

September 2025

Youth Music Initiative

Considering the past, present and future of Scotland's flagship music making fund for children and young people



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Considering the past, present and future of Scotland's flagship music making fund for children and young people.



Report by tialt - there is an alternative

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Contents

4

Executive Summary

YMI's Evolution

Current Structure

Key Findings

YMI's Role Today

Looking Forward

10

Overview of YMI

12

Recommendations

14

Shifts in Delivery Over Time

Overview of the Current Core Strands

Formula Fund

Access to Music Making

Strengthening Youth Music

Youth Arts Open Fund

19

Thematic Exploration of YMI

21

Theme 1: Removing Barriers to Access

25

Theme 2: Fostering Partnerships

28

Theme 3: Supporting Long-Term Impact

31

Theme 4: Alignment with Wider Policy

33

Recommendations: Towards a Sustainable and Connected Youth Music Ecosystem

42

Appendix

Executive Summary

The Youth Music Initiative (YMI) has been a cornerstone of Scotland's cultural and educational landscape for over two decades. Established by the Scottish Government in 2003 in response to the landmark *“What's Going On Now?”* report, YMI was originally framed around the ambition that every child in Scotland should have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument by the time they leave primary school. Funded at a number around £9 million (although this fluctuates) per year since, the programme now supports tens of thousands of children and young people annually across every local authority, while also investing in the sustainability of Scotland's youth music sector.

This review, building on *What's Going On Now?* (2019) and drawing on extensive fieldwork, interviews, survey data, focus groups, case studies, and a documentary analysis of over 100 reports, provides a comprehensive picture of YMI in 2025. It asks how YMI has evolved over time, how it is functioning in practice, and how it might continue to adapt to meet the changing needs of children and young people, practitioners, and communities.



YMI's Evolution

In its earliest years, YMI focused predominantly on universal access to music education within schools, most often through instrumental learning but also including choral singing and Kodály-based musicianship. When it was established in 2003, YMI was responding not only to the recommendations of the *What's Going On Now?* report but also to a sector under pressure: the supply of primary music specialists was dwindling, and Instrumental Music Services (IMS) were facing cuts and inconsistencies in provision across Scotland. YMI was positioned as a way of securing a national entitlement that could sit alongside, and in some cases shore up, existing services - ensuring that music was not left to chance or dependent on postcode but became a consistent part of every child's education.

[The Formula Fund](#) - which guarantees every local authority funding to deliver music for primary-aged pupils - established the widely recognised "12-hour entitlement." This was a significant cultural and educational intervention, embedding music into the school day and asserting its value as a right, not a privilege. It recognised that music-making contributes far beyond technical skill: building confidence, creativity, and social connection, supporting language and emotional development, and offering children ways to express identity and belonging. These intrinsic and developmental benefits have remained at the core of YMI's purpose.

Over time, however, YMI has evolved in both structure and content. [Access to Music Making](#), introduced to complement the Formula Fund, enabled organisations, charities, and grassroots groups to reach children and young people who face additional barriers to participation. This strand shifted YMI beyond universalism, embedding trauma-informed and youth-led approaches and supporting marginalised groups, including care-experienced young people, those in poverty, rural or island communities, neurodivergent and disabled children, and LGBTQ+ youth.

Meanwhile, [Strengthening Youth Music](#) emerged over a decade ago. This shift signalled a recognition that investing in the workforce, peer learning, and infrastructure is critical to sustaining the wider ecosystem. Although still less visible than the delivery-focused strands of the programme - the Formula Fund and Access to Music Making - Strengthening represents an important development in YMI's history: a move from simply providing access to music, to supporting the conditions that make access meaningful and sustainable.

YMI has also broadened musically. Early delivery was dominated by classical ensembles, traditional Scottish music, recorder or string-based tuition, and choral and Kodály-based musicianship programmes, which were core elements in the early stages. Today, YMI encompasses hip hop, DJing, digital composition, songwriting, jazz, and grime, as well as culturally responsive projects tied to Gaelic traditions or community heritage. This diversification reflects not only Scotland's changing cultural demographics but also a shift in pedagogy: from teaching set repertoires to supporting young people to create and express their own musical identities.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated further change. Local authorities and organisations were forced to pivot rapidly to digital platforms, uncovering both structural inequities (e.g., broadband access in rural areas) and new opportunities for hybrid models. Post-pandemic, practice has become more intentionally trauma-informed, with projects offering wraparound supports such as meals, transport, or childcare. There has also been steady growth in leadership pathways, with many projects - even before the pandemic - supporting former participants to return as mentors, tutors, or youth producers. These approaches have since expanded further, ensuring that YMI not only introduces music but nurtures long-term cultural continuity.

Current Structure

Today, YMI is delivered through two distinct strands of funding:

1. Funding for Local

Authorities – allocated to all 32 local authorities and Jordanhill School, enabling them to deliver projects that sit alongside the core curriculum and provide equitable access to music and music-making. This is most often through the Formula Fund, a universal entitlement typically targeted at P5 pupils but in practice spanning P1–P7. The Formula Fund ensures scale and reach, embedding music into the school day.

