



The Role of the Support Worker:

Enabling meaningful engagement and progression for young people in challenging circumstances

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Introduction

As part of Sound Connections' *Taking Off* research, the Irene Taylor Trust (ITT) was commissioned to explore the role of the support worker when delivering music projects with young people in challenging circumstances. This action research details approaches to the role through interviews with professionals in the field and young people with direct experience of ITT's *Making Tracks* project.

Context

ITT has been delivering music projects in prisons since 1995. In 2012, they expanded their work to include community projects for ex-prisoners (*Sounding Out*) and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (*Making Tracks*). *Making Tracks* consists of an intensive five-day project, where young people (16-25 years) form a band alongside a project team of professional musicians. Together they create, rehearse, record and perform new musical material from scratch. Subsequently, the young people are invited to attend a series of weekly follow-on sessions to continue developing their skills.

In the early stages of the project, it became apparent that there were changes that needed to be made in order for *Making Tracks* to be as effective as ITT's work in prisons. Each young person faces a range of barriers that could stand in the way of being able to engage meaningfully with the project. There were practicalities that needed to be addressed and, equally, emotional needs that needed to be acknowledged.

ITT has delivered eight cohorts of *Making Tracks* to date, typically working with eight to ten young people per project. The Projects Manager was onsite for the duration of each project (cohorts three to seven) and shaped the role to include pastoral responsibilities and additional long-term support. As it developed, the Trust recognised the impact of this work in relation to the project as a whole, and decided to create a separate role that would focus on supporting each young person from the initial

recruitment stages to eventual progression. The Creative Programmes Manager now deals with the day-to-day management and strategic planning of the projects, leaving the pastoral support and one-to-one sessions to the Personal Development Manager.

The Personal Development Manager (PDM) is the first and last person that each participant on *Making Tracks* has contact with, present for the entirety of the project and remaining in contact for at least a year after the project has finished. The PDM meets potential participants in the weeks leading up to each project, establishing and maintaining contact in order to start building meaningful relationships. Being onsite for the duration of the project allows the PDM to form strong trusting relationships and to compile a richer tapestry of knowledge about each young person. In addition to supporting progression, the PDM offers each young person the opportunity to complete a Bronze Arts Award and helps them to produce a portfolio of their work.

Justification

Each young person possesses considerable amounts of potential and deserves to engage in a project of quality and integrity, to be supported fully throughout this process and beyond. The nature of the support worker role is to recognise the practical and emotional issues that may present themselves as potential barriers throughout the process, and to support participants in overcoming them. In order to do this, it is essential to develop a relationship that allows each young person to express themselves in an open and honest way, in a safe environment. There are practical things that can be done to assist this, such as keeping in contact regularly, sending reminders, forwarding opportunities, making sure travel expenses are reimbursed, completing application forms, etc. But more importantly, it seems, are the qualities a person possesses that enables them to form these trusting relationships; a genuine care and passion for the work, a commitment to the young person, and belief that what they are doing is of value.

For many organisations, a role such as this may seem somewhat of a luxury. But when looking at the time required to meet the needs of participants, in particular when it comes to supporting meaningful progression, it is more of a necessity. Creating a separate role means acknowledging that supporting participants and their progression is important, takes time and energy to do well, and deserves a staffing commitment. Having a designated role in place, alongside a project, allows the music-making to happen. It enhances the experience for the participant and allows them to engage and commit in a more meaningful way, knowing they are supported.

As highlighted in Sound Connections' *Taking Off* research; meaningful, trusting relationships and staff commitment are crucial to making progression happen.

*“Things crucial to making **meaningful progression** happen:*

- *Long term embedded grass roots projects build meaningful relationships with participants*
- *Trusting, respectful and committed relationships between individual staff members and participants “Someone I can pick up the phone and ask for advice from.”*
- *Communicative networks and support around participants*
- *Staff commitment to making it happen*

*The main **barrier** to supporting progression that organisations face is:*

- *Staff capacity to prepare young people for progression activities limited by lack of funding”*

Initial findings from Sound Connections *Taking Off* research

Page 8, *Taking Off* Surveys Report (<http://www.sound-connections.org.uk/taking-off/wp-content/uploads/Taking-Off-Surveys-Report.pdf>), November 2015

Methodology

Through interviewing professionals from different organisations, all working with young people in challenging circumstances, a number of common themes emerged. The questions focussed on specific areas relating to the context, approach, qualities, attributes and skills, as well as role perception and training. To give a broader picture of what a supporting role can look like in practice, it seemed appropriate to look at the work within a musical context (*Fairbeats!*), a different art form (*Ovalhouse*) and a non-arts organisation (*South London based youth centre*).

