



Rock Up

Project Report: August 2016

Background

Rock Up was a 22-month music inclusion project for young people in Lowestoft, devised and delivered by Suffolk Artlink.

It was primarily funded through Youth Music, addressing their priority area of Children and Young People in Challenging Circumstances. Additional funding was raised through local sources – please see Appendix I for details.

Sessions took place at Colville House Youth Club, a club for young people aged 11 to 19. The Club is in the Whitton area of Lowestoft where, according to the Mosaic classification (2014), 17.4% of households are in the 'Family Basics' category. Figures for Suffolk, the East of England and England are 7.5%, 7.3% and 7.2% respectively.¹

This classification includes families where expenditure can exceed income; who own a budget home and are striving to cover all expenses; and families with many children living in areas of high deprivation and who need support.

Whitton ranks 12 (out of 175) on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2015) – where 1 is the most deprived – and is within the first quintile of deprivation in the county.

Rock Up was open to all youth club members – and equally dependent upon their roll which fluctuated at certain times, most particularly around the beginning of term. At one time, there were over 85 young people on their register, and at others this fell to around 40.

Every young person participating in Rock Up was considered to be rurally isolated and experiencing economic deprivation. The Rock Up core participants included young carers, young offenders and young parents, SEN, Looked After Children, those at risk of offending or exclusion from school, homeless young people and NEETs. In addition, many were subject to CAF – the Common Assessment Framework – an interdisciplinary means of supporting vulnerable young people.

The Project

Between November 2014 and August 2016, Rock Up delivered a total of 74 two-hour music activity sessions. These included regular, weekly sessions during term time and two summer schools offering more intense music development.

Sessions were structured to offer a 'drop-in' taster element, where young people could come and have a go; one-to-one sessions to develop musical skills and abilities – supported by online tutorials produced by the tutors – and a band practice/group sharing period for the final part of the evening. In this way, the sessions offered different entry points, from complete beginner to experienced musicians.

Two public performances took place, both at the New Cut Arts Centre, Halesworth. Both times it was the Coolville Band who performed – a group of seven young people. A further nine young people made mixes with the DJ, and these have been posted to public sites, e.g. MixCloud.

Sessions were predominantly rock and pop music, delivered by regular tutors Bryan Hall and Matt Shepherd, who supported guitar, keyboard, ukulele, bass guitar, drumming, song-writing and vocal skills. The tutoring was always driven by the interests of the young person, rather than a prescribed learning programme.

There was also scope to invite guest tutors each term. Young people were canvassed about what skills they would like to develop, and DJ-ing proved to be the most popular. So popular, in fact, that Sophie Tott, aka Tallulah Goodtimes, joined the team of regular tutors.

¹ Source: Suffolk Observatory

DJ-ing offered an invaluable way of opening up sessions to young people who did not wish to learn an instrument, but who were keen to create their own digital music. Her sessions added a different dimension to the project, not least through the numerous mixes and recordings she helped the young people produce.²

Over the course of the project, 105 unique individuals took part in Rock Up. Of these, 24 were observers who attended just one session; four other observers came consistently and, whilst shy of taking part, obviously enjoyed the atmosphere in the room and preferred it to other areas of the youth club. This is considered significant, as one of the aims was to encourage personal, social and emotional skills amongst young people.

325 one-to-one sessions were delivered by the three tutors, with 21 young people taking part in them; a total of 61 online tutorials were produced to support the tuition.³ These online tutorials were supported by professional training in making and editing audio recordings, delivered to the tutors early on in the project.

Towards the end of the project we held a second CPD event, on providing Arts Awards, a nationally accredited qualification, and how to integrate them within the structure and practice of the existing sessions. This training informed our plans for the development of the Rock Up project.

Ongoing CPD was achieved through frequent attendance in sessions by the youth workers, who were able to observe how the tutors interacted with the young people, and were able to feedback on their practice, providing additional information about background circumstances of some of the participants, where appropriate. In this way, tutors and youth workers were able to share their skills and experience and both benefit as a result.

At the end of each term, the Project Officer held a review and reflection session with the tutors, using the Youth Music 'Do, Review, Improve' framework to consider the sessions. This provides an objective means of considering the sessions from all angles, and identifying areas that may be developed.



Young vocalist at a Rock Up session. Photo by Ben Jackson

² For examples, please visit <https://www.mixcloud.com/rockUpProject/>

³ For an example of the online tuition, please visit <https://vimeo.com/143597854>

ROCK UP - INTENDED OUTCOMES

In keeping with the Youth Music funding process, Rock Up addressed FIVE outcomes – two of which were generic to all Youth Music funded projects at the time, and three specific to Rock Up.

A number of indicators for each outcome were specified, along with methods of collecting the evidence to assess the extent to which the outcome had been achieved.

There follows a breakdown of each outcome, with indicators, sources of evidence and overall summary of progress.

Generic Outcome 1:

To improve the quality and standards of music delivery for children and young people

Indicators

- Number of music leaders (15) taking part in CPD sessions.
- Increase in skills and confidence of music tutors in working with young people in challenging circumstances from taking part in regular review and reflection sessions and skills sharing with youth workers.
- 4 professional music tutors engaged to deliver 72 structured, progressive music sessions.

Evidence

- Tutor feedback on training events.
- Do, Review, Improve framework for monitoring tutor confidence and increased skills.
- Contracts and registers confirming numbers of tutors engaged and sessions delivered.
- Tutor notes and tutorials evidencing structure and scope for progression within the sessions.

