

Music Clubs Report



National Foundation for
Youth Music



LOTTERY FUNDED



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



About

SoCo's programme of Music Clubs began in January 2015. Their aim has been to provide children and young people aged from 7 to 18 with opportunities to learn and make music in a way that is accessible, interactive, informal and most of all relevant to them. Through this they hope to engage a growing number of young people in music making, allowing them to learn new skills that they might not otherwise have the opportunity to learn and to benefit from the many positive outcomes that music can bring.



The Story So Far...

Following research with young people across south Hampshire, SoCo settled on 4 different workshops that they believed responded to the needs and interests of young people in the area. They were:

- ROCK CLUB
- SONGWRITING
- MUSIC PRODUCTION
- AFROBEAT

Each workshop has had a weekly slot running for 90 minutes after school and lead by an expert facilitator in that field. Whilst each facilitator has their own unique teaching style, tailored to the needs of the group, great effort has put into ensuring that above all every workshop is informal and learner lead. All workshops have also been free or with a very small attendance charge, which has been crucial in our aim to make music accessible to all young people.

Since January, our music clubs have steadily grown with almost all new participants becoming regular attendees and often joining more than one group. The young people have ranged hugely in age and knowledge, but in all participants we've seen a real desire to learn music, which they have not been able to fulfill elsewhere.

With this growth, our offer has also increased. In April 2015, SoCo teamed up with Rob Da Bank's Music Club on the Isle of Wight to offer a monthly evening of different music workshops at the Courthouse, based on their highly successful model. During these evenings, young people have been able to attend a number of new workshops including DJ-ing, Samba drumming and Hip Hop as well as watch professional musicians perform. Summer 2015 also saw the introduction of our summer program, an arts based holiday club that allowed young people to attend a whole day of music workshops on Mondays or art & craft workshops on Tuesdays. With this summer program, we have again seen a growth in attendance and engagement.

About Our Teaching Approach...

INFORMAL

Our music clubs are open to any child of any ability and with no expectation of prior learning. There is no structured programme, but instead participants are free to experiment with instruments and equipment and take learning in a direction that interests them, with practitioners taking more of a guidance role. Far from slowing down progress, this experimental approach increases enjoyment and builds confidence, which will often results in quick progress. It also places a great deal of trust in the participant, which in turn builds a strong mutual respect between practitioner and learner. Again, this approach, which is quite different from school, can be extremely beneficial for learning as it encourages participants to open up and also seek more guidance and support from the practitioner.

LEARNER LEAD

A learner lead approach is crucial in ensuring participants both enjoy sessions and are motivated to learn more. Many young people have a natural passion for listening to music but do not enjoy music at school because it is not relevant or they do not believe it is within their capabilities. By allowing participants to guide both what they learn and the pace that they learn it, their confidence and motivation to progress increase tenfold. Furthermore, when the music is something they can relate to, this can have an enormous impact on the participants' ability to express themselves, which can then impact upon their emotional wellbeing.



Outcomes

The main aim of our music clubs is to develop musical skills in young people, yet the benefits extend far beyond this. Through consultation with participants and parents we have identified a growth not only in musical ability but also in other skills such as confidence, communication, and emotional expression. Some of these key outcomes are further explored in the following text.

Musical Outcomes

SKILL ACQUISITION

Music Club offers young people the opportunity to learn new skills from professional and successful musicians on topics that are guided by the participant and often include one-to-one tuition. This has included learning a wide-array of instruments, songwriting, singing, production and creating songs using music software. Whilst many of our participants could perhaps do one of these skills when they started, they quickly become accomplished in a number of them, which has a real impact on their overall musical output. As one participant reflected ...

"I've learnt the tech side of music, which I didn't really know much about before. I learnt about microphones and their different purposes and uses. I've learnt Logic and know my way around that quite well now. The different sessions kind of compliment each other, and now I've been able to write and record my own music. Since coming here, I've also been learning drums at Afrobeat and some bass as well. It's helped me with recording and writing songs because I can now multi-track bass and drums."

As part of our evaluation, participants were also asked to rate how much they felt music club had helped to improve their musical skills. Responses were extremely positive, with scores averaging at 4.7 (5 being the highest). Participants were also asked to rank their preference for different activities, and in this learning to play an instrument or sing came out on top indicating that they valued the actual learning of a skill more than collaboration, performance or writing their own music. When asked to elaborate, participants commented on the wide variety of instruments available and the enjoyment that came from simply being able to pick up an instrument and play.

