

Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream: towards a 'learning programme'?

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Introduction

Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream (SUBTM) in the eyes of many internal and external stakeholders in the community music sector seems to have 'worked'. The cynics might say: well, with that size of budget, it would, wouldn't it? Undoubtedly the budget helped but as one more detached observer stated: 'Hefty budget, wisely spent.' In negotiating to write this review, the authors, however, felt that there was more to the SUBTM project than funding. The formal brief was:

*A follow up to the Beyond the Mainstream Report written by Rob and Phil. We feel that it is extremely important to show how the programme has implemented their recommendations, and what impact this has had. We would like certain elements within the follow up report to be 'probed' to highlight specific learning areas, such as **tendering, impact upon staff, and partnerships.***

As advisers, we wanted to explore why the programme seems to have worked, critically appraise some of its workings and examine what can be learned from the SUBTM experience which, despite major differences in the size of future budgets, might be helpful for other targeted or inclusive national programmes or local organisations – for example, the Henley Review's Music Hubs – in the future.

This review

This review is designed to complement other Sing Up reviews and evaluations including Beyond the Mainstream: Report on Funded Programmes 2009, the Institute of Education Centre for Understanding Social Pedagogy's external evaluation of the Sing Up National Children's Bureau (NCB) Looked After Children Programme, the CUREE evaluation of the whole Sing Up programme, and the internal evaluations of the participating projects. It looks at how far we have travelled since the research report; and is based on the experiences of the three Beyond the Mainstream advisers (Rob Hunter, Phil Mullen and Kathryn Deane) and has been informed by 17 interviews with staff and partners (see Appendix A). The three parts cover:

The impact on staff (**Part 1 - SUBTM: towards a learning organisation**)
Issues of partnerships (**Part 2 - SUBTM: working in partnership**), and
A focus on tendering (**Part 3 - SUBTM: tendering**)

'There's nothing so practical as a good theory'

It may be considered harsh to review the practice of an organisation in the light of theory or practice that it never pretended to espouse. However, we do so in this paper simply because the organisational practices adopted or emerging - even if in doing so programme leaders were acting intuitively and informally rather than formally - have had substantial merit and indeed can add to the building of organisational theory in the music education sector, formal as well as non-formal.

The intention of using theoretical frameworks is not to demonstrate academic links. Kurt Lewin, himself both an academic and CEO of a major US company used the memorable phrase: '*there is nothing so practical as a good theory.*' We take this to mean both helping make sense of experience and also guiding future action.

Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream: towards a 'learning programme'?

Similarly the comparisons, in parts 2 and 3, of SUBTM practices with other practices in the field is not to say that one is better or worse than another, but to help place these practices in context and in the wider world.



PART 1 SUBTM: towards a learning organisation

1 Background

1.1 The learning organisation

Rationale

The concept of the learning organisation emerged in the late 1980s. Donald Schon, one of the original conceptualisers of reflective practice, had written as early as 1973 of the likelihood of turmoil in the life of most organisations and the need for handling permanent change and shifting sands:

The loss of the stable state means that our society and all its institutions are in continuous processes of transformation. We cannot expect that new stable states will endure for our own lifetime (Schon 1973: 28).

The knowledge revolution, technological advances, the disappearance of 'careers for life' meant (Smith 2002):

The basic rationale for such organizations is that in situations of rapid change only those that are flexible, adaptive and productive will excel. For this to happen, it is argued, organizations need to 'discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels (Senge 1990: 4)

Charged with delivering on a substantial resource, Sing Up had to be productive but also flexible in a turbulent environment.

Definition

Smith (2002) highlights that in one sense *the learning organization is an ideal, towards which organizations have to evolve in order to be able to respond to the various pressures [they face] (Finger and Brand 1999: 136). It is characterized by a recognition that 'individual and collective learning are key' (op. cit.).*

Learning organizations [are] organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together (Senge 1990: 3).

Philosophy in practice

Senge suggests that *In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards and teachers. They are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is they are responsible for learning.... Learning organizations will remain a 'good idea'... until people take a stand for building such organizations. Taking this stand is the first leadership act, the start of inspiring (literally 'to breathe life into') the vision of the learning organization' (Senge 1990: 340).*

The spiritual dimension

For Peter Senge, real learning *gets to the heart of what it is to be human. We become able to re-create ourselves. This applies to both individuals and organizations. Thus, for a 'learning*

organization' it is not enough to survive'. "Survival learning" or what is more often termed "adaptive learning" is important – indeed it is necessary. But for a learning organization, "adaptive learning" must be joined by "generative learning", learning that enhances our capacity to create'. Learning organisations are ...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together (Senge 1990: 14).

This kind of connection supports collaboration, commitment, ready access to knowledge and talent, and coherent organizational behaviour. This description of social capital suggests appropriate organizational investments – namely, giving people space and time to connect, demonstrating trust, effectively communicating aims and beliefs, and offering equitable opportunities and rewards that invite genuine participation, not mere presence (Cohen and Prusak 2001: 4).

And finally

We must, in other words, become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are 'learning systems', that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation (Schon 1973: 28).

Leadership

People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas. And they are deeply self-confident. Paradoxical? Only for those who do not see the 'journey is the reward' (Senge 1990: 142).

Leaders have to create and manage creative tension – especially around the gap between vision and reality. Mastery of such tension allows for a fundamental shift. It enables the leader to see the truth in changing situations (Smith 2002).

1.2 Communities of Practice

In a review of Etienne Wenger's *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning and identity* in 1998, Tom Peters, the management guru, writes:

The idea that an organisation is a constellation of 'communities of practice' is a genuine breakthrough. It is an idea that has profound implications for what it takes to run a successful organisation in our frenetic, chaotic times. In this book, Wenger lays the groundwork for the kind of thinking that will be necessary for any organisation in the 21st century.

The notion of a community of practice. We are all members of several: gardeners, sports fans, dub aficionados, proponents of singing. As Peters says, a single organisation is a *constellation' of communities of practice*. However Wenger's conceptualisation not only looks inside an organisation but across organisations. He suggests this is at one level, simply a common sense concept:

A community of practice is a unique combination of 3 fundamental elements;

1. *a domain of knowledge (e.g. singing and young people 'beyond the mainstream');*
2. *a community of people who care about the domain (in SUBTM there were several: each individual project; the project practitioners and the central team; the wider SU*

Gathering. i.e. this can cross organisational boundaries hence different from a learning organisation, or sit within them. It can include those not members of Sing Up but those outside Sing Up who are committed to the cause);

3. *the shared practice they are developing to be effective in this domain* (and which SUBTM is aiming to capture).

Wenger builds a social theory of learning which focuses on learning and the generation of knowledge in four ways:

1. **Practice:** learning **from** and **about** practice in the company of other practitioners
2. **Community:** learning **from** and **about** 'community' (being in and acting as a community) in the company of other practitioners
3. **Meaning:** making individual and collective meaning from 'practice' and from 'community'
4. **Identity:** developing individual and collective identity from shared practice and shared community.

In another book he writes of the art of cultivating communities of practice (Wenger 2001). We suggest this is a relevant lens through which to review the SUBTM activity.

2 Sing Up: the early months and the emergence of Beyond the Mainstream

2.1 Working collaboratively

Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream was a stream of work within a very complex programme or organisation. While it is not appropriate to dig deep here, some of the origins of Sing Up as a whole were so formative to the eventual BTM programme that they must be highlighted.

We go back initially to the Music Manifesto Report No. 2:

The central recommendation of this report is that everyone involved in music education should work together to provide the framework and focus needed to deliver a universal music education offer to all children, from early years onwards, where they can take an active part in high-quality music making.