Brief background

Fairbeats! provide music-making opportunities for 3-11 year olds in Lewisham, Kingston and Wandsworth, working with children from refugee, asylum seeking and new migrant backgrounds.

Ovalhouse offer a range of drama-based participatory arts projects for young people aged 8-25 years old.

The youth centre works with hardest to reach 13-25 year olds not in education, employment, training or volunteering in South London.

Findings

Approach and Nature

Developing an approach that works for you was highlighted as important. In order to make meaningful connections, you need to be able to communicate in an authentic way. Going against the grain of your personality will be uncomfortable and difficult to sustain. Young people are incredibly perceptive and if interactions are not genuine, this will be picked up on.

“You have a stock approach that works given your personality. You have to tailor it for the young person but also for your own approach. Young people, I think, are very perceptive, they know when you’re forcing something and they know when you’re trying to be someone you’re not.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

What drives a person to do this type of work is particularly prevalent. The nature of the role can be incredibly demanding and often requires people to go ‘the extra mile.’ It is not something that can be done half-heartedly, or paid lip service to, if it is to be effective and beneficial for the young person. Fundamental is the belief that the work is of value and makes a difference, and that it is something worth dedicating time and energy to. There was an invested interest in forming and developing relationships in order to support the growth of young people.

“I think it’s really important to try to understand where the child is coming from and to not give up on them. To be consistent in your approach. I think, really, this idea of going the extra mile.”

Catherine Carter, co-founder – Fairbeats!

The nature of the interactions requires you to be emotionally in-tune. By establishing a connection, and building trust, you are opening up the possibility that the young person may draw you into their world. From experience, this can often include distressing and emotional material. If this is something you are unable or unprepared to deal with, you should be mindful of entering into this realm. If a young person opens up and the situation is not handled in a sensitive and appropriate manner, it may be a long time before they have the courage to open up again. There is always an element of risk, as it is impossible to predict what has, is, or will affect a young person at any point. Taking care of yourself on a personal level, with regards to this, is of equal importance and raises the issue of what support should be available for a support worker.

“Make sure that anything serious is dealt with before you go home. You get it written down. It’s been escalated if it needs to be escalated. You’re satisfied that what you’ve done is good and is right by the young person. Because you don’t want to take it home with you, and it will be very, very stressful if you do. That’s something I learnt quite quickly when I first started.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

Connecting to the context is a fundamental priority; the age of the young people and the challenges they are facing. For younger participants it was noted that the support required was mainly practical with the emotional connection being stronger with the parents. For older participants, the need for individual emotional support is more evident and takes on a greater importance.

“With our particular group of people, because we are working with primary school children, I think a lot of the emotional support tends to be with the parents and then the practical stuff is with the kids and the parents.”

Catherine Carter, co-founder – Fairbeats!

“With the younger age groups, it is a lot more hands on and practical. For groups with older participants it is being a bit more of an emotional support.”

Kitty Withington, Pastoral Care and Monitoring Officer – Ovalhouse

For a person in this role, it is a constant challenge and requires you to think on your feet and adapt. Having an awareness of the barriers and issues each young person may be facing, allows you to be flexible and tailor your support accordingly.

“It’s something that you can never perfect, there will always be social norms that will change, what’s affecting young people will always change and, as a result, you’re going to see new issues, new problems. It’s always going to continue changing and there is always going to be a need for it.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

At the heart of it is the realisation that, in order for a project to be beneficial, the needs of the participants must be met.

“It’s about realising that just because we want there to be a music project with some children who are in challenging circumstances, it doesn’t mean it will necessarily work unless we really meet their needs and sometimes those needs are quite massive.”

Catherine Carter, co-founder – Fairbeats!