Indicator/Evidence 1

Number of music leaders taking part in CPD sessions - tutor feedback

- It was not possible to recruit 15 music leaders on to our training events, but feedback from those who did attend was positive and informative.
- Two tutors attended sound recording training, gaining skills/confidence to produce online tutorials. Both confirmed that they had increased their knowledge and skills, and that the experience of working alongside a professional sound recordist increased their confidence in producing good quality recordings. They said they felt fully supported to deliver this element of the project: 60 online tutorials have been produced.
- The second training event was delivered by an Arts Award Advisor, who observed a session and then delivered an overview of how the Award could be integrated into our practice. The tutors were excited to discover that much of what they already do would qualify for the Award, and expressed their confidence in supporting the young people to achieve the qualification.

Indicator/Evidence 2

Tutor increased skills and confidence – Do, Review, Improve framework

- “I particularly liked using the framework, it gave me a vocabulary for considering and discussing the sessions objectively. It’s been a real boost to my confidence, considering a question and realising that we’re delivering like that.” – Tutor comment
- “Working as part of a team is really helpful, it informs how I approach the sessions, and the feedback from fellow practitioners and PO is very encouraging. It supports our holistic approach to sessions – keeping the kids engaged, delivering what they want and stretching them but always aware of other issues in their lives. I feel really confident knowing that we’re all in this together, and that we can share experiences with each other.” – Tutor comment

- “The youth workers feedback was really good, they know the family far better than us, they put you at ease, without disclosing exact details.” – Tutor comment

Indicator/Evidence 3

Four professional music tutors engaged to deliver 72 structured, progressive music sessions - contracts, registers, tutor notes and tutorials

- Professional music tutors Matt Shepherd, Bryan Hall, Sophie Tott and Dan Friend were engaged to deliver the project, as well as Daniel Ball, a young and relatively inexperienced community musician, to assist at some sessions.
- Dan wrote, "I want to thank you for letting me get involved in the music workshops, I've really enjoyed myself and hope that I have been of help. I feel honoured that Matt, Brian, Sophie and yourself have made me feel so welcome and really hope that you will consider me as part of the team in the future."
- Rock Up delivered 74 2-hour sessions. Starting in January 2015, we introduced one-to-one tutorials for young people to develop skills; 325 1-1 sessions were delivered, with tutor notes evidencing the progress made by the young participants.

Summary of progress towards this outcome

- Music leaders involved in the project have continued to develop their skills through delivery of session. They feel more confident in their abilities to use specialised equipment and to deliver Arts Awards, as well as to handle other issues that arise from working with young people in challenging circumstances.
- It is evident from feedback and response to the Do, Review, Improve Framework that the tutors highly value the reflection opportunities available both through formal meetings, and the on-going reflections and reviewing that takes place during sessions between the tutors themselves and with the youth workers.
- There is a definite structure to the sessions - and one that the young people recognise and accept now - yet within that structure we need to be very flexible to the young people - we are constantly making assessments about how we should or could respond.
- We work closely as a team, and the youth workers are an invaluable and much appreciated element of that team; their involvement has contributed significantly to the increased confidence of the tutors and PO in supporting young people in challenging circumstances.

What was particularly successful, or unsuccessful, in achieving the outcome?

- The regular review and reflect sessions allowed the project to develop to meet the needs of the young people and the Do, Review, Improve Framework was a very useful tool for discussing the sessions from all angles.
- We asked the senior youth worker to sit in on a session and complete the Framework; her responses were very encouraging to read, and obviously added to the tutors' sense of confidence in how they delivered the sessions - it also informed her as to how we actually work and what is achieved in the sessions.
- By having the youth workers present in the room we have been able to observe and discuss with them the different approaches and considerations in working with young people in challenging circumstances. This has provided a significant boost to tutor confidence, in a flexible, informal manner.
- Training offered was specific to the needs of the music tutors involved in the project, which may have meant it was less relevant to the wider music leader community.
- Whilst the regularity of the Review and Reflection sessions was a very useful discipline to follow, just as important was the on-going reflections between tutors and youth workers throughout the sessions; it created a strong sense of team work and mutual support.

“You couldn’t do it without reflection – you could end up going the wrong way, and not fulfilling the child-centred ethos. We’ve evolved each term, something happens and we’re flexible, we learn as we go along, reflecting with everyone, including the youth workers, the kids, reflecting after one-to-ones, you have more contact and you can follow up, there’s a consistency in our approach to young people.” Tutor comment

Generic outcome 2:

To embed learning and effective practice in host and partner organisations and share practice beyond the project

Indicators

- Increased confidence of youth workers to use music to engage young people in challenging circumstances
- Youth workers recognise the value of music sessions in supporting children in challenging circumstances
- Music and CYP services from region are aware of learning and impact through shared project report

Evidence

- Feedback gathered in review and reflection sessions with tutors and youth workers, supported by Do, Review, Improve framework
- End of session report forms used by youth workers, to include evidence of reaching learning outcomes
- Response to final report circulated via web site and partner networks

Indicator/Evidence 1

Increased confidence of youth workers – youth worker feedback

- Regular review and reflection sessions (5 in total) were held with the tutors, but it wasn't possible to engage youth workers in them. So the Project Officer conducted one-to-one interviews with two youth workers, and invited the senior Youth Worker to sit in on a session, to observe how it was conducted and to complete a Do, Review, Improve document.
- Comments received included: "Staff have had the opportunity to join sessions and witness the value of this group to the yps. I've discussed this with my colleagues and we do feel more confident in being able to support yps during sessions."
- "This is a big club, some kids get 'lost' in it, they come specifically to do music, that's what they come here to do. It's been pretty special to see that."
- "The [music] sessions have given us a chance to see things we didn't know they could do."