When Youth Music submitted its tender to the government in partnership with The Sage, Gateshead, Faber Music Publishing and AMV-BBDO, it was not only embodying this belief of working together – this Consortium has not only governed Sing Up but been essential to its success - but also proposing that partnership working should permeate all aspects of its strategy and operation:

- Horizontal partnerships with other national organisations and providers such as the Federation of Music Services, Drake Music, Music and the Deaf, Sound Sense; and also
- Vertical partnerships between central strategic planning and local delivery organisations.

This theme of partnerships is reviewed in greater depth in part 2.

2.2 The advantages and disadvantages of substantial funding

We have noted above that Sing Up was very well funded. However, that funding came with its own pressures:

- a) the initial contract with the government was for £10m to be spent between October 2007 and March 2008 – by a new consortium operating over a seconded Programme Manager (who become Director) and no established staff. This meant that large sums of money had to be spent quickly over six months, that appropriate systems had to be initiated all at the same time as developing a strategic plan to bid by the end of January 2008 for continuation over the following three years. The challenge was that *Some things needed to be well-framed, the rest were better loosely framed* (Programme Director).
- b) such a relatively large amount of government funding to a single organisation, albeit consortium-led, might have led to professional jealousy. There were indeed some initial tensions but
We needed to recognise the practice that existed. [Key government figures] were open to dialogue. We learned that conversation with the right people was the best way of taking things forward (Programme Director).

2.3 The emergence of Beyond the Mainstream

In November 2007 there was a conversation between the Programme Director of Sing Up and a community musician who was to become one of BTM's researchers and advisers. The thrust was: you're doing well in launching the main programme but what about those young people who don't go to school? This conversation was mirrored by a similar conversation by the manager of the then Hearts and Minds projects (whose role became Funded Programmes Manager and within this document will be referred to as Former Funded Programmes Manager) and another interested observer. In February 2008, the Programme Director and Hearts and Minds manager decided to ask these two outside observers:

to look deeper into the area of singing activity in non-mainstream primary-aged education....Sing Up recognises that its principal focus is on mainstream primary-age schools, but that, in order to ensure that all primary-aged children are able to access high-quality singing every day, it must be proactive in reaching those outside of mainstream education.

The two were asked to:

- **Scope** current best practice in the field of non-mainstream musical activity and learning for primary-aged children - particularly with regard to singing
- Make **recommendations** to Sing Up on how it could most effectively develop its resources, support and funding to ensure that non-mainstream primary-aged children are effectively reached.

The resulting report surprised senior Sing Up staff when it identified the numbers of young people who would be unlikely to access singing in school. Sing Up management's determination to act on the reports findings led them to:

- a) set up 14 projects in 2009 working with different groups of children 'beyond the mainstream'
- b) go on to set up 7 projects in 2010 as part of the Sing Up National Children's Bureau (NCB) partnership. Projects were established through partnerships between music

organisations and Children's Services and work focused specifically on engaging looked after children of primary age in singing. These 7 projects were evaluated by the Institute of Education's Centre for Understanding Social Pedagogy. A further 4 'development projects' were set up late in 2010;

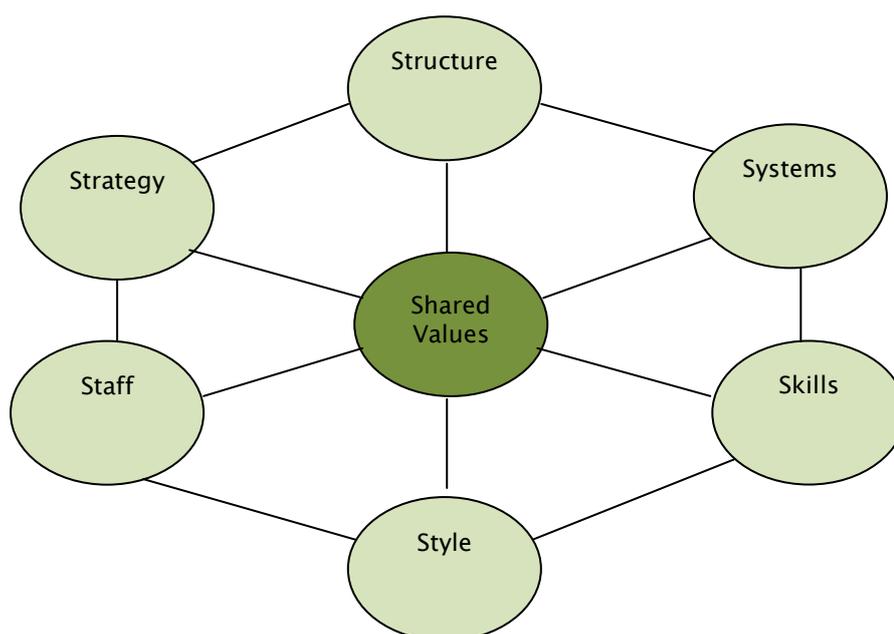
- c) embed the knowledge and values emerging from this work into the wider Sing Up organisation, initiate a range of singing and vocal programmes with different groups of children beyond the mainstream at national, regional and local levels in particular through Vocal Force, and ensure that the expertise and knowledge being generated in the wider Sing Up programme also informed work with beyond the mainstream children.

So far we would reflect simply on the following:

- the SUBTM activity was set in train at a time when there would have been every excuse for senior managers to focus exclusively on meeting more tangible targets in work with mainstream schools.
- Senge's meaning behind 'personal mastery' seems significant. *People with a high level of personal mastery are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, their growth areas. And they are deeply self-confident.*
- the concept of 'knowledge generation' was emerging as a characteristic of a Sing Up-cultivated community of practice.
- the delegatory and trusting leadership style of Sing Up allowed individual and regional programme managers to develop their own ways into BTM work – 'letting a thousand flowers bloom' while still tapping into the knowledge generated by others.

3 Beyond the Mainstream: a framework for analysis

In the Beyond the Mainstream Research report (Section 7.2 pgs 26-31) we used the McKinsey 7S Framework as a device to frame our proposals re aspects of strategy. We suggest it has similar value in reviewing practice 30 months later. Its origins predate the concept of the learning organisation (Peters and Waterman 1982) but it may be considered both inclusive and robust.



One characteristic of the above representation of the 7S – it is also sometimes represented as a hard triangle (Structure, Strategy and Systems, the more macho elements when used in the world of business and industry) and the soft square of Staff, Skills, Shared Values and Style – is that Shared Values (sometimes also known as Superordinate Goals) are at the centre and all elements are interconnected. This indicates that changes in one area have a knock on effect in others.

4 Beyond the Mainstream: Shared Values

The sub questions here might include:

1. Is there an articulation of shared values?
2. Are they genuinely shared across the organisation?
3. If Peters and Waterman in their seminal *In Search of Excellence* (1982), suggest that a prime task of management is managing the organisation's values into every nook and crevice of the organisation (and not leaving them on a shelf to gather dust), what was the Sing Up BTM practice in this regard?

And it is important here to acknowledge the centrality – but greater difficulty – of developing shared values across a partnership such as the Sing Up Consortium, across other partnerships and across a community of practice as a whole.

The strap line of Sing Up is *Help kids find their voice*. It was fairly easy for senior management to make the moral case for this to mean all kids and not only those reached through Sing Up's mainstream schools programme. The Music Manifesto Partnership and Advocacy group had been appointed from signatories of the manifesto and reported directly to and interacted with government ministers. This group had identified five issues/strands within the Manifesto Report Number Two that needed to be driven forward. One of these was work with vulnerable or disadvantaged children and those with special needs. Kathryn Deane, Director of Sound Sense and a member of the group, suggested that these children were less likely to receive music education appropriate to their needs than mainstream children and there is a need to redress the balance. A recent report, *Making music with SEN children* (Special Children 2008) writing of music generally, had stated:

We know that music has a particularly important role to play in the lives of vulnerable and at risk children, and those with special needs. However, organisations working with these children have raised concerns that they are particularly poorly served by existing music provision. There is little research on the state of that provision or on how children's needs might best be met. This inevitably limits the objective for universality in music education.