Qualities, attributes and skills

Some aspects of the role of support worker can be learnt whilst others are very much dependant on personality. It takes a certain type of person to be able and willing to form trusting relationships and invest time and energy into developing them. For many it is more than just a job, it is a passion and way of being that extends outside of working hours. It is critical to bring to the role a genuine, caring attitude and the ability to listen in a non-judgemental, empathetic manner.

“To be a warm person. Somebody who can talk to anyone. Somebody who is willing to listen and genuinely cares about young people. Somebody who is not judgemental.”

Kitty Withington, Pastoral Care and Monitoring Officer – Ovalhouse

The role requires a lot of self-reflection and understanding. You need to be able to know yourself, your strengths, weaknesses, what feels comfortable and what feels forced. To be able to trust in your gut, be resilient to challenging behaviour, and adapt to the unexpected.

“I think you've got to be quite self-aware and know what your strengths are because that's how you build relationships. It's playing to your strengths and identifying that strength in other people. I think you've got to be quite thick skinned, to a degree, but equally don't be so thick skinned that you fail to notice something is going on. Trust your gut. I think you've got to be quite fluid to change as well. If you're the sort of person that does everything by the book, that will work 60% of the time but the rest of the time you've got to have the ability to think on your feet and balance your time.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

The value of a designated role

The crux of the argument here is why a designated role is needed rather than tasks being allocated to existing staff. The results here were unanimous.

“The key is that it is a job in itself. If it is just an aspect of your job, it's going to get lost. It is a full blown job in itself and it is quite a lot to expect someone to do their job and to also be dealing with that.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

The added benefit of having a designated role is that, in addition to giving the young people the time they need and deserve, it enables the practitioners to focus on the creative process. In a sense, a fully developed supporting role is a necessary pre-condition for a successful and meaningful artistic project.

“It's useful for tutors to focus on the creative work. They can focus on the task in hand and on the group as a whole rather than get distracted by individuals. If it is one person's job, that is their whole focus, it doesn't just become a part of someone's work load that might get overlooked.”

Kitty Withington, Pastoral Care and Monitoring Officer – Ovalhouse

Music projects have the potential to impact on young people and their lives in many positive ways. However, within challenging circumstances, in order for a change to be sustained, there is a need for a support worker to be addressing the deeper issues.

“In a music context, it's fantastic in building confidence and increasing their engagement and increasing their self-belief. But if you're not dealing with the root causes behind that, it's only

going to be a short-term fix. They'll get the confidence from that week but if you're not also in the background dealing with the underlying issues, things will just slip off again."

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

We all hope that our music project will make a difference, and it may seem like a support worker is not integral to the music-making process. Much of the work will not be noticeable to anyone other than the young person, but that does not mean nothing is happening. Sometimes all it takes is for a young person to know that someone is there if they need them to be.

"You need to have a designated role that's making deep underlying changes that might not be so visible to the naked eye but they are the ones actually that get into the young person's system and stay with them."

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

Ultimately, by having a designated role, we are sending a very important message to the young person. Their wellbeing is a priority, they are not an afterthought; someone cares and has time for them.

"The young people can see and recognise that person is for them and that their wellbeing is really taken seriously."

Kitty Withington, Pastoral Care and Monitoring Officer – Ovalhouse

Progression

Supporting young people to progress through a project and beyond is a central aspect of the work. From the support worker, it requires a lot of time, thought and patience. The progression must be at the appropriate level for the young person if it is to be a rewarding and enriching experience.

"A lot of my role is getting to know families and getting to know which children have a desire to take part in more music-making activities. Then thinking about what would be appropriate for them, finding those opportunities and supporting them to take part in them."

Catherine Carter, co-founder – Fairbeats!

Being aware of barriers and challenges is a crucial part of the role, particularly when it comes to progression. It can be a very gradual process and it is important not to give up. Sometimes the experience of being accepted onto a programme is a big enough achievement for the young person, and attending is a step too far for them at that time. Dropping out is very common but, by talking about it, you can both learn a lot and move towards something new.

"There are barriers in their way, so the first, second, third and fourth time that it doesn't work doesn't mean it won't work the fifth."

Catherine Carter, co-founder – Fairbeats!

Once a progression route has been identified, it is worth establishing if there is a similar support worker role attached to this new project or opportunity. Forming a connection, prior to referring a young person, will enable a smoother transition and ensure the necessary support is available. For cases where no such role exists, it is advisable to continue providing background support. Sustaining progression is often difficult and support should not stop when a 'successful' outcome has been attained. Circumstances can change very quickly and it is important for a support worker to be aware of this.

