

Sound Connections User Survey 2014 Our Analysis and Response



BRIEFING PAPER

In our most recent survey of users it has been heartening to see that feedback is positive; our services are useful and appreciated, our support and information is effective. Respondents were clear that they see our role as sharing good practice and encourage innovative delivery. There are areas we can continue to review and improve, some changes can be easily instigated whilst others will need more consideration and embedding into our longer term plans.

Membership

The majority of those completing our survey were employed and worked in the formal sector, as we know our membership is made up from people working in many different ways and sectors we shall keep this in mind when reviewing the survey.

A quarter of respondents weren't sure if they were a Sound Connection's member. This raises the question of *how* we refer to the people that have signed up to our newsletters and access our opportunities.

The *why* is clear; it remains important for us to unite those that engage with Sound Connections. By defining a community of practice we can network practitioners and nurturing partnerships, sharing ideas and preventing feelings of isolation. The survey shows that most people find out about us through word of mouth. As a united community we have a stronger voice and can bring about more effective change in both policy and practice.

- Our website needs to state clearly what the membership can offer and how we view our 'members'
- When new people register to our newsletters we must reinforce this message through a welcome message
- We are consistent with our language in all our communications so that confusion is reduced
- We may consider a more appropriate term than 'member', however, whichever word is used the above recommendations stand

Communications

We know you read our newsletters and that our social media presence is steadily increasing in importance as a way to share information.

We also know that a large percentage of respondents engage in email correspondence with individual members of staff.

"Your staff are your biggest asset"

This reflects our approach to communicating with different stakeholders and partners. It is important for us to share as widely as possible our news, opportunities and resources. We also want to be effective in our support for individuals that need it and for the partnerships that we're collaborators.

- We shall continue to keep abreast of social media developments to ensure that methods of communicating are effective.

Engagement

The majority of respondents engaged with a training session (workshop or conference) or networking event (Would Like To Meet...) or utilised our resource library. As these are the opportunities we devise that seek to support as many members as possible, it is heartening to see that the survey supports this.

The next most used 'services' are more direct engagement with the specialist networks and the Innovate Programme. We are aware that those more likely to take the time to complete our survey are those that work more closely with us and so this can skew data.

However it is when we analysis the services that respondents would like to use we can see where we may focus our attention. Again the specialist networks are identified as a service most would like to engage with. This is closely followed by the aspiration to work more with us in partnership.

Half of respondents state that they do not see our DNA or consultant service as relevant to their work. This is crucial information for our income generation targets and business planning going forward.

In terms of the quality of these services overall respondents felt our services were good or excellent, with 63% recommending us to others.

- We need to be clearer about how members can engage with our different specialist networks. We can build on the work done with LEYMN as a model that has a clear core group (with membership criteria) and a wider network engaged through newsletters and a Facebook group. It would be through these networks that activities are devised to tackle challenges. This needs to ensure it provides opportunities for new individuals and organisations to engage and therefore create new partnerships
- Internally we have already started to review how we 'market' our services as part of our income generating, this is crucial for our organisation to continue and grow. A clearer, targeted, approach to promoting our services will ensure that those who *are* interested and *could* benefit are aware of our services. We will become better at knowing which services appeal and support which segments of our membership.
- We cannot not ignore those respondents that categorised our service as fair or poor. We will continue to seek ways to improve, this survey being part of this.

"As a freelance musician I find that SC provides a multi-level support network - providing everything from advisory services, training events, specialised networking and most importantly enjoyable musical experiences that inspire and support me to develop my practice. All services are very accessible and I have always felt welcomed and encouraged to contribute. Events are always smoothly organised at interesting venues and provide valuable opportunities to develop professional practice in a creative learning environment facilitated by subject experts. There is always an excellent feedback process and a commitment to ongoing evaluation in the context of the wider picture of music making across the capital. Sound Connections really does live up to its name, connecting funders, organisers, educators, freelancers and professionals who share a commitment to providing high quality music experiences in the wider community. THANKYOU!"

We asked for some suggestions on how we might improve:

You said...	We will...
Increased focus on SEND	Explore how we can make our services and opportunities

practitioners to engage with Sound Connections	more inclusive and accessible through consultation with our Challenging Circumstances Music Network
Review cost of events	We are unable to offer our training courses and events for free as we do not secure full cost recovery funding to host these. However some are subsidised and our networking event is free. We shall continue to review the marketplace to ensure our prices are competitive and where possible offer discounts. We do have a special discount price for students – if you have not received information about this offer please get in touch with bookings@sound-connections.org.uk
Offer accredited training	We have looked into the new Certificate of Music Education accreditation but found that without specific funding we could not cover the costs associated with running this and felt that asking those undertaking such a cost to foot these costs would be prohibitive. If funding becomes available to support this we shall review our position
Provide greater feedback on unsuccessful Innovate applications	We currently offer those that are not successful with their proposals the opportunity to discuss reasons with staff. We shall review whether we can enhance this feedback by examining staff capacity and the number of Innovate applications received.
More workshops / wider variety of subjects covered / workshops held at weekends	We are always reviewing the way in which we shape and deliver our training programme. The courses are designed to respond to feedback from surveys, evaluation forms and member's suggestions. We still find that numbers booking onto our courses are declining and we know this is a national issue from colleagues in similar organisations. We will review whether we can offer a workshop programme that meets the needs of the sector but also covers its own costs.
Activities beyond London	Sound Connection's has a clear remit to support the sector within the pan London region. Although our consultancy service allows us to work for clients anywhere, our funded work has a clear geographical boundary.
Sound Connections App	This would require additional funding, however we can review how accessible our website is on different devices as part of our ongoing IT work.