The personal and the political came together. The Programme Director of Sing Up, when asked about his personal motivation to pursue this value within the organisation, recalled the impression made on him in his previous organisation by the impact of singing on the lives of (older) disadvantaged young people. This commitment when linked with awareness from his previous Music Leader experience of the lack of infrastructure nationally for 'beyond the mainstream groups, drove professional practice:

Having Baz on board and supporting this work from the outset ensured that from the top, this work was endorsed and supported.... Particularly over the past year, the significance of his involvement and his dedication to BTM has sky rocketed' (BTM Manager).

Many staff intrinsically shared the value:

People got a sense of BTM values from their own personal store. BTM allowed them to give Sing Up another level of meaning (BTM Adviser).

It is one thing to have a shared value around the importance of BTM groups, another to 'manage that into the system' and one key player found this straightforward:

Working with Sing Up colleagues to ensure BTM was, as the report recommended, fully embraced throughout the entire programme, has been an absolute joy. It hasn't as some might think, been a difficult task because everyone seemed to get and agree with the intention. The 'getting there' may have been something they needed support with but I could do that in my role. I felt like the work was embraced in every sense of the word (BTM Manager).

More contentious might have been the amount of organisation resource allocated to it. The report's authors alerted management to the fact that investment in this area was not easily demonstrated as cost beneficial. In a Phase 4 purposive selection meeting it was stated that:

BTM has had an exaggerated level of budget and investment from the programme.

The Henley Review and ensuing government white paper give perhaps disappointingly limited space to the benefits of music education with this client group. BTM was *the first time a national programme has invested the amount it should to work with BTM groups.* (BTM Manager) It will be a challenge to keep this particular 'shared values' plate spinning during a time of reduced expenditure.

5 Beyond the Mainstream: Structure

In the 7S Framework, this refers to the organisational structure and to where decisions are taken. We reflect in the following way.

Originally, decisions about the emerging BTM strategy were taken by Sing Up senior managers in dialogue with Consortium and advised by the two researcher/advisers. The process of developing the Research Report, however, drew on the views of many others in the emerging community of practice around BTM, thus suggesting anything other than a closed system.

Over the three years of SUBTM, the programmes have been steered by a Steering Group (at other times called a National Advisory Panel). In its most recent incarnation this has consisted of:

- Programme Director of Sing Up
- Director of Workforce Development (based at The Sage Gateshead)
- Funded Programmes Manager
- BTM Manager (a post recommended by the initial research report)
- BTM Advisers
- Youth Music as a Consortium partner along with The Sage Gateshead
- NCB (2010) as key partner in SU/NCB looked after children programme
- SU officers (e.g. marketing, resources) according to the agenda
- SUBTM Administrative Officer

- External Evaluator (co-option)
- Workforce Development BTM Administrator
- Workforce Development BTM Coordinator
- Independent Chair

This group met initially 6-weekly and more recently bi-monthly, alternating between London and Gateshead. Despite the geographical split between London and Gateshead and the variety of organisations and individuals involved, these meetings, complemented assiduously by bilateral updates outside the meetings, have been received as enjoyable, producing substantial learning and, again, providing an essentially open system at national level.

This umbrella body did however mask the difficulties of working within complex structures:

My feeling when I arrived was that Jenny had about eight different managers – all demanding time and action and feeding into the planning for the activity. It was a challenge to mend that feeling. We did it and due to that process, we all became much closer in terms of what we were aiming to achieve (Funded Programmes Manager).

Other structures such as Gatherings (throughout the programme) and Project Managers Meetings (in the SU/NCB looked after children programme) have been designed among other things to promote vertical communications and consultation.

The overall issue of structure, perhaps, is whether a programme such as emerged in SUBTM was 'bolted on' to the main organisation or 'built in.' Inevitably and probably rightly, up to the end of the initial 2009 14 projects programme, the focus of BTM was inward-looking in organisational terms: trying to develop and operate an emerging strategy and discover what exactly this thread should be about. The fact that BTM thereafter became appropriately more outward looking was largely due to the everyday work of the BTM Manager who perhaps fortuitously had been appointed in Autumn 2009 with experience from a The Sage Gateshead post and, therefore, had good links into the Youth Music, Faber Music and The Sage Gateshead team operations. She also had a particular personal history and commitment to the target group. At a meeting in Gateshead in July 2010, the authors of the original report who had made a wide range of sometimes tentative recommendations, were amazed at how much progress had been made in both following these through and in terms of integration across the wider Sing Up programme. A particularly productive internal partnership has been that with Vocal Force which has developed projects with PRUs, children with mental health difficulties, and gypsy and traveller children, as well as with several SEN projects.

There is still inevitably some territory to cover. Might the role of Area Leader ever be systematically resourced and guided towards playing a developmental role in relation to BTM? This may be out of reach given the existing substantial territory Area Leaders have to cover. However, some Area Leaders have already developed strong links and projects with local BTM networks. Having that function carried out consistently across the country in relation to the needs of BTM children might be considered a Holy Grail.

6 Beyond the Mainstream: Strategy

The first stage of this strategy was the commissioning by Sing Up senior management, with the agreement of the Consortium, of the research into the scope of BTM. In terms of

learning organisation practice this was formative. What followed illustrates the concept of 'emergent strategy.'

Emergent strategy is a set of actions, or behavior, consistent over time, "a realized pattern [that] was not expressly intended" in the original planning of strategy. When a deliberate strategy is realized, the result matches the intended course of action. An emergent strategy develops when an organization takes a series of actions that with time turn into a consistent pattern of behavior, regardless of specific intentions. "Deliberate strategies provide the organization with a sense of purposeful direction." Emergent strategy implies that an organization is learning what works in practice. Mixing the deliberate and the emergent strategies in some way will help the organization to control its course while encouraging the learning process. "Organizations ...[may] pursue ... umbrella strategies: the broad outlines are deliberate while the details are allowed to emerge within them" (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 23-25; Hax & Majluf, 1996, p. 17).

Following an emergent strategy path involves risk-taking, management courage and the political skill to negotiate such space with governors, in this case, Consortium and indeed with government.

There was an undeniable force steering strategy: the need to make the strapline *help kids find their voice* apply to all kids. There were inevitably tensions at times, perhaps particularly when the decision in the summer of 2009 was how to follow up the initial programme of 14 projects. There was a case for deepening that learning and a danger, perhaps, in cutting off certain experiments with a timescale not suited to community development. There was, however, a clear alternative which was that eventually adopted: focusing on fewer domains: SEN schools, PRUs, EBD units, refugee and asylum seeker children and, most significantly, looked after children – a focus which had been touched on in three of the 2009 projects. The focus on the latter had intrinsic merit in terms of obvious need; it potentially seized the political moment given the government of the time's apparent priorities; and strengthened the chance of a more lasting legacy by linking at local level with Children's Services and at national level with NCB. The debates in the National Advisory Panel at the time were intense but produced a lot of learning.

One particular example of a strategic win-win came when the emergent strategy and opportunist work done to integrate the BTM value across the programme including Vocal Force and Sing Up Awards, resulted in a substantial increase in the number of Special Schools and PRUs registered and counting towards overall Sing Up targets.

7 Beyond the Mainstream: Systems

In some organisations, systems dominate strategy. It seems that in Sing Up and its BTM programme, by and large, the strategy, albeit emergent, has led and systems have supported it well. *Instead of thinking what's easiest for us to run, we said what's best for the workers/children/projects* (Former Funded Programmes Manager)

'Partnership' and 'Tendering' have been two systems on which we wanted to concentrate in particular and reviews on these are found in complementary documents. We focus here on a few of the other main systems.