“It’s different for every young person in every situation and it might be that someone wants you to step back, then all of a sudden something happens and you need to be ready and willing to step back in again.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

Depending on the number of young people you work with, you may find yourself collecting large amounts of data about each young person. From experience, creating a system to record and track this is vital and stops you from having to carry it all around with you. Having a secure system in place to track progression is essential.

“We have an online system and log every contact; what that contact was, who contacted them, when, why, what the outcome was, how much support they’ve had. It’s all online, it’s all centralised, but obviously it’s carefully monitored.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

The support worker as a musician

Somewhat of a controversial question, but worth considering, was whether it is beneficial for the support worker to be a musician. Responses here varied, with the general consensus being that some degree of knowledge and understanding is useful. As a musician, it is quite easy to overlook the qualities you can bring to the role.

“In a progression routes context, I would say it definitely matters whether they are a musician or not. Just to be someone who, if the child needs a bit of extra guidance or support, is there on hand. It’s really helpful for that person to be someone who can join in with the music-making sometimes and really understand the context. I think it would be really tricky to do that if you weren’t a musician.”

Catherine Carter, co-founder – Fairbeats!

It is arguable that without a level of musical literacy and awareness it may be challenging to support a young person musically. There is a need for a deeper level of understanding of the creative process, and all it entails, in order to support meaningful musical engagement. A support worker must be in-tune with the project team, complementing the work they are doing, in order to bring others into this space. Often this will not be a verbal dialogue but will require a level of listening and intuition in order to sensitively support and enable this process.

Perhaps this identifies some key differences between pastoral support, that addresses the practical and behavioural needs, and artistic support that acknowledges the complexities and subtleties of the music-making process. The ability to pick up on musical cues and identify what is being expressed in this environment and the impact this may have emotionally. That is not to say that a non-musician would be unable to support a young person through a creative process, just that some aspects of the music-making may not be acknowledged or interpreted in the same way.

An interesting point is that it might be helpful in some cases to be a novice, as this can help build rapport with young people who are also trying to master something new. Fundamentally though, it comes down to letting the project team have artistic freedom and not becoming so integral to the music-making process that you are unable to step back to support the young people if needed.

“Your role is to support the young people and that takes priority over anything else.”

Matt Bentall, Youth Worker from South London

Learning and Development

There is a real sense of continued discovery with work of this nature. For many there is an initial interest or passion in the area but more importantly a willingness to learn and explore new ideas; to develop personally in order to help others.

“I’ve always been interested in social justice and this idea that music has a real power to change people’s lives. I didn’t know very much about refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants before I started, but I just felt like that would be something I could dedicate a lot of my energy to and would find very motivating.”

Catherine Carter, co-founder – Fairbeats!

Training

It is a different skillset to that of a project team member or project manager. As a support worker, it is important to receive training in order to ensure you are equipped to deal with situations in the most effective and appropriate way. Safeguarding, First Aid and Mental Health were flagged as essential, with De-escalation and Conflict Resolution being recommended as helpful.

Supervision

Seeking supervision from a professional therapist or counsellor, and prioritising your own wellbeing as a support worker, is invaluable. It is incredibly important to have a space in which you can be supported to process your interactions and the impact these may have on you personally. Building an awareness and understanding of your own motivations and core beliefs enables you to be mindful of these when working with others. The ability to reflect and analyse your behaviour and responses, and the effect these may have on the young people you work with, will allow for richer and more rewarding relationships to develop.

The Young Persons' Perspective

The young people who have taken part in *Making Tracks* over the years, continue to remain in contact and return to the project as mentors, volunteers, ambassadors and assistants. Speaking to them about the role of a support worker, in relation to projects and progression, revealed some very passionate and insightful responses. They need no further explanation and stand alone in their own right.

What would a project be like without a support worker?

“It would have been a different experience. It would have been good, but when there are certain other emotional issues going on outside of it, it would get in the way of doing the project. If there wasn’t a person there to support you with that it would be more challenging. Sometimes people have a talent but they need to talk to somebody. Someone to ask ‘How are you?’ ‘How do you feel about this?’ and say ‘Give it a go’, more of a motivation thing.”