Indicator/Evidence 2

Youth workers recognise the value of music sessions – end of session reports

- We had intended to use the end of session report forms to draw connections between individual learning outcomes and the impact making music might have on achieving those outcomes. For this, we were dependent upon the youth workers keeping records for the individuals who came to the music sessions; not every young person had a learning outcome form.

- It proved impossible to gather any meaningful evidence from this source, so again we relied on consultations with youth workers. In this, they made it perfectly clear that they thought the music room gave the young people scope to relax, make friendships, grow in confidence, demonstrate skills and interests and experience different ones, all in a safe and nurturing environment. The senior youth worker commented, "It's been so good for these young people to be able to come and express themselves with their music - it's really valuable."

Indicator/Evidence 3

Music and CYP services from region are aware of learning and impact - response to final report

- Suffolk Artlink uses many different routes to promote the work we do, from networking via steering groups such as the Lowestoft Cultural Partnership, Creating Changes group, or the county Music Hub, to publishing via our web site and partner blog sites, e.g. *'Travelling With Them'* published on the YM Network blog site, August 2015.
- The Project Officer has also developed strong links with other music providers, e.g. Access to Music, Great Yarmouth, The Garage, Norwich and Noise Solution, Bury St Edmunds, all of whom are aware of the work that we do on Rock Up.
- This year, Suffolk Artlink celebrated its 10th anniversary. We invited an audience of participants, practitioners and partners to come and listen to keynote speakers and experience elements of our work. The climax was a performance by the Coolville Band, seven youngsters who demonstrated clearly the impact that Rock Up had had on their lives.

Summary of progress towards this outcome

- We are confident that the Youth Workers recognise the value of using music to support young people in challenging circumstances - all our feedback demonstrates that they have been delighted to see the young people engaging, have noted increased confidence and social skills and welcomed the chance to experience skills and talents in the young people of which they had not previously been aware.
- We are also aware that much of that evidence has been collected in the spur of the moment, in response to an event or performance, and as such does not lend itself to any particularly 'formalised' analysis.
- One of our proposed indicators did not prove effective (the youth workers' report forms) in that we weren't able to use them to demonstrate the impact of music on the young person's learning goals. So again, we depended on informal conversations, inviting youth workers into the sessions and gaining their insights in the moment.
- We have been proactive in informing other providers about the work we do, and have several positive responses from other agencies, e.g. Access to Music, demonstrating that they are aware of our work and the impact it has.
- We invited the senior youth worker to observe a session and complete the Do, Review, Improve framework. This was particularly helpful, as it enabled her objectively to consider the session.

What was particularly successful, or unsuccessful, in achieving the outcome?

- Getting youth workers to observe and use the framework Do, Review, Improve was very useful, in that it helped them view our sessions from a professional point of view, providing a broader context and greater significance to the manner in which we deliver the sessions. It also gave us valuable feedback on how they received the sessions.
- Equally as important was the on-going reflection and sharing that occurred. The music room became a relaxed, safe environment in which young people who felt overwhelmed by the normal youth club activities could seek a different atmosphere - possibly not very quiet, but definitely not as threatening as some other areas of the Club.
- Youth workers, too, would come and join in that relaxed atmosphere, and in so doing would observe young people interacting, forming friendships, developing relationships with the tutors, teaching one another skills, it gave them the chance to see how the young people were developing and as such contributed to the value they put on the sessions.

“Choices were offered to the group and young people suggested songs and how they wanted the session to run. Tutors included all the young people and encouraged late comers who were reluctant to take part. The session became more technical and young people were taught harder sequences, stretching their skill base. The sense of achievement was felt by all young people in the session.” Senior Youth Worker feedback

Outcome 3

To improve the personal, emotional and social skills of young people in Lowestoft

Indicators

- Increased time spent by young people engaged in sessions.
- Increased confidence and teamwork skills
- Demonstrated responsibility for own learning through commitment to tutorials