7.1 Funding

We have noted elsewhere the obvious benefit of an organisation receiving substantial funding. We highlight here the value of an organisation reserving a certain sum in its budget to promote research, development and appropriate experimentation. In Sing Up the initial strategy had included funding a number of flagship delivery organisations under the Hearts and Minds funding stream. There might have been a temptation simply to have continued this after the first experimental year – or even to have diverted it to ensure that mainstream targets were realisable. Instead, senior management restructured the budget to translate Hearts and Minds in part into Funded Programmes. The fact that there was a (substantial) sum of money available to support appropriate experimentation enabled initially the BTM research to take place and be followed by the funding of a substantial number of developmental projects both in 2009 and 2010. This in turn contributed to Sing Up BTM's ability to develop as a learning programme.

7.2 Performance Management

Performance management has developed a hard-nosed image. Well-operated, it is essentially developmental. In the early months of Sing Up a practice emerged of moving away from the practice of simply funding programmes and then leaving projects to get on with it.

We introduced our own style of having quarterly meetings with those we funded. We didn't want just to give the money but rather saw it as a joint venture. It was a lot of work – I remember one ten day period in which we had to meet in this way with almost 40 projects – but it established a particular style of relationship. (Former Funded Programmes Manager)

This model was transferred into the 2009 Beyond the Mainstream projects through a twin-track approach of projects meeting with BTM advisers and also having contact with the BTM Manager. In the 2010 projects the model was a bimonthly phone conference or visit from both the BTM Manager and the NCB Principal Well Being Officer who co-managed the 7 Sing Up NCB projects.

7.3 Song Bank, Sing Up Magazine and Sing Up website

These key resources were central to the Sing Up mission and had been established long before Beyond the Mainstream emerged. There were substantial challenges: how possible was it going to be for the Song Bank to be thoroughly inclusive of the needs of children with special educational needs? How should the magazine be pitched to include BTM themes when its main customers were mainstream teachers and there wasn't enough room anyway for material aimed at them? How could the website make those working with BTM children feel it was for them as well as for those working in the mainstream?

It is understandable that the paths here were sometimes rocky.

When I became involved I had to organise the song bank day. It was quite painful realising how much more was needed to be done and not always being in control of what those changes would be and how we would manage and structure the time.... There are not many of us with a background in this area. The last two years developed much greater awareness and sensitivity in this area – the song bank day was a wake-up call.' (Sing Up Resource Administrator, Faber).

But changing systems needs substantial dialogue and that takes time:

Sing Up understood our vision [but there was]one thing which didn't work particularly well The website was crucial to get things public . It took more than a year to upload 15 folders. There were a large number of meetings etc . I couldn't understand the problem – that was a problem for impact . It only got up when it was nearly all over. The new website is so complicated- we have to email schools a pdf to enable them to get to our section of the website (Partner organisation).

7.4 Bringing about change in systems

Bringing about change in systems and systems managers is challenging and involves both winning hearts and minds and also persistence and time. First, to look again at the interface between 'shared' values' and systems. It was noticeable that the BTM Manager's approach to promoting shared values both within BTM and across Sing Up was not one of rhetoric but one much more related to making systems become inclusive:

I am very much a doer and can find talking and theorising about things too much, frustrating, particularly as this can often mean that the practice of putting things into place isn't considered.

It seems fair to say, however, that the BTM Manager's actions spoke as loud as her words and resulted in shared values being made manifest through appropriately designed and responsive systems. We don't suggest that this is the only way – in a complex organisation such as SUBTM there is a place for inspirational rhetoric – introducing Doreen Rao at the Sing Up Gathering 2010, for example. We simply note that there are different ways of producing the same end.

The second point relates to that scarce resource: time. *Money hasn't been a barrier. Time, though, has. For example, time for producing a database. We've been victims of our own enthusiasm and gone for it. Sometimes this has been too much.* (Sing Up Programme Director)

7.5 Growth points?

We recommend attention is given to the following aspects of systems over the coming year:

- a) a critical evaluation of BTM resources, particularly the website, with the input both of experts and resource users on the ground, and make adjustments as appropriate.
- b) modify the Sing Up Awards as necessary to enable the full participation of PRUs in them – and develop them as singing schools.

8 Beyond the Mainstream: Staff

The question here is: does the organisation/partnership have enough staff of the appropriate calibre and qualifications to deliver on the strategy?

Sing Up overall and Sing Up BTM was by no means overstaffed. Key staff, however, as will be noted in the chapter on Partnerships were seen to be very efficient as well as effective in terms of keeping a multitude of plates spinning, of getting back to field projects over queries quickly, of motivating and including.

There seemed also to be mutual respect between different role-holders within the organisation. Administrators were not deskbound but actively involved in meetings on themes they were administering. Their staff and career development was seen to be equally important to that of more highly paid managers. Perhaps as a result they went the extra mile and also, in the office, were able to solve problems themselves without needing to pass them up the chain. *The level of professionalism of the administration is absolutely superb* (National Partner).

When certain skills and perspectives were needed but not present in existing staff there was no hesitation in going out, finding these and co-opting them. Hence the BTM research, the development of the advisers' role, the partnership with NCB, the link with the Institute of Education.

Finally there's the issue of deployment of staff and the emphasis on teams and dialogue with staff either in Sing Up or partner projects. One commentator gave an interesting historical perspective on SUBTM as an intervention into the national community music scene: *The Gatherings have taken all the most angry and brought them together. Because they haven't been listened to for so long. They've had to fight for every single penny, isolated and in an insular sector. Really listening to their concerns and harnessing their experience has been centrally important.*

Senge comments:

When you ask people what it is like being part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than themselves, of being connected, of being generative. It becomes quite clear that, for many, their experiences as part of truly great teams stand out as singular periods of life lived to the fullest (Senge 1990 p 13).

The NAPs, the Gatherings. It's been very stimulating to be a part of all this with a lot of fun en route and such an obviously valuable purpose. It's been impressive to see an organisation getting such a lot of things 'right'. It can happen! (BTM Adviser).

9 Beyond the Mainstream: Skills

Question: did Sing Up BTM and partner agencies have the collective skills to deliver on the strategy, albeit 'emergent'?

We stress here three aspects and identify some possible growth points.

9.1 Raising awareness

Across all roles within the organisation and its partners there was substantial learning about singing Beyond the Mainstream.

The journey of it across the programme, from something we knew little about to something we seem now to be international experts in! The enthusiasm with which people have taken it on (Programme Director).

I understand the national picture better and have even taken an interest in the Henley review...not my normal bedtime reading. I am suddenly aware of the political climate. I have

been able to clarify my own sense of voice work, making it more accessible to others (Community musician).

9.2 Reflective practice and enquiry

The Sage Gateshead had long had an emphasis on reflective and reflexive practice both through its own ReflectLab and ongoing use of ICA development opportunities. Devices such as the ORID structure (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional) for framing decisions influenced the quality of Steering Group meetings. The BTM Report, too, promoted reflective practice as the cornerstone of the 2009 pilot projects approach to staff and team development and asked each project to frame enquiries (a concept borrowed from Creative Partnerships) to set the tone of an action research approach to the fieldwork. It is interesting to go back to the Guidelines for Applicants to the 2009 programme:

- *The programme's aims are . . .to identify interesting practice and share it regionally and nationally, developing a 'community of practice' of those working in this domain.*
- *Learning from experience*
The programme differs from traditional grant-giving programmes in that it is designed as a partnership between field projects and Sing Up. In exchange for making the grant, Sing Up wishes to work closely with successful projects to help them learn from the experience they are having; support them in thinking through difficulties; and exchange interesting practice .
To aid this process, Sing Up asks that the aims of your project include 'enquiries' you will make as a framework for individual and reflective collective practice and monitoring and evaluation activity . . .
- *Sing Up... acknowledges that some approaches will not succeed as planned – the importance is to try to learn from and be open about why this might be so.*

Advisers' contact with projects and the final reflection meetings highlighted learning both about the content of the projects and also the processes.

The Gatherings – both BTM and Sing Up – offered opportunities for collectively taking stock, learning from each other and extending insights and were very much welcomed by sometimes isolated field projects.