Nizzy – past participant, mentor and ambassador, *Making Tracks*

“None of us would’ve actually been ourselves – laughing and joking. It would’ve be horrible. You encouraged all of us to be who we wanted to be and encouraged us to be ourselves. No-one would’ve actually said to be ourselves. Everyone likes to be their own person, not to be forced to be something they don’t want.”

Jess – past participant and Arts Award Assistant, *Making Tracks*

What is involved?

“There should be someone there for everyone. Some people do go off and have a breakdown or just need to let off steam. But they need someone there to talk to. Everyone needs that, everyone needs that someone, even if they don’t feel like it, they know they do. People can storm off and they need someone there. Most people don’t really want to open up to anyone, so it will take time. People just want to be able to talk freely and know that they are being listened to, that it’s going in and staying in, and that they are getting help.”

Jess – past participant and Arts Award Assistant, *Making Tracks*

The importance of a support worker in relation to progression after a project

“The project made me continue doing music, before that I thought I was going to quit. After the project I didn’t feel like it was done, you kept calling and asking ‘How are you doing? What are you doing?’ and I was like ‘I want some projects to do’ and you were like ‘I’ll find you some.’ That was really good and very helpful. With some projects they say ‘here’s a project’ and then it’s done. It feels like a bit of a waste of time, even though you did produce some good stuff, because they don’t call up to see how you’re doing. It’s on to the next group, no ‘Hi, how are you doing?’ So many times that’s happened to me, it ends too quickly, and you don’t want that to happen again. The projects with a support worker are the best ones. Those are the ones I keep going back to.”

Nizzy – past participant, mentor and ambassador, *Making Tracks*

Music, emotions and the support worker

“It’s good for young people. Some people are in a bad way and just need a point in the right direction. With music they can let out anything they like. They can feel so emotional at times or angry and it will just come out in the music. What they are saying, rapping or playing, they are just speaking to you about their feelings and afterwards they don’t feel bad. You just let go of your feelings. Singing, your emotions just go, your anger just goes, it’s a good feeling. But you wouldn’t be able to do that if you didn’t feel comfortable. Everyone needs to have that feeling. You don’t need to be strong all the time, you know there are people there to talk to. I wouldn’t turn up if I didn’t feel safe, I would get angry and think ‘what’s the point of this?’”

Jess – past participant and Arts Award Assistant, *Making Tracks*

“I’m a creative person and it’s my way of getting away from what I’m feeling at the time. It always helps me. Making Tracks was one of the first times I’d really done that. I was speaking about some deep stuff and putting it all down on paper was like letting it go. I needed to explain it through a song, and that was really important to me. After I did that I didn’t feel like that anymore. It’s like either bottling it in and it taking over me or letting it out and letting people see it. The support helped me let go like that. If I didn’t have a support person I would’ve been like ‘I’m not doing it’.”

Nizzy – past participant, mentor and ambassador, *Making Tracks*

What makes a good support worker?

“A kind heart and a love for people and helping people. They could be like a friend, sometimes you just need to take your mind off things and have a normal conversation. They can be like a mentor and help with making decisions, give you options and make you think. Not many people necessarily like to say that they want stuff, so you need to be observant. Some young people don’t feel like people care, that’s why they don’t really do anything. When there is someone there doing something it makes them believe in themselves. The best support workers have time and don’t make you feel like it’s a schedule and that you are one of their clients. Some people who become support workers have been through things themselves too. It’s like if they’ve come out of it, they can help others do the same– ‘There’s light at the end of the tunnel’ sort of thing.”

Nizzy – past participant, mentor and ambassador, *Making Tracks*

What practical things should a support worker do?

“Keep in contact. Try to keep people boosted up about things they like. Just be there really, because not everyone always has that certain person to talk to.”

Jess – past participant and Arts Award Assistant, *Making Tracks*

- *“Ring you back*
- *It is helpful to get morning calls/reminders*
- *Be consistent – check in every couple of weeks*
- *Don’t make promises you can’t keep*
- *Don’t cancel last minute*
- *Explain things clearly*
- *Be aware of circumstances*
- *Be realistic”*

Adam – past participant, *Making Tracks*

The use of terms such as NEET, vulnerable or at risk

“What’s the point of being labelled? You are your own free person, you don’t want to feel like that. I’ve experienced it before a lot of times and it just makes you feel horrible. It makes you feel angry. It doesn’t feel equal. You don’t want to make anyone feel uncomfortable, it should just be ‘we are trying to get a bit of money to help people be who they want to be, and be free’. You don’t let people grow if you put them in a box, they may even feel smaller.”

