

## Essex Music Education Hub Youth Voice Consultation *Summary of findings, recommendations and next steps for organisations*

Essex Music Services - part of Essex County Council – is the lead partner in Essex Music Education Hub (EMEH). Along with partner organisations that make up the Hub, they offer a range of musical services, projects and opportunities in Essex schools and within the community. In 2017 EMEH commissioned Sound Connections to consult with young people across the county, particularly those less engaged with music opportunities and Hub provision. The main purpose of the consultation was to get to the heart of what young people are experiencing, what they want and, in doing so, ensure music opportunities are relevant to the needs and interests of young people in Essex.

The consultation involved **six focus groups** which took place at Essex Children in Care, Northwick Park Primary School, Princes Trust Essex, Sevic Community College, Saffron Walden High School and Lexden Springs School. **Online and paper surveys** were shared with schools and youth organisations across Essex and an **interactive survey** was developed in response to the different environment of the Sounds of Essex youth music festival and sessions with a 'drop-in' nature at Tendring Music School.

There was a significant response from children and young people aged 7 – 25 years old from across Essex. In total 884 children and young people completed the online, paper and interactive surveys and 73 attended focus groups, so just under 1000 participants in total. Here is a summary of the findings:

- The majority of children and young people feel **music is important or very important** in their lives with 40% saying that music is part of their daily life
- The biggest motivator for participating in music is **enjoyment**
- **Pop music** is by far the most popular type of music to listen to, followed by rap and rock. Pop is also the most popular type of music to play or create followed by classical music
- **Listening to live music** is the most popular musical activity to engage in followed by performing, with 50% having been to a concert/performance
- The way children and young people most like to **make music is on their own**
- They would like to see a **greater range of music genres** supported and promoted
- Whilst music is important to children and young people, the majority have not opted to study music at school/college and 65% have never considered a **career in music**. For those who wish to pursue a career in music the most common music career aspiration is playing music/performing
- **Social media** is the most common single way to find out about music opportunities, though if you group all **person-to-person forms of communication** together (word of mouth, parents, school letters) then this is the most common way children and young people learn about opportunities
- The biggest barriers to participation are pressure on **time and cost**, and **what's on offer not being in line with children and young people's interests**
- Activities being **local** is an important factor in whether or not they feel able to participate
- Across the board, children and young people would like more access to **studio space** in particular, music festivals, opportunities to perform (particularly in bands, to peers, and in informal ways such as through open mics), opportunities to network with one another, and more workshops/clubs



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- They recognise the **positive personal benefits of music** such as how it relaxes you, helps you to express yourself and escape, makes you happy and helps to address and alleviate mental health issues

As a result of these findings, the following **recommendations** were made by Sound Connections:

- **Share a summary of findings** with everyone who took part in the roundtables and survey.
- Speak with each of the roundtable host settings to discuss opportunities and next steps, such as identifying a partner to work with on creating **accessible performance opportunities**
- **Build consultation into annual activity plans.** To make this manageable and practical, select priority groups to focus consultation efforts on each year
- Continue to **share and promote youth voice and youth consultation practice** through training and advocacy
- Set up a **pilot young producers group** and work with them to address some of the gaps identified
- When planning new activity, refer back to this report to check it is in line with what children and young people want and need

What EMEH are currently doing to address some of the points raised:

- Continue to **invest in**, develop and diversify **community music schools** and 'de-centralise' county music groups to ensure there is a diverse, accessible offer in each district of Essex
- Continue to host **music festivals for young people** with the aim of running another festival in 2020 involving young people in planning, programming and delivering the event
- Continue to provide **training for music teachers and leaders** to ensure music activities and opportunities meet the needs of all young people. Also, offer further **training for Essex Music Service managers** to ensure the Hub continues to develop skills and ability to consult with young people on an ongoing basis
- Continue to programme **activities and opportunities** across a broad range of music styles and genres

Future changes that will address the points raised:

- Introduce **rock-band teaching** in primary schools to enable children to enjoy the social aspects of learning an instrument and allow for exploration of music styles that are relevant to the learners
- Offer **half-term rock and pop courses** in several locations across Essex for bands and individuals to have opportunity to work with professionals, like-minded peers and engage in performance opportunities
- **Engage further with local organisations and individuals** who deliver opportunities on a local level across Essex, identify where the quality provision is and promote all that they offer through the Hub website and social media, including availability of recording studios and other functionable spaces
- **Offer local delivery organisations and individuals the opportunity to bid for funding** to develop local provision
- Set up a **young producers group** in each quadrant of Essex (North, South, Mid and West) which will consist of YEA members, Music School representatives and School representatives. These groups will have funding to spend and will be able to identify the provisional needs of their local area



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