In the Sing Up NCB projects, the Institute of Education Centre for Understanding Social Pedagogy evaluation encouraged the keeping of reflective journals and regular review and evaluation meetings across the partners while the regular phone conferences between the central team and field projects had the same effect: *Again, the phone calls with Helen and Jenny were really helpful in providing regular opportunities for my own reflection* (Field Project Manager.) *Latterly phone conferences chaired extremely well by JY to an agenda set by JY: notes produced very quickly. I find phone conferences extremely efficient and these were frequent enough for continuity'* (Children's Services Manager).

9.3 Social Pedagogy

The injection of thinking about Social Pedagogy through the co-option of Professor Pat Petrie and the partnership with NCB, particularly given their previous work on the Learning Framework for Artistic Pedagogues, was both a very practical intervention but also one that offered a valuable intellectual framework for the final phase. For many it was reaffirming, for some challenging.

What have I enjoyed and found challenging? Investigating another model –social pedagogy – and looking at our own work through that lens (Senior Manager, Consortium Partner).

9.4 Growth points?

We have already seen how the Sing Up resource to do what it wanted was substantially overstretched – particularly in terms of time. In identifying the following as possible areas for development, there is no criticism intended of the priorities which were set – and have largely been delivered on. The themes identified below are simply those skill-related areas which we suggest merit possible inclusion in the forthcoming 'sustainability year':

- a) **'Reflective practice'** is one of those spray on concepts which might with benefit be examined more rigorously. It can be used in a 'weak' sense – occasionally wondering what was going on in a particular situation – or in a 'strong' sense when there is more rigour employed which may need a bit of theoretical underpinning.

For some people, reflective practice sometimes looked like sitting round and talking. It needs to be tied into 'what next?' (Sing Up Manager)

We suggest, too, that 'collective reflective practice' might receive more emphasis on occasions: whole teams and partnerships being taken through a systematic review.

- b) **Codifying learning from field practice.** We suspect there may be value in codifying more systematically: what has been learned about the methods and repertoire used and with what effect; what has been learned about working with different BTM groupings? We may find in trying to do this that the patterns are weak but it might be an important part of Sing Up's legacy and sustainability strategy.
- c) **Making learning accessible.** Having codified this learning, the challenge is then to make it accessible to others, firstly through the Sing Up reportal and then in other ways.
- d) **Development of community musicians.** The best legacy of a programme such as Sing Up BTM is a substantial cadre of community musicians motivated and competent to develop work in this arena off their own bat. The BTM research report recommended the exploration of a comprehensive, appropriate professional development programme for community musicians to support this strategy. Might this be part of a consolidation period?
- e) **SEN Staff.** We suggest further development of professional SEN staff across the country, recognising the role both of creativity and technology in voice work with students with disabilities (including those with PMLD).
- f) The development of confident singing among PRU and EBD staff both through training and through the dissemination of now existing resources. This, we suggest, takes place across the whole country, in line with previous targets for mainstream and SEN schools .
- g) **Development of other professionals as singing leaders.** The BTM report also recommended developing a strategy to train up singing leaders in other sectors. There has been interesting work here: involving CAMHS staff; play workers; foster carers; teaching assistants; residential care workers – and the Vocal Force Rhythmix

project focusing on this dimension of the workforce. We suggest it would be important to develop further these professionals as singing leaders, distilling and building on the lessons from the current programme.

10 Beyond the Mainstream: Style

We address here the 'style' of the organisation: both that of the senior managers and of the culture they have helped create.

Lynda Grattan in her book *Living Strategy* writes of organisations with 'soul'. *Creating organisations with soul builds from the capabilities of.. visioning, scanning and strategy, the capability to diagnose, to think systemically and build adaptive strategies. To this is added emotional capability, trust-building capability and the capability to build the psychological contract* (Grattan 2000 p85).

Sing Up and its SUBTM seems to have been such an organisation. Why? This is more difficult to identify. Perhaps because of its effective blend of passion and system which are themselves seen by some as the hallmarks of quality (West Burnham 1994).

I have enjoyed it all. I have enjoyed working with Jenny and an extremely professional team. I have enjoyed the passion and enthusiasm of a whole bunch of people and have never had to apologise for my passion'(National Partner).

Perhaps because of its purpose: not only singing which itself can tap into 'soul' but also seeing singing's effects on the lives of the most vulnerable.

A perspective from someone who has come more recently to BTM as Funded Programmes Manager:

I am proudest of the way the BtM strand has responded to the changing world and changing thinking/ strategy. It has asked projects to form complex relationships with Children's Services knowing they were essential. It is an informed strand in so many ways. All this without losing its focus which is the children themselves. It talks the talk – responding to the outside world (SEN reviews, Henley etc, looking at the whole world of the looked after child, being brave about practice and swinging between the academics and the community musicians) but stays true to itself'.

And three specific aspects of style and culture, 'the way we do things around here.'

1. *Sing Up BTM seems to have created a culture of celebration without this slipping into complacency or self-satisfaction.*
2. It acknowledges its mistakes and seems to have avoided the blame culture: *We weren't afraid to say to the projects: 'sorry, we were wrong'* (Former Funded Programmes Manager).
3. *I am at ease with being honest with projects and don't mind admitting when I feel Sing Up or I have made a mistake* (BTM Manager).

And the overall style that has been inclusive and involving and is embodied in the way the BTM Manager has carried out her role:

Jenny has provided authoritative leadership and a pretty democratic dialogic model of management and at all times kept her responsibilities as project manager (National Partner).

11 Implications for other organisations

This needs more thought and collective discussion. However, our purpose in exploring this perspective has in part been to identify what if anything can be learnt from the 'learning organisation' aspect of Sing Up BTM's experience which can inform other national music programmes or community music organisations in the future.

We don't think that either the scale of Sing Up or its substantial budget invalidates the wider application of this learning. We suggest the universal importance, in organisational terms, of:

- a compelling vision – that every child will be supported to find their voice;
- of clear values around the task but also around how we address the task;
- the combination of passion and system;
- developing relationships as a partner and not solely as a funder;
- identifying a line in however squeezed a budget which encourages experimentation, research and development
- the essential contribution of reflective practice and collective learning both within and between participating projects
- the encouragement of transformative leadership at all levels of the organisation and partnerships
- developing an organisation with soul.

These are some core attributes which we believe are eminently applicable to organisations such as Music Hubs which may seek to develop as learning organisations and partnerships.



PART 2 SUBTM: working in partnership

1 Background

The *Sing Up 'Beyond the Mainstream' Consultancy Project Report* recommended partnership working at several levels; and the actual delivery of music work with beyond the mainstream groups has involved wide ranging partnerships, especially between those organisations primarily focused on the music work with the children and young people and those organisations primarily focused either on their general education (e.g. schools) or their wellbeing from a statutory point of view (e.g. children's services).

Two reports have looked at such partnerships: *Beyond the Mainstream - Final Report*, (Jo Hunter) which looked at the learnings from the first round of delivery projects in 2009; and *I want to sing: Sing Up National Children's Bureau Looked After Children Programme Evaluation* (Pat Petrie and Abigail Knight), which explored the seven looked after children delivery projects running in 2010.

2 Learnings to date

The learnings in respect of that level of partnerships from these two reports are quite clear.

2.1 Hunter

Jo Hunter was Sing Up's Funded Programmes Manager up to 2010. Her report on SUBTM made the following points:

- Partnerships can be difficult to set up, can take a lot of time to establish and can often lead to tensions, disagreements and difficulties for project teams.
- But without collaborative working – even assuming a project can be set up at all – a project risks being unable to embed the work, to see sessions cancelled due to lack of support from senior management, being unable to form relationships with the children targeted due to lack of insight into their lives and to see corridors continually blocked off due to lack of permissions and 'red tape'.
- Good personal relationships in partnerships was key to success: they vastly increased the efficacy of the partnership.
- Bad personal relationships, on the other hand often led to breakdowns. A gatekeeper who, for whatever reason (often time restraints, capacity or lack of understanding of a project) does not want to engage with a music organisation can make it very difficult for work to happen at all.
- Many projects tackled the issue of poor personal relationships through diversifying the people involved in the partnership (from ground level to management) and listening to their needs and working around them.