Evidence

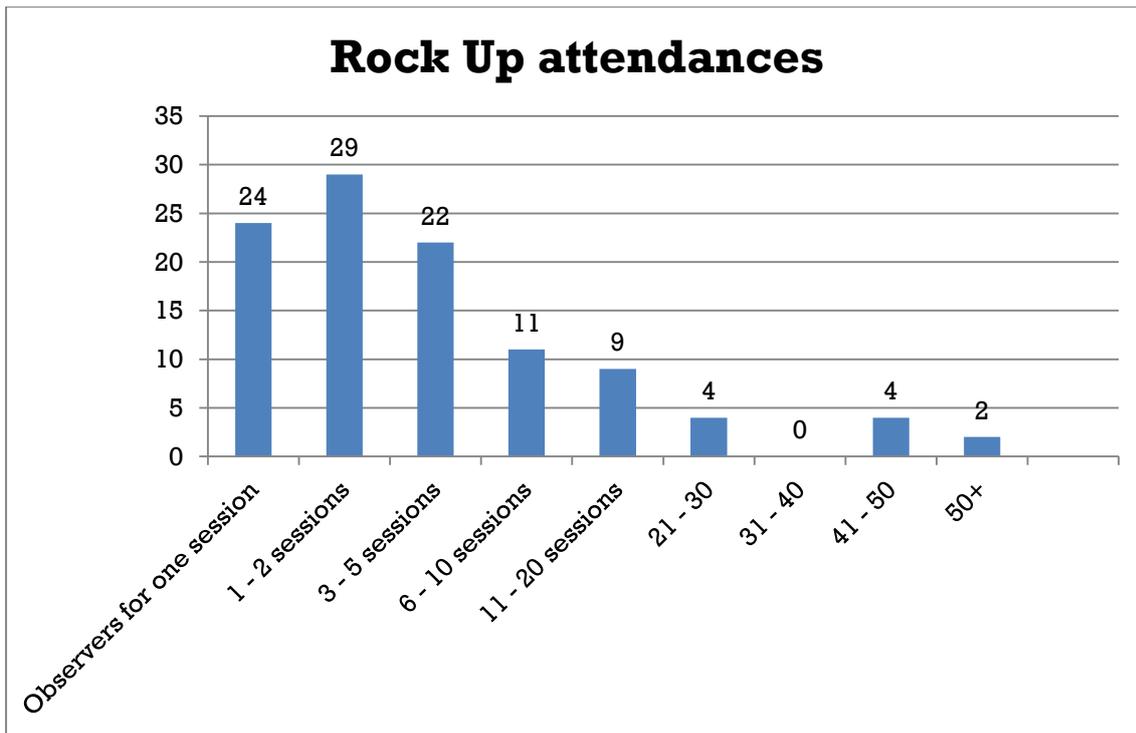
- We planned to use a variety of means to evidence improved personal skills, including the session register, recording attendances and tracking young people who came to observe and then subsequently took part in the sessions. This gave us a basic measurement of the length of time that they were engaged with the project - and a sense of the distance travelled by the young people.
- Other means included observations by the tutors, taken from their session log-books, observations from youth workers, as gathered when they sat in on music sessions and from feedback on the young person's behaviour in the rest of the youth club, and observations by the Project Officer.
- The Project Officer also conducted mini 'vox pops' with the young people. Typically, these would take place when a young person had just played something, and the PO would ask them how they felt about it. The PO also conducted a more formal questionnaire with the young people which, whilst aimed more towards increased musical skills, did illicit insights into how the young people had developed socially over the course of the project.

Indicator/evidence 1

Increased time spent by young people engaged in sessions - session register

- There were 105 unique individual attendees at Rock Up sessions. Of these, 25 observed for one session and did not return.
- Of those observers who returned, they observed between one and eight sessions, during which time they might be discussing music, listening to individuals playing, joining in conversations about different styles, as well as more general topics of conversation. Gradually, they developed the confidence to join in.
- We delivered a total of 74 sessions.
- A core⁴ group of 52 young people took part in the project.

⁴ Core as defined by Youth Music being those who attend for three or more sessions



Indicator/Evidence 2

Increased confidence and teamwork skills - observations from youth workers, tutors, young people and parents.

- "Coming here has given them opportunities such as performances that they definitely didn't have before and have been amazing for their confidence." Youth worker observation
- "It was lovely to see the group working together, with them showing each other what they'd learnt and teaching one another new skills." Project Officer observation
- "Oh my goodness – do you remember when I first came? I'd sit there with my head down, whispering a song, I'd keep stopping and saying I was no good. Last time I came here, I taught my sister how to play a song. That's amazing. I never realised how far I've come.' YP's feedback
- "To see my son take part in the group performance was amazing - he's so pleased and so am I." Parent interview

Indicator/Evidence 3

Demonstrated responsibility for own learning through commitment to tutorials - register, tutor log books, young peoples' feedback

- A total of 334 one-to-one sessions were delivered to a total of 29 young people; 8 of these were not considered 'core'. Of the remaining 21, 21 young people attended 1 to 10 sessions, 2 attended 12 to 20 sessions & 7 attended between 21 and 51 sessions.
- K: I've noticed the songs he wants to play changed a little during the term, which is good. This was a little advanced for him but he still tried hard.
J: Clearly worked on his song much more this week, very committed to practising.
M: Wanted to work on a particular song. Struggled with chords but is determined to do it.
Tutor log book comments

- “I couldn’t have done this without the one-to-one sessions. Before, my guitar was in a box under my bed - now I’m playing in a group. This has been everything to me.” Young person’s feedback

Summary of progress towards this outcome

- The indicators clearly demonstrate that the music sessions provide a safe and engaging environment in which young people can grow in confidence and personal skills. They have developed from singing along to their MP3 players to creating their own material and performing it in public.
- During the project young people have increasingly taken responsibility for their own musical development, and have shared newly acquired skills and knowledge with other members of the group in an appropriate, supportive manner - this has been witnessed by many adults visiting the club, including key workers.
- The music sessions have given the young people a focus - even those who do not join in the activities are nonetheless contributing via conversation, sharing tracks and their general interest in music - all this makes for a positive environment, supported by the tutors who provide strong role models for the young people.
- As they have grown in confidence, so the young people have shared more with the tutors, and dared to take bigger risks with their learning - they have come out of some very narrow and limiting comfort zones and applied themselves to difficult tasks - and enjoyed the sense of achievement from making that leap.

What was particularly successful, or unsuccessful, in achieving the outcome?