Jess – past participant and Arts Award Assistant, *Making Tracks*

Emergent Issues

Working in challenging circumstances makes it almost impossible to ignore the fact that we are often dealing with extreme emotions, issues, behaviour and traumas in varying degrees. Sometimes these are very present, sometimes they are bubbling under the surface. But it is important to acknowledge their existence and accept the possibility of them becoming something that is too big for that young person to handle alone. This is of heightened importance when we consider the emotional nature and

power of music. It has the ability to unlock things from within us and, in the context of challenging circumstances, we need to be open to the fact that we do not know what may emerge as a result. It is worth considering, with this in mind, whether it is beneficial for the support worker to be a musician as the ability to pick up on emotional cues, as presented by participants through their music-making, could prove invaluable. In terms of commitment to a project or eventual progression, our capacity to contain these emotions is an integral factor to the level of commitment a young person is able to give. By realising that their emotional needs can be met and understood, it gives them permission to bring things into a safe and supportive space and, ultimately, begin to overcome them.

Creating trusting relationships is a crucial aspect of the supporting role. It is important to have a genuine care and passion for the work and a self-reflective attitude. This will give a strong base from which to develop and adapt an approach that can be flexible for to each young person and context. Progression should be seen as a central part of the work, and a support worker must have an awareness and sensitivity to potential barriers in order to identify appropriate and rewarding opportunities. This will require time, energy and patience and an acceptance that progression is often a gradual and unpredictable process.

One of the main issues to address here is that of staff capacity. If pastoral support is not discussed it runs the risk of being neglected or put off. Participant support should not be an afterthought. Support should be consistent, carefully structured, and seen as a priority. This means talking about it and not sacrificing it for things that may appear more pressing. It may not be possible to have a designated role, but these conversations must take place and suitable alternatives should be discussed – e.g. employing someone on a freelance basis, sharing the responsibilities between existing staff members as in interim measure, looking to organisations who may be willing to partner with a project to provide support. The skillset required is very different to that of a project team member or project manager. A supporting role plays an integral part in the success and impact of a project and has the power to embed lasting and sustainable change by addressing underlying issues.

Finally, the strength and resilience of young people must not be underestimated. Terms such as ‘vulnerable’ suggest a weakness or fragility that is often misplaced. The circumstances are challenging. If we are to build trusting relationships, these must be grounded on a mutual respect and equality. It is not just the young person who may be able to grow as a result, it is the support worker too.

Next steps

It would be unrealistic to assume that it is possible to attach a support worker role immediately to every project working with young people in challenging circumstances. What we can all do is start thinking and talking more about it and integrate aspects into our everyday practice. Whilst this should only be seen as a short term measure, as the need for a designated role will need addressing, the most important thing is that these discussions take place. When setting up new projects, it is something worth taking into consideration. When applying for funding, it is something worth highlighting. Whilst staff may be willing to take on additional responsibilities in the short-term, being a support worker is a full-blown job in itself and over time it will start to take its toll. The role of a support worker, when done well, can allow young people to be who they want to be and achieve what they want to achieve. Undeniably, that is something worth investing in.

Appendix A

Framework for supporting young people in challenging circumstances to engage and progress

Making Connections

- **Establishing**
 - Instigating communication as soon as possible (persistence is key)
 - Finding a means of communication that works/gets the best response rate
 - Initiating regular contact that is specific/tailored to each young person
 - Being human – humour and honesty can go a long way
- **Developing**
 - Investing time to develop the connection through consistent contact
 - Identifying the level of support needed
 - Being aware of barriers and potential barriers
 - Managing expectations and setting realistic goals
- **Sustaining**
 - Observing, remembering and recording detail
 - Sending reminders – until you no longer need to
 - Letting the young person take the lead
 - Knowing when to step back and being ready and willing to step back in