The report also contained a list of partnership Dos and Don'ts

Do:

- Spend time developing partnerships with the organisations already involved with the children you want to work with
- Listen
- Be realistic about your needs and expectations
- Plan together
- Provide continual feedback to each other about how it's going and be flexible
- Build relationships with face-to-face workers as well as managers.

Don't:

- Assume knowledge of the children or the work of the other organisations that work with them
- Use a partnership only to fulfill your needs – listen to what they need from you
- Base a partnership only on one person – what might happen when they're gone?

2.2 Petrie and Knight

This evaluation made similar points about the necessity for strong and trusting partnerships; and about good personal relationships needing to be combined with a commitment to the work embedded in organisational structures. In building on Jo Hunter's analysis of why a prospective partner might not want or be able to engage, this evaluation also cited general demoralisation of social work staff because of the pressure of crisis work and an increased focus on child protection, and current financial problems faced by local authorities.

The evaluation also echoed the earlier point about tensions in partnerships, and how they can be due to different organisational cultures, 'the way we do things around here'. Typically a music organisation, particularly a community music organisation, would value providing music and singing in a free and flexible environment while a school-based structure (say) would have a more formal and structural approach.

3 The wider context

All the above, while good answers, are non-contentious and have been predicted by the literature on partnerships from Bruce Tuckman on teams, through Rosabeth Moss Kanter and her parallels with personal and marriage relationships, to Paula Zwozdiak-Myers's 2010 literature review on partnership working for the TDA.

David Price (2008) drew on his experience of large-scale partnership projects – especially running Musical Futures – to derive a list of four main factors that need to be present to create the right environment for collaborative innovation. Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream work was perhaps the epitome of "collaborative innovation", so Price's issues should be relevant. They are:

- A culture where honest, respectful but self-critical debate is actively sought and valued
- A risk-taking attitude
- A willingness to change
- An acceptance of initial ignorance – that is, projects in a truly innovative collaboration can't know at the outset what their outputs and outcomes might be.

Partnerships that meet these innovation-enhancers, says Price, would demonstrate qualities of sharing, openness and inclusivity, a freedom of ideas, and a no-blame culture of trust: this latter, he says, was difficult to inculcate completely in Musical Futures, where a couple of partners were reluctant to admit when mistakes had been made, for fear of consequences (it's possible, indeed, that a no-blame culture is more difficult to engender in a partnership than in a single organisation).

Finally, Price offers a set of "pre-requisites" for successful partnerships:

- Is there a clearly identified problem which needs fixing by coming together? Simply 'working together' is not enough.
- The problem must not have a solution which can be achieved by any one organisation – otherwise someone ought to have fixed it by now.
- Each partner may have differing levels of contribution, but they must all have an equal commitment to the need for a partnered solution.
- Partnership isn't a spectator sport – each partner needs to have a clearly identified role to play. But it isn't a competitive sport either – no jockeying for position.
- The needs of young people (rather than a partner's provision) should be the driving force: how will it be reflected in practice?

4 Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream in partnership

This part, therefore, concentrates on how those generally-accepted lessons of partnership working have translated into the partnerships between Sing Up itself and its delivery partners, and how they fare against Price's indicators. Against all these indicators, Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream fared very well.

4.1 Fixing problems

There was clearly a "problem which couldn't be fixed by one organisation", particularly in the second-round looked after children projects, where partners on both the singing 'side' and the children's services 'side' had no difficulty in acknowledging a) that they saw and understood the value of singing in a young person's life; b) that they saw and understood the complexity of life for beyond the mainstream children; and c) that they couldn't do much to tackle a) and b) without collaboration with partners. Without BTM, we wouldn't have brought singing to the lives of looked after children, reckoned Helen Chambers: *NCB would have not have a mechanism for affecting quality of music practice. We needed a partnership who could affect that quality of singing practice and who was sympathetic to the complexity of the work.*

And this theme was echoed by others:

*Bring to children's services not just the idea of singing but the authenticity of Sing Up and NCB: that made us connected to a national movement . . . Involvement of IOE opened doors to some children's services colleagues that were previously difficult to open
The people, expertise, processes in the project: wouldn't have been able to do it without all of that, the mix hasn't been in anything else I've worked on - there were elements in it that are similar in other processes, but not the same coz of the individuals involved.*

Inevitably, the fact that one partner (Sing Up) had money that other partners (the delivery organisations) needed to make work happen couldn't be disentangled from other aspects of partnership (and we return to this theme in the last part);

Obvious thing, is the impact to young people: we wouldn't have had the money to employ tutors. Children with disabilities wouldn't have got to work with tutors: their progress has been tremendous. Children are coming together: we're going to have a celebration day, these are special times for children in care. We had bigger and better wards events.

But that last project worked not just because of the money but because *we located the right people for the partnership to work. We couldn't have done it without those people coming up with goods. It's been greater as the whole.* A particularly telling response was the number of interviewees who said they would want to continue working with BTM groups, indeed with Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream itself, even in the absence of further Sing Up funding: *because it had worked for young people, explained one; Genuinely interested in continuing the partnership with Sing Up and NCB even if no [paid] work around at the time, said another.*

Some partners saw their role as enablers, middle-people, to ensure that a project could talk the language of other partners, oiling the wheels so that activity could happen: *if we just said to foster carers singing is good for your children nothing would happen, I have to find a marketing language, to present it as an opportunity not a threat.*

4.2 Partner agendas

There was a richness of partner agendas. A wide range of organisations could see the importance – or crucially the usefulness – of Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream to their own agendas.

We had ideas about the fact that young people who faced significant physical or communication barriers to singing weren't participating meaningfully in singing. We had ideas around how we could enable schools to make that happen - Sing Up saw this immediately, they had the network and the money, said Doug Bott. Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream Understood our vision. It was a vision jointly shared in every aspect.

We wanted to be part of wider, national, successful project. To be successful in our contribution, to make a fundamental shift in opportunities for looked after children in the county. Learning from how it happens in other parts of the country. To build on work we've already done and achieve more.

We wanted Sing Up's expertise. Wanted a big organisation to hang everything on, particularly for the direct work. Within the schools and educational field Sing Up has good reputation and high profile.

Liz Woolford's role as lead for a local authority gave her a unique vantage-point from which to see multiple partner agendas working: Helen Chambers' desire for an issue of Careers Can magazine; the Youth Development Service wanting accreditation; Sing Up wanting a project with primary aged children.

For partnerships like these to work requires Price's qualities of openness and trust.

4.3 Beyond Beyond the Mainstream

Partnerships in this programme worked at all levels: Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream wasn't just about the delivery projects of rounds one and two, but about how beyond the mainstream thinking could weave around the whole of Sing Up. Price's notion that partners need to have an equal commitment to a partnered solution can be reframed (perhaps more cynically) as "partners need to be able to see what's in it for them"; and certainly they need to be able to see what effect their area of contribution is making to the whole.

Kate Gibson in Awards noted that it was Jenny from the start who pinpointed awards as one of best ways to engage SEN schools and a way for them to develop through the programme; but Gibson could see clearly the benefits both to the schools she worked with and to Sing Up, through the Awards: *Sing up has achieved its actual mission in engaging all primary age children. The awards from the start were flexible enough to achieve this.*

Kate Wakeling, Sing Up Resource Administrator with Faber, could also see a problem that could only be fixed by partnership working: the Song Bank not being as accessible as it could be; *Sing Up having to help all kids - beyond the mainstream is not an add on*; and the role that Faber could play in helping to put things into practice: *the real aim is to move away from token gestures to a sincere and full commitment which I think is there - here is a shared goal with identified roles.*

4.4 Debate

Openness and self-critical debate were also features of partnerships. In one project it happened at the level of multiple partner agendas: Helen Chambers was noted for acknowledging the effort it was to get social care to acknowledge a music project; Pat Petrie's persistence about embedding social pedagogy was useful.