- The relaxed structure of the sessions, offering different entry levels, contributed to the success of making the young people feel able to engage.
- The one-to-one tuition really helped to foster positive relationships between the adults and participants, giving the young people the scope to develop at their own pace, and also to feel valued by the tutor who always gave objective and positive feedback on their progress. Several commented that they felt 'valued' by the tutors, as they engaged with the type of music they wanted to learn, rather than requiring the young person to learn something the tutor had chosen.
- The use of the DJ was invaluable in opening up different dimensions for the sessions - several young people attended specifically for her sessions, as they did not want to learn an instrument, but were clearly very interested in creating their own mixes. All of this added to the sense that we took their views and opinions seriously.
- Ultimately, we shape the sessions around the young people - we don't impose, but we do pick up very quickly when a young person shows any kind of interest - and then we endeavour to engage at that level so that no pressure is applied.
- This is particularly important for young people who lead chaotic, pressured lives in an environment where they are more likely to be deemed as having 'failed' then celebrated for all that they have achieved. Their aspirations are low - some have very little 'hope' for what they might do or could be. Rock Up has given them the chance to experience that they can apply themselves, they can learn and improve, and that has given them increased confidence and social skills to commit to the project.



Photo by Ben Jackson

Outcome 4

To increase the musical skills of young people in Lowestoft

Indicators

- Young people demonstrate improved instrumental and performance skills.
- Young people try new/different instruments and song writing skills.
- Young people demonstrate recording skills.

Evidence

- Tutor log books. These provided us with the most detail, in terms of the young person's starting point - for example, at the outset of learning a new song, and their progress towards achieving the song technically and from the point of view of personal satisfaction. As the log books were completed each week, it demonstrates the steps involved in developing skills - and any obstacles encountered along the way.
- Project Officer's brief weekly diary, noting more general events within the group plus young persons' views about their musical development, not least to encourage them to reflect on what they had achieved and increase their level of self awareness regarding their skills and abilities.
- Feedback from parents and youth workers, as they experienced showcases, recordings, band practice jamming sessions, and witnessed how the young people had developed.

Indicator/evidence 1

Young people demonstrate improved instrumental and performance skills - tutor logs, young persons' self-assessment

- 04.02.15 C. learnt how to form chord shapes and we looked at how to change between them efficiently and the importance of being patient
13.01.16 C. very pleased with how he played – he's becoming very relaxed with his playing now.
23.03.16 C. played bass for the performance, he was very cool and assured and although nervous he treated the practice sessions seriously and was extremely solid throughout.
25.05.16 J. found the song very difficult, but determined to persevere.
22.06.16 J's getting there on the song, finds the intro difficult, we're working on separating bars and chords.
06.07.16 J's clearly worked on the song much more, grasping the basic chords nicely.
Extract from Tutor log books
- "We didn't even speak to each other when we started - now we're teaching each other what we've learnt: that's amazing." Young person

Indicator/evidence 2

Young people try new/different instruments and song writing skills – Project Officer observations

- Young people have tried a variety of instruments and, where possible, have been supported in individual choices, e.g. when a lad wanted to learn ukulele we were able to provide one.
- "Session began with telling young people about the gig. They were very excited and all said they wanted to take part – the tutors worked with them to develop some basic chord patterns and M. was asked if she'd like to write the lyric. She was obviously delighted to be asked. Following week – no song, despite M. saying she would work on it at home. Band still keen to perform. PO and DJ both talked about song writing with M and tried out different techniques. Following week – M appears with fully formed song, sings it to group, and together they nail it. Brilliant." Extract from PO diary.

Indicator/evidence 3

Young people demonstrate recording skills - recordings made, yps's feedback

- Young people interested in digital music have been able to create their own mixes and upload them to Mixcloud
- Four compilation CDs and numerous individual recordings captured by the DJ for participants to take home and share with family and friends.
- Young people may spend up to four sessions choosing tracks and learning basic techniques before creating the final mix.
- One young man recorded how his recording skills had progressed, saying:-

“I’ve been able to create a track which I feel is significant. It’s much more professional, I’ve been using new mechanisms and strategies that I’ve learnt here – this is pivotal, the sessions have provided a turning point for my music – something big is going to happen, and it’s come from the help and support of the tutors and the other young people here.”

Transcript of young person’s comments

Summary of progress towards this outcome

- These indicators demonstrate that young people have increased their musical skills, and have a personal sense of that development.
- The tutors provide objective, professional feedback on how the young person is developing - from starting point through to achieving the song - which provides meaningful bass/finishing lines against which to gauge development. It also provides reference to some of the obstacles encountered - often associated with home life - that get in the way of practising or being consistent in attendance at sessions.
- Young people were to be invited to make recordings of band practice and performance, but in the event no-one was interested in doing this. The Project Officer captured some performances for sharing within the group, but we acknowledge that this does not develop the young peoples' recording skills, as initially intended. However, in the absence of anyone wishing to do it, there was little we could do.
- Much was achieved through the DJ sessions, and the young people clearly felt they had learnt techniques and were pleased with the mixes they created.

What was particularly successful, or unsuccessful, in achieving the outcome?

- The one-to-one tuition was particularly successful in achieving this outcome. As it was absolutely geared towards the young person in question, it meant they could learn the type of songs they wanted to learn, and the tutor logs demonstrate that they would attend with a particular song in mind - they obviously thought about what they wanted to learn, and then applied themselves to learn it.
- What was unexpected - and fantastic to witness - was the way in which the young people then shared these skills amongst themselves. The final part of the session was supposed to be a jamming/band practice time for everyone. Very often, a participant would start playing what they had been learning with their tutor and then another young person would be interested and say they wanted to learn it, too - so the participant would show them - perfect, informal skill sharing that had never been stipulated as part of our monitoring process, but wonderful to behold.
- The online tutorials were created specifically to support the individuals in the one-to-one tuition. These were not as successful as we had thought they would be - they were viewed, but not in huge amounts. When asked about this, there were a number of responses, including one young man who had been banned from using his phone or computer,

because of inappropriate use. Others said that they 'wanted to wait and see the tutor in person' rather than watch in on their phones; in the end, it is debatable how much the online tutorials contributed to increased musical skills.