Forming meaningful relationships

- Developing an approach that works given your personality
- Tailoring your approach to the individual and group
- Not forcing something that doesn't feel authentic or genuine
- Establishing boundaries
- Being emotionally in-tune
- Building trust
- Actively listening in an empathetic way
- Being present and available
 - Physically visible in the space– being the first to arrive and last to leave
 - Making contact with everyone
 - Being contactable outside of sessions to provide extra support (within clearly defined hours and on a designated work phone)

Qualities, attributes and skills

- Self-awareness
- Resilience
- Trusting your gut
- Being flexible
- Thinking on your feet
- Balancing your time
- Understanding where the young person is coming from
- Being aware of barriers
- Not giving up on the young person

- Being consistent in your approach
- Going the extra mile
- Musical awareness

Practical considerations to supporting progression

- **Thinking** about appropriate progression routes
- **Sourcing** suitable opportunities
- **Supporting** them to take part
 - Completing application forms or assisting the application process
 - Explaining all of the details clearly e.g. locations, times, requirements etc.
 - Establishing whether there is a similar support role in place– connecting with that person, or continuing to provide support in the background
- Covering expenses – travel and food etc.
 - Budgeting for this or taking it into consideration before referring young people to other projects
- Having a system in place
 - Logging contact in detail
 - Carefully monitoring who has access to this information
 - Forward planning

Recommended Training

- Safeguarding
- Mental Health
- First Aid
- De-escalation
- Conflict Resolution

Appendix B

JOB DESCRIPTION

PASTORAL CARE AND MONITORING OFFICER (Ovalhouse)

Main Purpose of Position

To support the pastoral and personal needs of the young people who attend, or would like to attend Ovalhouse activities to enable them to take part in arts activities in confidence comfort and safety.

To support Ovalhouse in data collection and recording.

Responsibilities

- Providing chaperone and pastoral care services for arts workshops.
- Taking registers at each session to ensure that we know which young people are on the premises at all times.
- Collecting weekly fees from young people, following up on non-payments and managing petty cash.
- Following up non-attendance.
- Being aware of appointments and other commitments that young people have.
- Collecting and protecting personal and health data of young people.
- Arriving at least half-hour before workshops begin and leave half an hour after workshops have ended.
- Liaising with parents, carers, social workers and other adults that are involved in the care of young people.
- Answering enquiries from young people and their carers.
- Assisting with recruitment of young people where appropriate.
- Liaising with young people and enabling them to take advantage of the other opportunities available to them at Ovalhouse and elsewhere.
- Recording and monitoring of young people's details and attendance records for all workshops and maintaining spread sheets and data bases
- Processing film/photography release permission.
- Communicating/liasing with participants and parents/carers about workshops, rehearsals, trips and other events.
- Ensuring that all spaces used for workshops comply with health and safety regulations and are risk assessed.
- Acting as a responsible authority figure/positive role model at all time, maintaining and overseeing the security of the site during the sessions.
- Resolving conflicts between young people.
- Being the first point of contact for Child Protection and Safeguarding issues including vulnerable adults.
- Recording any disclosures and concerns and reporting as appropriate.
- Informing staff of issues for young people on a 'need to know' basis.

- Providing first aid assistance.
- Organising break times including providing refreshments with regard to dietary requirements.
- Locking up the building and setting the alarm when Duty Manager is not in attendance.
- Constantly monitor the activities of the young people in and out of workshops for compliance with our policies supporting the health and wellbeing of young people (Child Protection and Safeguarding and Health and Safety).
- Work within Ovalhouse policies and procedures with particular emphasis on Child Protection and Safeguarding, Drugs Policy, Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities.
- Any other duties as agreed with the Project Managers appropriate to the job title and level of pay.

Person Specification

Experience of:

- Supervising children and young people including those who have barriers to participation
- Working in a culturally diverse context
- Operating within an equal opportunities framework
- Microsoft Office – excel, word and email

Knowledge, understanding and/or training in:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Conflict resolution
- First aid
- Safeguarding level 2 or above

Qualities:

- Excellent communication skills including good listening skills
- Patience and an understanding of the concerns of young people
- Warm, approachable
- Enthusiasm for and interest in youth arts
- Good professional boundaries especially around confidentiality
- Fairness

Other:

- Ability to work flexible hours, many of which will be evenings, weekends and holidays.
- Willingness to undergo an enhanced DBS check