4.5 Collaborative working

Good collaborative working requires partners to have, and know, their roles. We were struck by just how clearly nearly all interviewees could describe their roles clearly and in active terms: they knew the jobs that needed to be done, and how to do them.

Perhaps even more importantly, they knew what their opposite number in the partnership was there to do, as well. One, however, disagreed with the term 'opposite number' *because it didn't feel like we were on an equal footing in a partnership as such, but rather that I was getting some intensely supportive supervision from more experienced and more knowledgeable people.*

For however collaborative you intend to be, there is no getting away from the fact that Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream was a lead partner. They had all the money, they initiated the partnerships, they were the body to whom the delivery partners were answerable. Many funding organisations respond to such a position by becoming tightly controlling, demanding of data and measuring only outputs: European funders may be the worst culprit, but most publicly-funded projects suffer degrees of this type of parent-child relationship with their funder. It is no wonder that in that climate projects become risk-averse, resistant to change, and fearful to being open and honest about the work with their funders. A few funders take the opposite tack, and become very hands-off: nice for the fundee at first, but rapidly leading to a sense of uncertainty and dislocation.

Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream, in both its first and second-round delivery projects, managed the rare trick of being a funder who was a genuine partner intent on creating Price's "environment for collaborative innovation". And they did this through what might have been thought quite a controlling mechanism – if it hadn't been recognised as open-hearted honest and supportive:

Very good partnership, lots of support, clear structure, regular reporting: what we were doing, how to correct what we weren't doing, taking an interest in what we were doing, listening to my ideas and making suggestions. Not holding us to account, but had the job of ensuring that when we weren't making the deliverables, they would help us back on track.

(We say more about the process of negotiating funding of projects in Part 3, below.)

4.6 Partnership learning

Individual and organisational learning from the partnerships was rich and diverse; good indicators that the programme delivered on Price's qualities of sharing, openness and inclusivity, a freedom of ideas. Just some of the responses included:

- *I understand more about the national singing programme as a result of this and its work in primary schools and music in the lives of looked after children, their carers and a wider range of people in their lives.*
- *I'm always trying to learn. I definitely appreciated how important it is to young people, but that's been reinforced. I've topped up some of my own knowledge, e.g. about singing and the physical benefits. And as a result of all that I've got something new in my professional experience and development.*
- *Sessions with staff, getting young people singing at a social care conference, all had an impact on staff. Making links between singing and wellbeing and emotional health all linked up a bit. Specialist nurses in CAMHS now know about the benefits.*
- *I was not aware of BtM before this project so I now have a good understanding of the aims of BtM, but I don't know a lot about the other strands of work undertaken by BtM.*
- *We've been doing BTM work for some considerable time, so we're not new to it. But we were helped with the provision of resources: songs orientated to BTM groups, BTM training. Learning's also happened with meeting BTM peers at gatherings, manager's meeting, Lucy Dillon's review, it's all in the mix. All has provided a focus, it's named the work.*
- *Now, you can take the learning, model, framework and apply it elsewhere and make better quality work as a result.*
- *Really good training opportunities, developed staff in specific areas: good for them. Developed a different level of understanding and care for young people; made them stop and think about children's behaviours. The sharing and learning at gatherings, being part of a successful project. All that impacted on outcomes for young people; see examples in my reports about how tutors have move young people on. We've massively improved our safeguarding processes across the whole organisation.*

5 The challenges

All the above is not to say that there weren't any problems – although the balance of the interview responses was overwhelmingly positive.

5.1 Lack of time

The most-cited negative issue was a lack of time. We all say that and it is largely true. But these projects deliberately had plenty of admin, meeting, development and reflection time built in – and still people struggled. The cost of this manner of deep, intense collaborative working must not be underestimated:

Although I haven't had this level of support from another funder, it also requires a lot of time in preparation, meetings and attendance at other events. This has made the direct delivery of this project and other projects I coordinate a bit more challenging at times.

It would be unlikely that I would have the capacity within my role to maintain this partnership alongside other work, unless it was costed into my role at full cost recovery.

A variation on this theme was “not enough time” to forge partnerships.

Another variation was the amount of time collaborative working – not only within partnership projects, but within Sing Up itself - took up:

The website was crucial to get things public. It took more than a year to upload 15 folders. There were a large number of meetings etc. I couldn't understand the problem - that was a problem for impact.

I must have gone to 20 meetings at least in Children's Services in setting up the partnerships. Trying to find the key people, making relationships. It took quite a bit of persistence. Then once the relationships were established you had to maintain them, give the constant feedback on how it was going, showing them DVDs, demonstrating that what they were involved in was working.

5.2 Personnel changes

Changes in personnel were also mentioned. It is perhaps a positive result of the depth of collaborative working developed that in one case, although they had to *go through the discomfort of having to remake relationships in the end it worked better because the team was spread more widely.*

6 The charismatic leader

It's outside the scope of this chapter to delve too far into personal roles. And the sociological theory of charismatic leadership is too rich to summarise here. But there is a clear paradox – evident also in the community music field – that the more successfully collaborative a piece of work is, the more likely it is that it is driven by the vision of a single individual. That is apparent at all levels right across Sing Up, which boasts probably the largest concentration of charismatic leaders of any music programme. It is true also of programmes within Sing Up, of which Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream is no exception – first with Jo Hunter and subsequently with Jenny Young.

Three elements of Young's style were particularly cited by interviewees as contributing very largely to the successes of Sing Up Beyond the Mainstream: her efficiency and timeliness (meetings were always clear, notes were produced swiftly, phone calls were returned promptly); her supportive manner; and her complete conviction in the work and personal drive to move it forward.

7 And the work is continuing

We have a decent amount of underspend to carry forward, which released a further £8k from KCC. Also got the use of a support worker from KCC educational attainment team, which will help building the relationships. Our mainstream provision has been influenced by Sing Up work. It's an area of work we want to go forward on, but it would take funding to do it to the level we've done it at.

Surrey Arts Partnership now have a commitment to working with looked after children which they certainly didn't have before, now want to do follow-up work, I'm very excited about this.

We will explore and develop more work inspired by the BTM programme. This will mean that we are bringing the Sing Up BTM insights into our work with adults with learning and physical disabilities, pre-school SEN children, looked-after children, vulnerable adults and so on. This will massively increase impact and improve range and quality. We are excited!



PART 3 SUBTM: tendering

1 Funders have agendas

All funders have an agenda. They want to ensure something happens or they want to create change. Sometimes they can do those things themselves, perhaps through advocacy. But mostly they rely on other people to 'deliver' the things they want to happen or the change they want to make. This is a pure transaction: I will 'buy' some action from you.

The forms that transaction can take, and the nature of the negotiations required to set it up, however, can be very broad (as we've already discussed). A laissez-faire funder (or a very trusting one) might say "you want to put on a performance of *The Magic Flute*? Here's £10,000: let me have a ticket to the opening night." A commissioner or contractor might say "I want you to create 500 new part-time jobs for NEET young people under 19, with 50% minority ethnic backgrounds, and you can't pay your administrators more than £12,000 a year. I'll pay you in arrears each quarter provided you fill in these forms showing that you've met all your outputs."

Either way might get a particular job done – and done efficiently, in terms of the cost to the grantee per grant. But where the goal of a funder is to create learning, and perhaps also where the change goals are less quantifiable than in the NEET example above, a different grant-giving methodology is required.