OUTCOME 5

To increase opportunities for young people in Lowestoft to access high quality music making

Indicators

- Number of sessions delivered
- Online tutorials created specifically for young people
- Increase in young peoples' knowledge of opportunities

Evidence

- The session register was used to track the number of sessions and music making opportunities for young people in Lowestoft, including the online tutorials created specifically for the one-to-one students.
- Number of showcase opportunities provided
- Young peoples' feedback on opportunities provided by other organisations would be used to gauge their level of awareness of what was available.

Indicator/evidence 1

Opportunities provided - register

- Rock Up provided 74 two-hour sessions for young people in Lowestoft - that's a total 148 hours of high quality music making.
- 334 one-to-one sessions took place, with 29 young people signing up for them. At an approximate length of 15 minutes each, that's over 83 hours of one-to-one tuition delivered to young people, many of whom have poor records of attendance at school and low expectations of academic achievements.
- Our target was 85 young people engaged - in the event we would claim 80 young people. Although 105 unique individuals attended sessions, some (24) were as observers who never converted into participants, and so we discount that number.

Indicator/evidence 2

Online tutorials created specifically for participants - number of tutorials created

- A total of 61 tutorials were created during the Rock Up project.
- These are available to view at on the Suffolk Artlink website (<http://www.suffolkartlink.org.uk/our-work/rock-up/>) or directly at <https://vimeo.com/album/3617787> They are password protected, for safeguarding reasons, but there is a demonstration video available at <https://vimeo.com/143597854>

Indicator/evidence 3

Increase in young peoples' knowledge of opportunities - young peoples' feedback

- There are limited opportunities in the Lowestoft area for young people to engage in music making activities and wherever possible we try to identify and signpost them to our participants.
- Consequently, activities such as Friday Afternoons and Group A (both Aldeburgh Music initiatives), Access to Music (Great Yarmouth) and opportunities at The Garage in Norwich are all promoted via the organisations' PR literature and posters.
- Over the course of the two years, the young people have become increasingly aware of different music venues (normally pubs) in Lowestoft. Through visiting guest musicians and

the tutors, they have become aware of some that offer open mic opportunities and have begun to discuss the possibility of taking part.

- We also encourage participants to use Mixcloud and other digital platforms to showcase work, and as a source of information about other opportunities.

Summary of progress towards this outcome

- Rock Up has definitely increased opportunities via the sessions, tuition and online tutorials. The combination of rock and pop tutors and DJ sessions has increased access to the sessions, and involved more young people in the initiative.
- Because the project takes place within a youth club, it is only available to young people attending that Club but this does not seem to impact negatively on the numbers attending. We are aware that we draw from a particular area of Lowestoft and that young people from other areas of the town do not attend the Club; this is apparently (according to youth workers) as much to do with rivalry between different groups of youths, and is out of our hands in terms of promoting the sessions.
- A few of the participants have explored some of these other opportunities - Access to Music courses, for example - but have ultimately decided against them ... possibly because they felt overwhelmed by the commitment and travelling involved and anxious about the cost - always a barrier to their involvement in other opportunities.

What was particularly successful, or unsuccessful, in achieving the outcome?

- By providing structured sessions with several entry points, enabling participants of all abilities to take part, and using a combination of genre including rock and pop and DJ-ing, we have ensured that as many young people as possible could take part in Rock Up and thus increased the opportunities for young people to take part in high quality music making.
- Rock Up takes place at a senior youth club and as such we are dependent upon young people wishing to join the Club for our participants. In the last term, there have been a few young people who have come to the Club specifically for the music sessions - they have since become fully integrated members of the Club.
- The online tutorials have not contributed as much as we would have hoped to increasing opportunities - we had hoped that the young people would take greater advantage of them - but through them and the one-to-one sessions, young people have been encouraged to use Youtube and other platforms to listen to and research other music and musicians - broadening their experience of certain music genres and hopefully whetting their appetites for more.



Practising guitar riffs. Photo by Ben Jackson

Additional and unexpected outcomes

- One unexpected outcome was the extent to which the young people shared their skills and experiences amongst themselves - how supportive they became of one another, and the care they took in teaching one another the songs they had been learning with their tutors.
- This support extended to the public showcases. One young lad became most upset before hand, and we were concerned that he would not have a positive experience, despite his previous determination to take part. One of the older band members went and sat with him and chatted - at the end of which the young lad dried his tears and went on. When asked afterwards how he felt, he said 'Fantastic - I'm really glad I did that.'
- We were delighted with the impact of the DJ sessions - it extended the sessions to many more young people, and was particularly popular with those on the autistic scale. At least two young people who were typically disruptive in the general sessions became totally focused with the DJ-ing, and spent over an hour creating their own mixes.
- One young man considered the support he'd received at Rock Up as being 'pivotal' in the development of his music and wanted to tell us so in his own words.

