

Executive Summary

Pathfinders: Facilitating musical progression routes for children and young people from refugee, asylum seeker and new migrant families

by Catherine Carter and Kate Wakeling
in association with Fairbeats! & Sound Connections



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Introduction

Background

Sound Connections is a pan-London organisation that aims to develop, enable and empower young Londoners through music. Through our Musical Inclusion work (funded by Youth Music) we bring together a group of experts working with children in challenging circumstances to identify problems and solutions. It is from this group that this report was commissioned. We shall share the findings and toolkits with the wider music education sector in London and nationally in order to build more progression routes for those young people that need additional support to engage.

This document explores the benefits and challenges of facilitating musical progression for children and young people from refugee, asylum-seeking and new migrant families, and offers a range of practical approaches to creating secure and meaningful progression routes. Drawn from a longer report (*Pathfinders: A research report on musical progression routes for children and young people from refugee, asylum seeker and new migrant families*), this toolkit outlines strategies and checklists designed to be used by organisations along the progression route: from 'grassroots' refugee organisations to 'intermediary' music-making organisations to 'next steps' mainstream arts organisations or programmes.

The research feeding into the toolkit is centred around the work of such an 'intermediary' organisation, Fairbeats!, a London-based music project funded by Youth Music and based at Action for Refugees in Lewisham (AFRIL), which supports Lewisham's Chinese, Eritrean, Nigerian, Ghanaian, Somalian, Sri Lankan and Algerian communities. Fairbeats! seeks to build musical skills and instill a culture of music-making within children and young people from refugee, asylum seeking and new migrant families, and one of its key aims is to provide participants with the skills, confidence and support to take up musical opportunities beyond Fairbeats! itself. So far, Fairbeats! participants have attended a wide variety of programmes and projects, including with the Midi Music Company, Animate Orchestra (Trinity Laban), the Horniman Museum and Gardens, and Lewisham Music Hub holiday courses.

While the musical and social benefits of participating in these opportunities have been celebrated by participants, their families and our partner organisations involved, the pathway through such transitions has not always been straightforward and has taken time and effort to establish and finesse. Indeed, research undertaken in association with the Refugee Support Network and Royal Holloway highlights how vital it is that organisations formalise their aims and approaches in initiating and developing arts-based projects in this field, noting the potential pitfalls of programmes that do not address the risks and challenges of this work: 'it should be noted that arts activities, in and of themselves, have the potential to harm as much as assist young participants, and therefore the development of an effective policy should be carefully considered prior to embarking on these types of activities'.¹

In this vein, alongside outlining the tremendous value of positive musical progression experiences for young people in such challenging circumstances, our research has also generated a toolkit of practical considerations and procedures to support other organisations to establish secure and meaningful progression routes.

¹ Lockowandt, M. (2013) *Inclusion Through Art: An Organisational Guideline to Using the Participatory Arts with Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Royal Holloway University: London.

Our partners

Supported by Sound Connections, Fairbeats! has developed this toolkit through consultation with project participants, their families and individuals from a range of partner organisations, including:

- Helen Hendry, Projects Manager Learning & Participation (music) at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance;
- Peter Hayward, Head of Lewisham Music Service (lead partner in Lewisham Music Hub);
- Rachel Harrison, Community Engagement Officer, the Horniman Museum and Gardens;
- Wozzy Brewster OBE, Founder and Executive Director of the Midi Music Company;
- Phil Greenwood, Programme Co-ordinator at the Midi Music Company;
- Iolanda Chirico, Founder and Director of Action For Refugees in Lewisham;
- Jenn Raven, Co-Founder of Fairbeats! Music.

The benefits of music-making and musical progression

The value of music-making for young refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants is as much about the personal, social and emotional benefits for children and young people as it is about artistic development. Research has demonstrated the profound benefits of the participatory arts for children and young people in such challenging communities, in terms of enhancing **psychological well-being, resilience**, individuals' sense of **personal identity** and **self-image**, offering a **powerful means of expression**, an **outlet for difficult emotions**, as well as increasing young people's **independence** and **integration into new social and cultural systems**.²

A range of evidence supports the value of musical progression for children and young people. Research into the 'Musical Futures' programme found strong benefits in both musical and extra-musical learning when clear progression routes were secured for young people. The study found that these progression routes enhanced participants' **self concept**, improving their **motivation, self-esteem, confidence, concentration, organisational skills, behaviour** and **school attendance**.³

Research led by Youth Music into the 'ingredients to create an environment for musical progression' in 2009-2010, emphasised the importance of addressing the '**whole child**', and the broader concomitant benefits of sustaining young people's musical learning. The findings state: 'in many cases the **non-musical benefits** brought about through music-making will have a **longer-term impact on a young person's life**, even if they do not pursue their musical activities.'