2 Funders as partners

One such methodology is based around funders and fundees as partners – each bringing something different to the table, but both having some shared interest in the outcome. The model is good in theory – but in practice, it is clear that there is always a power imbalance between a funder and a fundee: crudely put, the funder controls the shots. A partnership of funder and fundee is, therefore, an ethical issue, and a funder who truly wants to work in partnership needs to empathise with the position of the fundee.

The Massachusetts-based Center for Effective Philanthropy recognises this need in its grantee perception programme, which asks fundees to rate their funder against a wide range of criteria, including:

- how well the funder's work impacts on the fundee's field of work
- how well it advances knowledge and impacts on public policy
- what impact it has on the fundee's organisation and on the sustainability of the work
- how well it understands fundee's goals and strategy
- how clear it is in communicating its own goals and strategy
- how responsive, approachable and fair it is
- how helpful its selection process is
- what post-acceptance help it is to the fundee.

In other words, the funder has responsibilities to its fundees – at least as much as the fundee has in return. SUBTM recognised at least some of these type of responsibilities, and attempted to put them into action in funding both the first-round delivery projects and the second-round looked after children-specific projects.

In the first-round projects, SUBTM borrowed heavily from Youth Music grant application processes, in soliciting applications, in a shortish application form, and in assessing bids against standard Youth Music criteria. The restricted word-counts allowed for in responses to a number of questions on the application form were not universally popular with applicants – and this might have been exacerbated by the assessor, one of the BTM advisers, asking rather more probing follow-up questions than perhaps applicants were expecting.

2.1 Towards partnership funding

This round of grants also asked applicants to describe enquiries they intended to make as part of their work. This was an important part of the intended partnership. The guidelines for applicants explained that the programme differed “from traditional grant-giving programmes in that it is designed as a partnership between field projects and Sing Up. In exchange for making the grant, Sing Up wishes to work closely with successful projects to help them learn from the experience they are having; support them in thinking through difficulties; and exchange interesting practice.”

There were two challenges for applicants here. First, the idea of a project having learning outcomes was unusual (though not new: the idea was based on the enquiry projects run for some time by Creative Partnerships). Some applicants had difficulty in framing their enquiries in the first place, and a few had difficulties in delivering on them during the course of the project – perhaps because the project changed its nature, or the initial enquiries weren't thought-through enough. Or because of a bugbear heard across the whole of SUBTM, probably across the whole of Sing Up, and not by now new to a reader of this review: that there wasn't enough time within the life of these projects to see ambitions properly delivered on.

The second challenge for some applicants was in recognising, accepting and trusting that SUBTM really did mean it when they said they wanted to be “partners”. Some had heard all that before, and they were wary of empty rhetoric. It took time to convince them of SUBTM's bona-fides here – a process which matured only towards the end of their projects, when it became clear that projects wouldn't be blamed (see elsewhere in this review) for not meeting numerical targets claimed in their bids, and when projects saw SUBTM exhibiting good traits according to the grantee perception criteria described above: things like understanding fundees; being approachable and fair post-acceptance; offering post-acceptance help; advancing knowledge (for example, through the gatherings); and being clear in communicating its own goals and strategy.

2.2 A tendering process

SUBTM therefore developed its processes for the second-round of delivery projects, describing them as “tendering”. This was a process of filtering prospective projects whose stages included:

- Consultation meetings inside and beyond Sing Up, first to tease out what could be delivered by practical projects in this second round and whether a broad approach to BTM groups (as in the first round) should be maintained or whether there should be a focus on specific groups (and if the latter which group or groups). And then to explore how the decided-on focus of looked after children could be best approached;
- Using the skill and knowledge of those within Sing Up to agree a long list of potential tenderers. This was complemented by information from NCB partners on children's services most likely to be receptive to partnerships with music organisations;

- Inviting that list to describe their qualifications in terms of a set of quality indicators for artists and organisations working with looked after children – a type of pre-tender qualification round;
- Inviting a subsequent short list to tender for delivery of work against a brief. Learning from the earlier round of projects, the response requested had only one substantive point: to provide “Clear outcomes for what you would like to achieve with your project” in up to 2,000 words. The rubric to that request was equally brief; “Use clear, descriptive language that tells us what you hope will happen at and beyond the end of your project. Then, in equally clear language, tell us what the project itself will do in order to achieve those outcomes.” This was to be an outcomes-driven piece of work;
- An assessment panel that looked at each application in the broadest possible terms, focusing on how well the tenderers could be expected to deliver the outcomes they wanted – rather than on a set of target-driven external criteria and objectives. This certainly addressed the Center for Effective Philanthropy’s criterion of “understanding a fundee’s goals and strategy”.

These steps could only work if three others of the centre’s criteria were also addressed: SUBTM being clear in communicating its own goals and strategy; being responsive, approachable and fair; and being helpful in its selection process.

The first stage in this was a consultation with projects after the tender brief had been issued but before it was to be returned. “This is an opportunity,” the tender brief said, “for organisations to ask questions and provide thoughts on the potential structure and content of project delivery.” It replaced the more-usual pre-tender workshop, which one project, used to formal tender processes, would have been happier with - an individual process brings both potential opportunities and weaknesses; and a process designed to be approachable might leave a project confused about which part of the process was actually the formal tender submission. This indicates, perhaps, the level of responsibility a funder needs to assume to be absolutely sure that, in being helpful in its selection process, their practices are properly communicated and fairly carried out.

Freedom can be destabilising: another project explained that the only “woolly point was that, because it was non-prescriptive, it took some time to establish what the learning looked like.”

For other tenderers, however, the process worked well, especially perhaps for those who had been invited to and were able to be at the original consultation meeting. That provided a *strong sense of context*. The pre-tender application *took less time than filling in a full application, and by not dwelling on the outputs allowed me to concentrate on the looked after children – a good use of time*. Then at the point of application *there was already a sense of having thought through what we say we do well, we were more coherent about the processes*. And overall *the bidding processes left me in no doubt about what the programme was intended to achieve*.

One organisation, which was involved in both first-round and second-round delivery, identified the aspect of *initial ignorance*: *Unlike other funding bids, this was about us telling the funder what we wanted to achieve. Our role was to deliver quality singing opportunities,*

to prove the difference that those opportunities could make. Outputs levels were secondary: it was all about what we were learning, even valuable if there were no positive outcomes.

For another interviewee, it wasn't so much the process that was significant, being not much different from those the organisation was used to, but the way *it was approached by Sing Up to be very much a collaborative partnership rather than a direct funder/client relationship. This also made us feel more valued and included in the process, which was great.* As often, however, this praise was tempered by a concern that lead-in times were too short.

Q. For the type of work you did in these projects, what would be your ideal bidding process?
A. *Sing Up's! I'd love to do it all in this way, where it's about what you're learning, and the freedom when you're applying. It 100% clarified what our role was – because our bid was what the role was. But then in reality: I know you'd need to have more elements if you were more prescriptive.*

3 Funding in the future

There was no doubt that for most people, SUBTM's partnership approach to negotiating funding was well-liked and produced results. The challenge for future use of this model is cost. It is beyond the scope of this review to attempt a cost analysis of the SUBTM funded projects – but taking into account the cost of the BTM manager, a proportion of the funded programmes manager's time, the strategic partners, the advisers, the gatherings, the evaluations . . . and so on and on, the cost per grant was significant.

This could be compared with the recently-announced caps on lottery income which is not spent directly on grants. As part of the government's lottery reform measures the DCMS carried out a comparative study of the administrative costs of some UK-based charities: costs per grant varied from as little as £82 to just on £7,000. For Arts Council England costs per grant varied from £2,700 to £6,000, depending on how you measured it. As a consequence, DCMS minister John Penrose has applied an eight percent cap per grant to total running costs. That would be equivalent to just £4,000 per grant for the majority of the SUNCB looked after children partnerships funded by Sing Up - and the challenge would be; how much of the partnership approach from the funder could be delivered on that relatively small amount of resource?

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Appendix A Those interviewed for this paper

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