map closely onto the 'self-determination theory' factors, often used in wellbeing research, of competence, connection, and autonomy.

- The biggest changes related to music making skills - a combined improvement of 35 percentage points pre and post project (38% for technical music making skills and 32% for collaborative music making skills)
- Creativity improved by an average of 24 percentage points (23% for enjoying being involved in a range of creative activities and 25% for feeling proud when making something themselves)
- Self-efficacy and agency improved by an average of 22 percentage points (26% increase in participants who said they feel they can decide how to progress their music making, 19% more saying that they would continue making music even if their friends were not, 22% for feeling they can finish tasks when started)
- Motivation increased overall by 18 percentage points (25% for wanting to continue making music, and 12% for enjoying trying new things in music - this latter score was high to begin with)
- Additionally, 78% reported that they planned to continue making music over the next six months, and 59% said they knew where to go to continue their music making.
- The highest follow up scores related to creativity, indicating that this should be prioritised in post-project opportunities or feedback to partners to ensure that participants are given sufficient opportunities to develop their creativity further beyond projects, along with music making

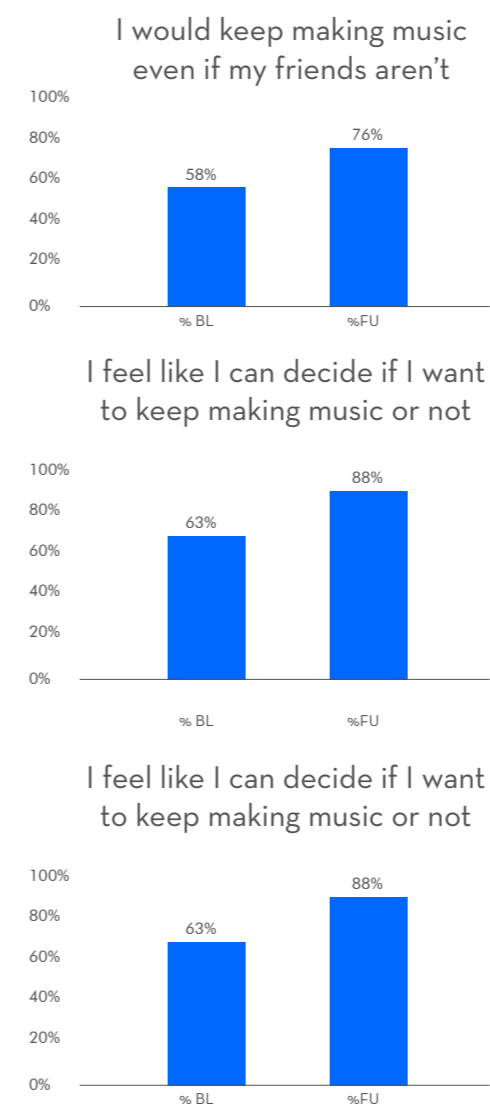
CREATIVITY



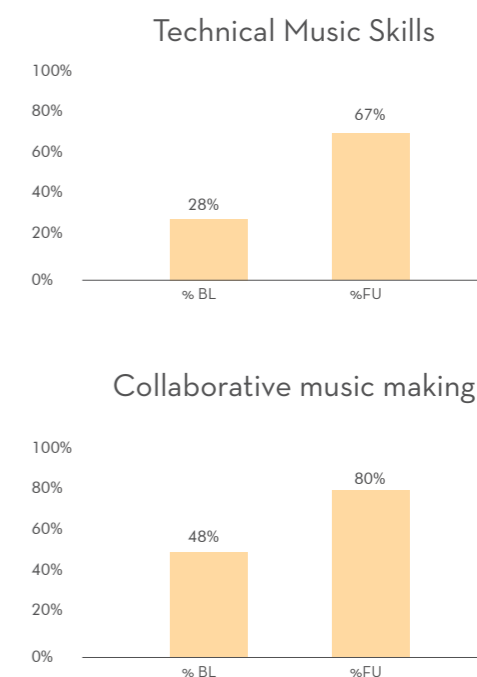
MOTIVATION



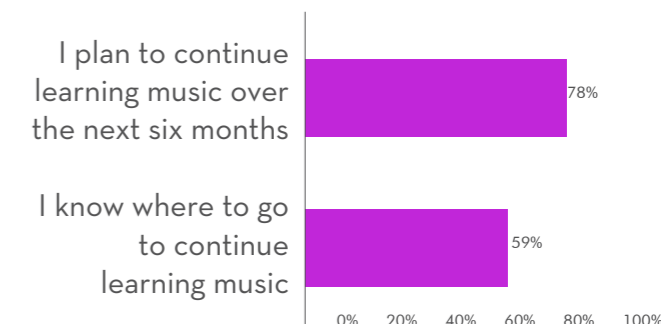
SELF-EFFICACY AND AGENCY

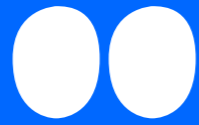


TECHNICAL AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS



MOTIVATION TO CONTINUE





APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Reflective practice prompts

Adapted from Graham Gibbs 1988 reflective learning cycle model

- 1) Description: what happened during the session?
- 2) Feelings: what were you thinking and feeling, what was your emotional response at the time?
- 3) Evaluation: objectively consider what worked well and what didn't work so well during the session?
- 4) Analysis: what sense can you make of the situation
- 5) Conclusion: what would you have done differently (if at all)
- 6) Action plan: what changes might you make for future sessions, or if the situation arose again what would you do?

Appendix 2: Focus group interview questions

- 1) How do you feel during the sessions?
- 2) What specific things are you grateful for?
- 3) How do you feel after leaving a session?
- 4) Have you developed any new skills in the project, musical or other?
- 5) Can you share examples of how you've been creative throughout the project?
Appendix 3: Indicators of impact
- 6) To be used as useful by music leaders as a reflection and planning tool

Appendix 3: Indicators of impact
To be used as useful by music leaders as a reflection and planning tool

CREATIVITY

Over time you may notice participants:

- Making/creating an intentional musical sound / artwork
- Expressing themselves through music
- Expressing themselves through active participation
- Producing some form of musical / creative output

MOTIVATION

Over time you may notice participants:

- Showing up and staying in the space
- Willingness to try instruments / technology
- Willingness to contribute towards subject matter / artistic creation

AGENCY

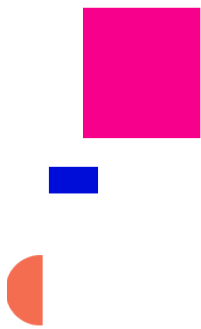
Over time you may notice participants:

- Willingness to engage in verbal or non-verbal communication
- Take a lead in verbal or non-verbal communication
- Willingness to work collaboratively
- Taking an active lead in an aspect of the music making
- Willingness to engage in the musical activity
- Willingness to express how they feel in the present moment

SELF-EFFICACY

Over time you may notice participants:

- Moving from I can't to I can
- Having the confidence to try something new / different
- Willingness to demonstrate (i.e. an instrument, song, lyric)
- Noticeably listening to the music / music leaders
- Demonstrating a sense of pride in themselves



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