What Fairbeats! participants and their families say

Fairbeats! has found the impact of the programme and its supported progression routes to far-reaching effects in terms of participant well-being, confidence and aspiration.

- **Supporting young people to feel special and proud of themselves**

'It's affected his life. For example, he goes to school with his big guitar and people ask him questions. He's the only one going to school with that guitar - from school he goes straight to Midi [Music Company] - so he answers: 'This is what we do... I can play a little bit for you.... this is what I learn' – it makes him make friends as well.' (Parent of Fairbeats! participant)

- **Lifting the spirits of the whole family**

'Every Tuesday now he reminds me: 'oh, today is Tuesday: drum class [at Midi Music Company].' So it's something that we look forward to - he looks forward to it... makes him happy, and when he's happy it passes over to the younger ones

² See Couch, J. (2007) 'Mind the gap: Considering the participation of refugee young people.' *Youth Studies Australia*; Kidd, B., S. Zahir, S. Kahn. (2008) *Arts and Refugees: History, Impact and Future*. Arts Council England; Noble, D. (2009) 'Safe and Sound: Who are Music for Change, what do we do, what is our philosophy?' in *Participatory Arts with Young Refugees*. London: Oval Theatre; Howell, G. (2011) "Do they know they're composing?": Music making and understanding among newly arrived refugee and immigrant children.' *International Journal of Community Music*.

³ Hallam, S., A. Creech, H. McQueen (2011) *Musical Futures: A case study investigation*. Final report from Institute of Education University of London for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

and everybody's happy in the house - so I'm really, really happy with what he's done.'

- **Acknowledging that children have needs beyond shelter and sustenance**

'Going out to mingle with other people makes them happy - which I wanted to keep on [offering them] but I couldn't because of financial challenges and other circumstances beyond my control - so I was happy when I got the opportunity [at Fairbeats!]... I still try to source places that are OK, [to find] if there is anywhere that will help apart from food. Food is everyday something. Yeah, if they have food they happy, but I find that when they go out more with their friends or with their peers they become more happier.'

- **Widening musical horizons**

'I like learning new things!'

'I like hearing all the different instruments and sounds and learning new notes and chords.'

'With Animate [at Trinity Laban] he comes out happy... seeing a lot of instruments he has not seen before and also seeing if they have the same for the music writing.'

- **The value of meeting new people and making friends**

'I like meeting people from different schools.'

'Before he wasn't [confident]; confidence started with his ukulele.'

'Even when I have a little thing to give them they are happy - it's so important, apart from their daily food - so them making other friends is very, very important for them too and to me.'

- **Supporting families to be ambitious about their children's futures**

A number of parents of Fairbeats! participants have expressed the idea that musical learning can also be a stepping stone to other kinds of attainment. The parent of one child who is currently learning the flute with a Fairbeats! bursary (on a flute borrowed from Lewisham Music Service) enquired whether this activity would be something that could help her child get into university. On being asked about attending arts activities at other venues in London, namely the Southbank Centre, another parent discussed the broader aspirations she held for herself and her family:

'I know about South Bank University - so if that name should be attached to a music company or a place for children, it should be a prestigious place as well. Before I even came here, I knew about 'South Bank University'... because I wanted to read law, so maybe one day I'm going to go there. So, if my children would have the opportunity to attach themselves to such a name that I've been dreaming of, yes, that would interest me.'

A toolkit for facilitating musical progression routes

Our toolkit tracks the potential progression route of children and young people from initial contact with a **grassroots, non-arts-based organisation** (i.e. Action for Refugees in Lewisham) which targets these communities directly; through an **arts-based 'intermediary organisation'** (i.e. Fairbeats!) and onto a **mainstream 'next-step'** organisation, programme or venue that offers broader musical (or participatory) activity (i.e. Animate Orchestra at Trinity Laban (www.animateorchestra.org.uk), the Horniman Museum (www.horniman.ac.uk), Lewisham Music Hub (www.lewishammusicsservice.org) and Midi Music Company (www.themidimusiccompany.co.uk)).