The future

- We are going to use Rock Up as a model for delivering Arts Awards.
- Supported by the youth club and local Academy, we intend to run taster sessions at the local school, to make more young people aware of the project and recruit new members. We will build on our experiences of using DJ skills to engage young people, and develop our skills at capturing and uploading video and audio files, both to support the Awards and to showcase and promote the project.
- We are going to continue the drop in/one-to-one and online tutorials structure of the project and we are going to introduce Bronze Arts Awards, offering young people to gain a national qualification.
- To achieve this, we will train the tutors and Project Officer in delivering Arts Awards. We are also planning to use a nationally-acclaimed monitoring process - SWEMWBS - to monitor individual response to the project. This will provide an effective base line/finish line and, as it is already used in other Suffolk Artlink projects, it will add to the overall data that we produce to evidence the impact of our work.
- Suffolk Artlink is a core member of the Lowestoft Cultural Education Partnership - which is tasked with improving the cultural offer for children and young people in Lowestoft.
- Our experience with Rock Up enables us to have an 'on the ground' knowledge of some of the issues young people are dealing with, and will ensure that any development work will be delivered under the Cultural Education Partnership is as inclusive as possible.
- It has taken a long time to gain the confidence of the young people attending Colville House Youth Club. Without that confidence, it was very difficult to get them to engage, let alone commit to the tuition or dare to try new skills; their limited aspirations are significant barriers to personal or musical development.
- Funding for this two-year programme has enabled us to spend the necessary time gaining that trust, and has helped us bring the young people to a point where they are willing to consider trying for national awards - as one youth worker commented, "So many of them have had such poor experiences at school, it's fabulous to think that they might be able to gain a qualification by doing something that they love - making music."
- As the Project Officer involved in Rock Up, I have learnt a huge amount, and gained tremendously in experience and confidence as the project has evolved over the past 22 months. We started with a very clear idea of what we wanted to achieve, and how we intended to achieve it. This, in turn, gave us a framework against which we could assess how far we have come, and whether our original aims were realistic.
- I think our aims were absolutely realistic, and that we have indeed achieved all that we set out to achieve, although we have not always achieved the numbers we hoped to, and some aspects, e.g. the online tuition, was not as successful as we imagined it would be.

- Key to the success has been the length of time we've had to go at the pace of the young people - to ease ourselves in and let them approach us, as and when they felt ready. I know it has meant a lot to the young people, and it's meant a lot to the project team, as well.

Additional issues

Both Suffolk Artlink and the Youth Club have appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures and although we didn't have to deal with a major incident, there were several occasions when we sought the advice of the senior youth worker in response to something that happened or was said.

As the young people grew in confidence, they tended to share confidences – or just inappropriate information. This has required us to be constantly vigilant and mindful of how we respond to the young people and each other. All issues were dealt with in accordance with Suffolk Artlink & youth club safeguarding policies and procedures.

Meeting our aims

It has been a challenge to get the young people to perform together – it took much longer than we anticipated, and there were fewer young people wanting to perform publically. The younger ones found it particularly difficult to commit – they'd attend a few sessions, appear eager to join the band, and then disappear without letting anyone know. All the young people lead chaotic lives, and this is reflected in the difficulties they have in commitment and communication. Yet we did achieve two public showcases.

It was more difficult to arrange formal skill sharing sessions with youth workers than we originally imagined. Events within the youth club itself made it particularly difficult to meet after sessions. Instead, the youth workers would bring young people to us and, once they were engaged, they would tell us a little of their circumstances and comment on how the individual would benefit from taking part in the session. Sometimes we were able to bring them in – and sometimes they used us as a 'safe place' – they came and relaxed in our music room, engaged in conversation, but didn't take up an instrument.

This project has been a challenge - and a joy. It has been a challenge in that it's taken much longer than we anticipated to develop a level of trust with the young people that enabled them to engage in a meaningful, constructive manner.

It has been a delight watching them grow in confidence, make new friends, share their learning and gain personal satisfaction from their achievements.

We are also aware that, over the course of a 2-year project, the young people grow older, and their issues change. One young lad who was 16 when we started, is now 18 and has left his care home and is in 'independent living accommodation'; the transition has not been easy for him.

In the course of the project participants have left because they became pregnant or to work abroad – although in that case the individual returned within a month or so. Others have been diagnosed on the autistic spectrum, others excluded from school or from the family home and some have gone into family therapy; there are many more examples of the chaotic lives and challenging circumstances they face.

And what's also delightful is that, in the main, they come back to the youth club and they come back to the music sessions - and we're delighted to have them back.

"I couldn't have done this without the tutors, it's been everything to me." Rock Up participant



Members of the Rock Up Coolville Band, performing at Suffolk Artlink's 10th anniversary celebrations. Photo Warren Page

"My boys live for these sessions, it's what gets them through the week." Parent of Rock Up participants

"Coming into the project has counteracted boredom, given me a focus and something to look forward to throughout the week; as soon as I'm leaving, I'm looking forward to the next week." Rock Up participant

"The stability of the project is very important to us, as we know that we can improve skills and build relationships with the tutors, as well as other people who like the same things that we do. It's good to have a shared interest and to not be just hanging out with people." Rock Up participants

“The staff/tutors are encouraging, supportive and a bit quirky! They offer opportunities to play with other musicians, work around ability and encourage participation regardless of level of ability, they’re willing to listen to music that they might not really be interested in! This makes us feel more confident about performing in front of other people.” Rock Up participant

“The one to one tuition is free and very helpful, helping you to grow in skills and it’s not restricted to one instrument or to the type of songs we want to play or sing. They go out of their way to accommodate, so will go the extra mile to understand our tastes and diversity.” Rock Up participant