SELF-DISCOVERY & SELF-EXPRESSION

One of the big ways that our music clubs can differ from music lessons in school is the opportunity they provide for participants to experiment and explore their own musical interests. This is important in not only developing their skills but also in developing opportunities for self-expression. Our practitioners facilitate this by nurturing an environment where participants feel trusted and confident to try new things. In feedback from participants on the things they liked about music club, this was something they clearly identified and appreciated, commenting on a 'Good and safe environment where everyone respects you' and the opportunities to 'make your own music'. Furthermore when asked if there was anything new they would like to see included in Music Club, two participants suggested that they would like to try peer-to-peer teaching. It is also an area that parents have commented upon in their feedback, noting...

"It's a supportive and non-judgmental environment where children have free reign and can explore at their own pace. It gives them access to instruments that they don't get at school and the freedom to go where they want with music."

PERFORMANCE

All of our workshops encourage participants to work towards performance in some way, whether this is performing to their group, recording a track to take home, or for some of our older participants performing in a Courthouse Open Mic night. A number of research papers have found performance to be central in producing some of many benefits caused by music, including growth in confidence, self-esteem, musical ability and engagement in education. Whilst some participants understandably found this one of the trickier parts of music, feedback showed that for many individuals it was an important experience that they would not have got elsewhere.



"The sessions were inclusive of all regardless of ability or experience and they gave young people the opportunity to explore a variety of different lyric and song writing techniques. Some young people wrote their first ever songs using these helpful techniques. The offer of songwriting on a Wednesday and recording/music production on a Thursday was particularly successful as it enabled the young people to write songs and then record their ideas whilst they were still fresh in their minds. Thus giving them a full and rounded learning experience which instilled confidence in their talents and abilities."

Jim Chorley, Music Leader, SoCo Music Project

Wider Outcomes

CONFIDENCE

Many of our participants referred to a growth in confidence when reflecting on the opportunity to perform. There are many other elements of music that can help with confidence though, such as writing and sharing music and also learning new skills. As one participants noted...

"In songwriting sessions when I was collaborating and writing songs with other people, I gradually got more confident to sing in front of more and more people."

Participants were also asked to rate how much they felt music club had helped their confidence, and the response was overwhelmingly positive, receiving an average score of 4.7 out of 5 (5 being the highest). Consequently, it is probably the most significant non-music related outcome for the majority of our participants. As noted it is an outcome that many researchers have also evidenced when looking into the benefits of music tuition (particularly when it includes performance) for young people.

Parental feedback also indicated that they had observed an increase in confidence related to performance and also the opportunity for exploration:

"It builds confidence to get up in front of other people"

"I've seen a confidence in my children to give new things a go"

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Our music clubs offer many opportunities for young people to identify and express their emotions. Our songwriting workshops actively encourage young people to engage with and express a wide variety of emotions, whilst clubs such as Rock Club and Afrobeat provide an excellent opportunity for emotional outlet. The benefits of this on the participant was noted by one parent during a focus group...

"It makes them happy. It helps if they have frustrations because they can write songs or just come along and bang drums. It's real escapism too, which is so important. There's freedom. It's fun."

Also noted in this feedback is the fact that playing and hearing music can make the young people feel happier. The positive impact of music on our mood is well established in research, with recent projects identifying that listening to music causes our body to release the feel good chemical, dopamine. The simple enjoyment of sessions is reflected in participant feedback, with 100% of participants scoring their enjoyment of sessions 5 out of 5.

INTER-PERSONAL SKILLS

Music making has the potential to encourage and nurture particularly strong bonds between individuals and in doing so develop excellent inter-personal skills. A study on the benefits of participative music making has found that it can have a significant impact on communication skills as individuals learn to identify and respond to their peers and to co-operate in reaching a shared performance goal. On a similar thread, the Department of Education's Musical Futures project, which looks into informal music making has identified that the opportunity to make music with friends is integral in successful music learning. In line with this, SoCo's music clubs also encourage a high level of peer-to-peer interaction, which can really improve inter-personal skills. Young people are encouraged to experiment and make music together, collaborating on songs and sharing their first performances with their peers. The benefits of this has been particularly picked up on by parents

"It helps them to work with people they wouldn't normally."

"Good to do something out of school that allows them to meet children from different schools and out of their peer group. There's less peer pressure, which can really help them to be more explorative with their music"

"Working in groups is great for team-working and also for listening to others. It helps develop a musical ear too."

Whilst participants did not directly pick up on the development of these skills in their own reflections, their growing ability to successfully work with peers to write and perform songs has demonstrated real growth in inter-personal skills. When participants were asked to rank activities according to enjoyment, 'working with other musicians' was the second highest-ranking activity. Furthermore, feedback from students on activities they would like to do in the future placed real emphasis on these activities with students showing a desire to do peer-to-peer teaching and to also support music groups aimed at vulnerable young people.