The toolkit is divided into four sections: 1. Laying the foundations for progression route partnerships; 2. Practical issues to negotiate between organisations; 3. Considering the support necessary for participants 'in the room'; 4. Facilitating progression beyond the 'next-step' offer and establishing procedures for strengthening and developing the route.

1. Laying the foundations for progression route partnerships

Forming such progression routes requires close partnership work between organisations along the chain. We found that it is crucial to set aside some time for each organisation to **share and reflect together on each organisation's missions and ethos**; to establish a **clear understanding** of participant organisation's aims, needs and expectations; and to continue to develop and strengthen **shared goals**.

'Grassroots' & 'Intermediary' orgs

- **Regular partnership meetings** were recommended between the 'grassroots' organisations managers and the 'intermediary' organisation project manager to share plans and stay connected in terms of project strategy and aims.
- **Sharing impact studies/evaluations** can help ensure that the grassroots organisation staff are aware of the broader social impact of such an 'intermediary' project, beyond just musical learning.
- **Offering training to grassroots staff and volunteers** about the benefits of music-making for young refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants and how to best support a project like Fairbeats! to have the most impact helps create a sense of shared endeavour.
- Offering opportunities for **core staff** and **volunteers** from the 'grassroots' organisation to get **involved with the 'intermediary' music project** and to get to know leaders during practical projects.

'Intermediary' & 'Next Step' orgs

- 'Intermediary' organisations should be mindful that mainstream progression routes need to be **carefully assessed for their suitability** through close consultation with the relevant 'next-step' organisation, including informal site visits.
- While missions may diverge considerably between organisations, a practical and concerted commitment to **inclusivity** in a 'next-step' organisation is a good

indicator of a successful progression route.

- A primary emphasis on **'artistic excellence'** in the 'next-step' organisation may signal **potential barriers** to engagement among some children and young people in such challenging circumstances. However, these barriers can be overcome through honest and open discussion between organisations.

2. Before the opportunity begins: Setting up positive progression experiences

'There are places where you go, me personally – I will feel inferior... because of the class of people who are there [and] the way they are behaving, so I feel segregated.' (Parent of a Fairbeats! participant)

Once a pathway has been established in principle at an organisational level, there are a number of advance, practical issues to consider to ensure a positive progression route for participants.

What might stop a family from getting involved?

When we talked to participant families about what might have stopped them from getting involved in participatory activities, they mentioned:

- Financial barriers: parents and carers on low incomes or with no income may be unable to afford fees and travel costs for their children;
- Language barriers can make it difficult to know what opportunities are on offer, what they comprise and whether they feel suitable;
- There is a lack of knowledge about where and how to look for such opportunities;
- There is a strong perception that families might not be welcome at some mainstream cultural venues sites, so it may be better to 'stay away'.

Further to these, Fairbeats! staff have noted various additional barriers which may obstruct participants from taking up progression opportunities:

- Music is a low priority for families who face so many challenges in their day-to-day life;
- Some parents have poor literacy skills which means it can be difficult to communicate information;
- Children with very low-level musical skills don't initially express interest in taking part/don't enjoy taking part which is communicated to parents and means there is no culture of seeking out opportunities amongst families;
- Some parents do not have access to the internet;
- Some parents seem unconfident to use public transport or to travel to new areas.

'Grassroots' & 'Intermediary' orgs: Readyng participants for progression

There is much that can be done at the **grassroots** and **intermediary** level to **ready participants for mainstream progression opportunities**, including:

- embedding the value of musical progression within the grassroots site itself through performance opportunities;
- arranging visits for participants to venues and events in the local area and beyond;
- sharing information with parents about progression opportunities.

'Intermediary' & 'Next Step' orgs: Establishing the planning process

'There's only so much you can write on a form' (Helen Hendry, Trinity Laban)

Our research found that a clear strategy in terms of information-sharing can ensure participants get the best out of progression opportunities, including:

- **Allowing time to establish brief but personal contact** between e.g. project managers in order to plan additional support needed and exchange general participant information as required. It was noted that relaying individual/personal details about participants tends not to be particularly appropriate or necessary, but that broader contextual information may be useful to share.
- **Sharing information and expectations** between organisations enables 'intermediary' organisations to **brief participants** so they arrive at with **clear expectations** and a sense of the **'ground rules'**. This assists positive behaviour and helps put young people in control of their learning.

