

ZOOM IN
TO YOUTH VOICE

WIRED4MUSIC



YOUTH GOVERNANCE ONLINE



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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

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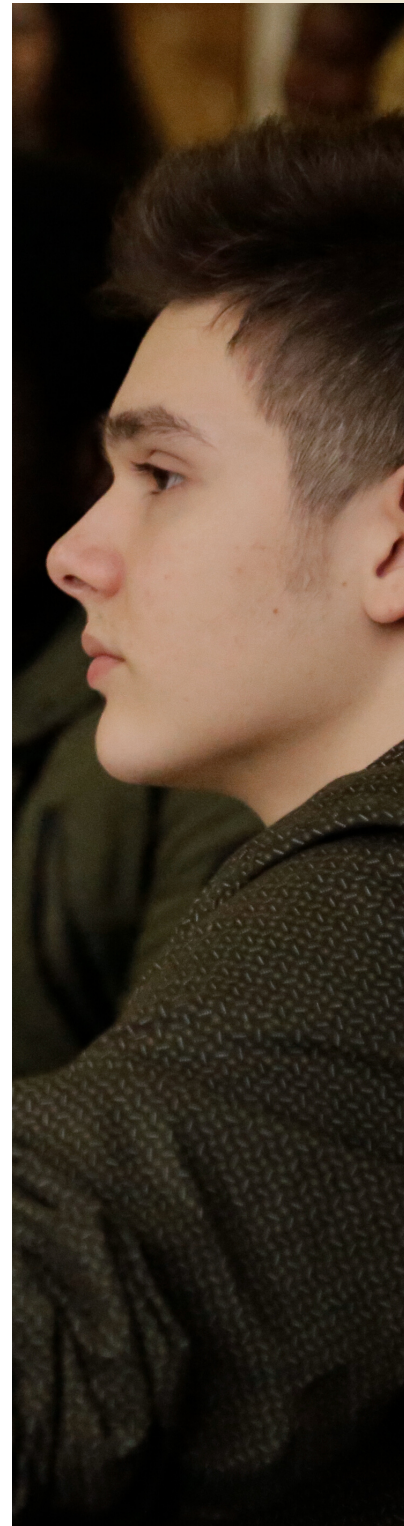
YOUTH GOVERNANCE ONLINE

Sound Connections Deputy Director, **Jennifer Raven** describes the challenges and opportunities for working with Young Trustees online and explores some of the barriers that need to be overcome to get the best from a virtual board meeting.

Read on to find out how you can better engage your young board members when working in a virtual environment.

At Sound Connections, we recruit two Young Trustees from Wired4Music (our network for people age 16-25) every year and help them develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to be a trustee. Young trusteeships mean we can empower young leaders to undertake a valuable learning journey, and enable Sound Connections to embrace a wider range of perspectives and voices around the decision-making table. We are currently in our third Young Trustee cycle and the impact on our team, board and wider culture has been significant.

Trustees play a critical role in governing a charity and as the COVID-19 crisis has unfolded, we have been working more and more closely with our board. As we've transitioned to remote working, we have encountered both opportunities and potential pitfalls in our work with Young Trustees. In this blog, I explore some of the things you need to think about when working with your own young trustees.



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“Young trusteeships mean we can empower young leaders to undertake a valuable learning journey.”



THE VIRTUAL BOARDROOM

During our first online Sound Connections Trustee meeting, I observed that the ‘Zoom room’ was in some ways more equitable than the real life board room – younger Trustees adept at using platforms like Zoom appeared more confident navigating virtual conversations.

Things we normally do to ensure Young Trustees feel confident and included, such as seating Young Trustees opposite our Chair, are more difficult on Zoom. This means the Chair and other speakers and facilitators need to be particularly well organised, clear and mindful of involving Young Trustees in a sensitive way.

Communicating with clarity and making everyone feel valued can be harder online. It’s important to follow-up with Young Trustees to check they understood information shared and decisions taken, and to hear feedback about their experience

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BUILDING TRUST

For any Trustee, young or more experienced, finding the confidence to speak up regularly at a Trustee meeting can take time. Using the chat function on Zoom and encouraging ideas to be shared via email between meetings can really help people to be heard.



“*Young Trustees flourish when supported with the right training and development...*”

Young Trustees who are in the very early stages of their tenure will need more support in order to build relationships with other Trustees and staff. This might include one-to-one calls in between board meetings. We are also developing plans for ‘Link Trustees’ as a way to make better use of Trustee expertise and to create more structured collaboration between Trustees and staff. Involving Young Trustees in this helps them to build relationships with staff, and to be valued for their unique expertise.

Young Trustees flourish when supported with the right training and development. NPC and NCVO both offer excellent Trustee training and resources – it’s a great time to offer these opportunities.

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BALANCING COMMITMENTS

During COVID-19 Board meeting attendance has been higher than usual as removing the need for travel has made committing to meetings easier. This is beneficial for Young Trustees who are often balancing a trusteeship with work and study. It's also beneficial for others - for example, people with childcare commitments - and creates a more accessible and inclusive board in multiple ways. We are now considering permanently changing to a half-and-half mixed model of virtual and face-to-face meetings.

Young Trustees are at a pivotal time in their lives: they might be studying, figuring out their career pathway, or have unstable living arrangements. Be sensitive and flexible about this, and remain supportive and encouraging when life needs to come first. Be proactive about reaching out to them if they are quiet for a time.

During a crisis there is often a higher volume of urgent work for Trustees to get involved with. Small working groups, or 'task and finish' groups, are a great way to divide the workload and are an effective way to involve Young Trustees. Working groups can feel less intimidating than Board meetings and are an opportunity to contribute in a more practical, hands-on way.



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Finally, remember that Young Trustees aren't there to represent all young people. It is still important to consult with your beneficiaries and constituents more widely, for example through focus groups or surveys, in order to better understand their needs, wants, views and opinions.

As we all continue to adapt, the need for Trustees' time, energy and expertise will remain high, so now is the perfect time to be considering how to maximise your youth governance work. To speak to us about working with Young Trustees, contact jennifer@sound-connections.org.uk.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Connect with us:
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Drop us a line and say hi:
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Find out about our training
and consultancy services:
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Design by Camara Pinnock.

We're pleased to be sharing these resources in solidarity with AMIE, the Alliance for a Musically Inclusive England, a group of organisations from across the country who want all young people to have access to music-making opportunities.

WIRED4MUSIC



**YOUTH
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