"Support groups for vulnerable kids e.g. bereaved children, kids being bullied or with no friends. We could come along to help."

"Something to showcase our own instruments. We could come along with our instruments from home and show/ teach our friends how to play"

Looking To The Future...

The introduction of Music Clubs has highlighted the importance of young people having access to informal music making opportunities. As has been demonstrated, the outcomes are numerous and often unique to an informal and explorative approach to music making. Furthermore, it is an opportunity that young people are receiving limited access to at school with music lessons being cut down in many schools, and feedback from participants indicating that school lessons do not offer the same opportunity for enjoyment and self-directed learning.

Music Clubs will consequently continue to be a core part of SoCo's output, with the aim of engaging more young people in music and also continuing to nurture the talent of our current participants. As our learners develop though, so will the music clubs, introducing new activities that respond to the needs and interests of our participants. Alongside this we also hope to support a next generation of young musicians, through offering additional support and progression to individuals who want to take their musical skills further.

CASE STUDY 1

Joseph

AGE: 18

ATTENDED: Songwriting, Afrobeat & Music Production

ABOUT: Joseph is a modern-soul pianist and songwriter. He also plays Saxophone, Harmonica, Steel Pans and since coming to music club has started to sing, play bass and drums.



➤ WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT AS A RESULT OF COMING TO MUSIC CLUB?

Songwriting is really good because Jim is a knowledgeable songwriter so he has a lot of skills, which I've picked up, and that's helped me to write songs. I used to struggle to think of ways to start. Now I know loads of different methods and techniques. I've learnt the tech side of music, which I didn't really know much about before. I learnt about microphones and their different purposes and uses. I've learnt Logic and know my way around that quite well now. The different sessions kind of compliment each other, and now I've been able to write and record my own music

➤ HOW HAS IT HELPED YOU?

Before I came here I didn't really know what I was going to do. But now I've been writing and recording my own music, and I think that's the kind of thing I want to do in the future. It's definitely impacted my future plans.

Since coming here, I've also been learning drums at Afrobeat and some bass as well. It's helped me with recording and writing songs because I can now multi-track bass and drums.

➤ WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED THE MOST?

I've always enjoyed writing music and songs but now I also enjoy the performing and the tech. I've liked it all!

➤ WHAT PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES HAVE YOU HAD?

The first times I was performing were difficult, but over time it's become much more familiar. And even singing in front of people - I never imagined I would be able to do that before I came here. But in songwriting sessions when I was collaborating and writing songs with other people, I gradually got more confident to sing in front of more and more people.

Open Mic nights have been a really good opportunity. The first open mic night I was quite nervous. The second time I felt neutral. So it's shown an improvement in confidence in me.

➤ WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE COURTHOUSE AS A CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT?

Really good. All the people are friendly and nice. The building is perfect as a creative space. It's like it was built to be that rather than a courthouse.

None of my friends are musicians so they can't really understand when I'm talking musically, whereas here I can talk to people who do.

CASE STUDY 2

Thea

AGE: 15

ATTENDED: Rock Club, Songwriting and Music Production.

ABOUT: Thea plays the ukulele, guitar, flute, and since attending music club has started to sing and also write and perform her own songs.



➤ WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT AS A RESULT OF COMING TO MUSIC CLUB?

Coming to Rock Club has helped me learn about performance and timing and working in a group. Mark and Jimmy have taught me riffs and quite complex guitar chords and Jim has also helped me in writing songs. In Music Production I've also learnt how to use Logic.

➤ HAS MUSIC CLUB HELPED YOU DEVELOP MUSICALLY?

It's helped me in a lot of ways. I've gained more confidence. Open mic has definitely boosted my confidence. I definitely enjoyed it.

At school I'm in Wind Orchestra, which is quite tricky. We'll be given a piece of music and be expected to do it perfectly straight away. Whereas here if I don't get something, Mark or Jimmy will show me how to do things.

It's a more friendly and relaxed environment than at school. I just know that if anything goes wrong like my guitar string breaks, I can come here for help. There are some pretty swell people here!

➤ WHAT HAVE YOU ENJOYED THE MOST?

I've most enjoyed recording myself because I love to play my instruments. And then I can play with my own recordings rather than with samples. I prefer that.

➤ HAS MUSIC CLUB HAD AN IMPACT ON YOUR FUTURE PLANS AT ALL?

It's definitely helped. It's helped me see what it would be like to be a musician. It's helped me see what I'd like to do. I'd like to produce music and to perform.

➤ WOULD THINGS BE DIFFERENT IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE THIS FACILITY?

I probably wouldn't want to do music as much as I do. I wouldn't be as certain about what I want to do at college or uni. And my Youtube channel wouldn't have such good content!