“Since starting the project we’ve grown in confidence and self esteem, it’s really helped with coping with anxiety and helps us to relax and not worry for an evening, it also helps those feelings during the week.” Rock Up participant

“The encouragement and praise of the staff helps to build confidence. The music gives us an opportunity to express ourselves and to meet other people. We’re excited about the progress we’re making.” Rock Up participant

"It's been very special, watching the relationships grow - it's given them opportunities they would never have had otherwise." Youth worker

"I've enjoyed see the growing confidence of our young people, not only in their skills with the instruments, but also in their confidence. They've developed a strong bond with the other young people, which will certainly be valuable in their everyday life." Youth worker

"Rock Up was certainly very important in helping that young lad get through a difficult phase in his life - it gave him a purpose and somewhere to come and hang out with other like-minded people." Key support worker

"The tutors give so much - they are so supportive and encouraging, it's been brilliant." Parent

"Please come back, you've got to come back - what will I do with Wednesdays if you don't?" Rock Up participant

ROCK UP STATISTICS

Participants

Total number of participants = 105

Core participants = 52

All core participants were classified as being children in challenging circumstances, with classifications including: -
Homeless, young carer, young offenders, SEN rurally isolated, NEET, PRU, at risk of offending, Economic deprivation, Excluded from school, Looked After, young parent, CAF

Age groups for core group only

6 – 11 year olds: 2 males

12 – 15 year olds: 5 girls, 13 males

16 – 18 year olds, 5 females, 19 males

19 – 25 year olds, 5 females, 3 males

Ethnicity

96% White British

4% unknown

This figure reflects the demographic of the area, which is 97% White British.

Sessions

Core sessions = 74 – equivalent to 148 hours of activity

Taster sessions = 64

One-to-One sessions = 334 – equivalent to over 83 hours of one-to-one tuition.

334 includes ALL participants, not just core group

21 core group individuals took part in one-to-one sessions

Genres and music activities

Rock and pop, DJ, song writing, beat boxing, spitting, vocals

The following article was produced by the Project Officer and posted to the Youth Music Network blog site in June 2015

TRAVELLING WITH THEM

It's never too late to evaluate.

Almost two and a half terms into the music project, I realised that I had no quantitative data from the young people involved, relating to how they viewed their progress and development.

I had lots of anecdotal evidence. I could also tot up the register and point to the fact that they kept coming back: when working with 14 to 18 year olds in a youth club setting, that's an achievement in itself.

The youth workers and support officers all commented on how enthused and engaged the young people were, and the young people talked about how much they looked forward to the sessions.

Yet I had no colourful graphs, no pie charts or scatter patterns to demonstrate progress – either in practical skills or emotional and social skills. So I devised a brief questionnaire of four, simple questions: -

1. Do you feel confident about your music skills?
2. Do you feel confident about playing in front of other people?
3. Do you feel confident about playing together with other people?
4. How much, if at all, has the one-to-one tuition helped you develop your music?

Whilst obviously the first and last questions related directly to the project outcomes, the middle two were informed by what we, as tutors, had observed when the young people started attending.

For example, they might start to play something, but as soon as another young person walked into the room, they would stop. And once they had got past that stage, they might continue to play, but the slightest suggestion that they might play along with another person (other than a tutor) sent them rushing off for another rollie and high energy drink.

The questions were rated one to five, and split into half-terms, starting in January 2015, so there were three 6-week periods for them to consider. I reckoned the young people – this cohort is aged around 16 – would remember back to January, not least because it was when the one-to-one tuition started, and be able more accurately to reflect on how they felt they had progressed.

You know when something works so well you just want to go outside and hug yourself? Because they *know* they have progressed, I had anticipated that they would probably want to mark themselves high now – and so would start down the bottom end of the scale for the earlier periods. What I had not anticipated was just how powerful that level of self-reflection would be for the young people.

One young woman sat there saying 'Oh my goodness – do you remember when I first came? I'd sit there with my head down, whispering a song, I'd keep stopping and saying I was no good. Last time I came here, I taught my

sister how to play a song. That's amazing. I never realised how far I've come.'

Another young man, having marked himself quite high from the outset, commented 'I suppose I've always felt fairly confident about the music I make – but what this has done for me – it's made me feel much more optimistic about my music now – I feel I can take it somewhere now.'

Typically, this sort of evaluation would be done each half term – and then the big picture would be created at the end, resulting in a lovely graph of some description. By encouraging them to look back and reflect, it was the young people themselves who plotted their development; they also experienced a level of self-awareness that I do not think would have been achieved, had we done it each half term.

J. went from '1-not at all confident' about playing together with other people in January to a maximum of '5' by May. He said, 'I hadn't thought about that, but yes, now I'm showing the others what I've learned – we're sharing the stuff we've learnt – I couldn't do that when I started.'

Another young man, when asked the same question, marked himself low, as in '1 – not at all confident' back in January, and only rose to a '2' by May. 'What you've got to understand,' he told me, 'is that, for me, the '1' is me playing in my bedroom – '5' is playing Wembley.'

So, now I have my graph, demonstrating a gradual increase in confidence since January. There is, however, one question where the response is the same throughout. The final question, relating to how helpful, if at all, the one-to-one tuition has been.

Each respondent marked it '5-very helpful' throughout; 'I couldn't have done this without them [the tutors]' one participant said, 'it's been everything to me.'

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APPENDIX I

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