'Intermediary' orgs: Acting 'in loco parentis'

Further to this planning, intermediary organisations often need to act *in loco parentis* to support participants' attendance at 'next-step' activities, which may involve:

- **Filling in forms** and/or simplifying enrolment information in order to communicate it to families;
- **Administrating payment of enrolment fees;**
- **Arranging and paying for travel and food** (in advance of the day);
- **Organising routes and transport**, which may include creating a map and identifying a bus route from home to the 'next-step' opportunity venue, or arranging a support worker to meet and accompany a child (when a parent is working or unable to travel);
- **Offering friendly reminders** e.g. reminding parents face-to-face in the week before and on the day before by text.

'Next-Step' orgs: supporting this 'in loco parentis' process

Consultations found that 'next steps' organisations can meaningfully support this *'in loco parentis'* work through:

- **Streamlining the administrative/enrolment process** - acknowledging the scale

of tasks that the 'intermediary' organisation may face when enrolling multiple participants, as opposed to parents enrolling a single child.

- **Offering financial support for travel** when a venue is particularly difficult to get to and an 'intermediary' organisation is responsible for bringing a number of participants.

3. 'In the room': Supporting positive progression experiences in practice

[sessions] are very equable.... everybody is in together and there is a culture of fostering teaching as well as learning. There's a lot of peer-to-peer learning that goes on. [The facilitator] is an exemplar of how to run a mixed ability workshop...
(Phil Greenwood, the Midi Music Company)

When the contents of 'next-step' projects are targeted at mixed-ability groups and directed by the needs of more vulnerable or challenging participants, additional support may not be required once the participant is *in situ*. However, the value of support workers in assisting individual participants in various settings was strongly championed in consultation. **Providing financial support for additional support workers**, where needed, is thus one of the best ways that 'next step' organisations can support participants from these communities to engage with mainstream progression routes.

Support workers can offer the following assistance:

- Quietly supporting with reading and writing when musical and evaluation tasks require literacy skills;
- Quietly supporting the understanding of any unfamiliar musical terminology;
- Modeling positive behaviour and giving opportunities for 'time-out' if things get too stressful;
- Praising small steps forward that unfamiliar adults might miss;
- Providing a sense of security in an unfamiliar and potentially intimidating environment.

'Intermediary' & 'Next Step' orgs: briefing support workers

Our research highlighted the importance of fully briefing support workers at the beginning of a project when attending alongside a participant – meaning that **both organisations must be clear on who is responsible for the various elements of the briefing.**

Advance information for the support worker should include:

- Access to a comprehensive timetable including any breaks
- Clear instructions as to when the support worker is responsible for the participant (and when not);
- If there are any specific behaviour management strategies in place at the project;
- Who the relevant line manager is on the day of the project.

4. The next stage: Facilitating progression beyond the ‘next step’ and establishing formal systems

‘You’re [Fairbeats!] taking in from the grassroots and we’re taking them to the next level: that’s great - that’s exactly why we exist.’ (Wozzy Brewster OBE, Midi Music Company)

Our research found that it is crucial to **develop and structure potential progression routes** beyond the ‘next-step’ opportunity, to continue to motivate and energise young participants.

- **How, when and by whom this information is shared with participants** should be clearly agreed by both the ‘intermediary’ and ‘next-step’ organisation to ensure **clarity and coherence** for participants and their families.

‘Intermediary’ & ‘Next Step’ orgs: Checklists and working agreements

Consultation also suggested that alongside the piecemeal practical issues at stake in securing progression, there was also a strong call for ‘complete systems’ to be put in place that will support (and help develop) such progression opportunities, particularly between ‘intermediary’ and ‘next step’ organisations.

- Based on discussion with partner organisations, we have created a sample **checklist** (available to download [here](#)) suitable for ‘intermediary’ (and potentially ‘grassroots’) organisations seeking to secure a new progression route with a ‘next-step’ organisation. The given checklist covers all aspects of the progression process and is designed to be used once a regular long-term musical offer has been embedded within an ‘intermediary’ organisation.
- We have also created a template **‘working together agreement’** (available [here](#)) for use between progression ‘partners’ to support planning and reflection on a partnership and to help develop the progression strategy.