2. Funding for the Youth Arts

Sector – supporting freelancers and organisations to deliver high-quality projects for the benefit of children, young people, and the wider youth music sector. This is delivered through three routes:

- **Access to Music Making:** Inclusive, community-based projects reaching young people who experience barriers to participation. Often delivered by youth arts organisations, individuals, and youth work organisations, these projects are relational, flexible, and responsive.
- **Strengthening Youth Music:** Infrastructure and workforce development, supporting CPD, networks, and systemic change across the youth music sector.
- **Youth Arts Open Fund (YAOF):** Established in 2023 with additional Scottish Government investment, administered by YouthLink Scotland. YAOF extends the principles of YMI beyond music to wider artforms, offering targeted funding to individuals and organisations working with children and young people. It has broadened the reach of YMI into youth work and social sectors, though its scale is modest and demand far exceeds supply.

Key Findings

Impact on Access and Inclusion

- Formula Fund continues to ensure broad reach, offering every child some form of music education. However, its reliance on the “12-hour entitlement” has sometimes prioritised scale over depth. Although delivery varies across local authorities, the requirement to include ASN/SEBN settings has been significant in extending access, with many councils reporting that it has embedded inclusion as a core principle.
- Access to Music Making is widely seen as the inclusive heart of YMI, enabling trauma-informed and youth-led practice. As a project-based fund, it creates valuable space for innovation and responsiveness, but the short-term funding cycles can also undermine the continuity required to build lasting relationships.
- Strengthening Youth Music remains underutilised, though stakeholders emphasise its potential to unify the sector, sustain the workforce, and support progression pathways.
- Youth Arts Open Fund has extended the reach of YMI into wider artforms. YAOF has created additional inclusive opportunities for young people facing barriers, particularly care-experienced children, young carers, and disabled or neurodivergent young people. While smaller in scale than other strands, its focus on youth-led and equity-driven practice aligns closely with YMI’s wider inclusion goals.

Diversification of Genres and Practices

- Early YMI delivery was dominated by ensemble traditions. Recent years have seen growth in culturally responsive and contemporary genres, including digital production and youth-led soundscapes.
- Local authorities have also experimented with projects rooted in local culture and community traditions, for example, integrating Gaelic music in the Western Isles or hosting opera residencies in Dumfries, while youth arts organisations, individuals and youth work organisations have pioneered DJing, hip hop, and grime projects, often tied to identity, resilience, and self-expression.
- Several organisations and local authorities are bringing young people and practitioners together in learning and celebration events at scale, providing rich and inspiring musical celebrations - for example, Aberdeen's *Big Sing* and Perth and Kinross' *Follow the Band*.

Workforce Precarity and Development

- Across all strands, YMI relies heavily on freelance tutors and sessional staff. Despite the critical role they play, annual funding cycles and increasing costs creates ongoing challenges for long-term job security.
- Musicians' Union rates for individual teaching have risen from £25.40/hour in 2007 to £44/hour in 2025, but YMI's overall budget has not kept pace with these costs. This real-terms reduction constrains both reach and workforce sustainability.

Partnerships and Progression

- Local authority-led YMI often connects with Instrumental Music Services, schools, and other council departments. These links are a real strength of the Formula Fund, helping pupils move from first access into sustained tuition or ensembles, and extending reach to those with additional support needs or living in rural areas. Cross-departmental working also ties YMI into wider agendas such as attainment, wellbeing, and anti-poverty work, embedding music more deeply in local authority priorities.
- Access projects regularly partner with, or are led by, youth services, care teams, or grassroots networks, offering more flexible entry points for marginalised young people.
- The Youth Arts Open Fund, meanwhile, has extended YMI's reach into the wider youth arts ecology, particularly through YouthLink Scotland's role in connecting with youth and social work organisations. This has created additional routes for participation and leadership, especially for young people who may not otherwise engage through music alone.
- However, connections between Formula Fund provision and wider out-of-school opportunities are often weak, leading to duplication or gaps in progression. Access to Music Making supports some community-based projects, but it does not cover the full range of youth music and arts activity across Scotland. As a result, the idea of a coherent "ecosystem of opportunities" - enabling smooth movement between school-based learning, community provision, and progression into further opportunities - remains more of an aspiration than a reality, reflecting a challenge for the sector as a whole rather than YMI alone.

Alignment with Policy Goals

- YMI delivery contributes significantly to Curriculum for Excellence, the UNCRC (Article 31: right to cultural life), SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, and the [Fair Work First agenda](#).
- However, evaluation and reporting frameworks are not well-aligned with these broader policy outcomes. Many practitioners feel their contributions to wellbeing, equity, and mental health are not captured in the current metrics.

Structural Challenges

- **Flatlining budgets:** equates to a substantial real-terms reduction.
- **Short-termism:** Annual cycles can prevent long-term planning, reduce staff retention, and constrain sustainability.
- **Fragmentation:** Weak connections between strands limit opportunities and system-wide learning.
- **Precarity:** Reliance on freelance staff presents a mixed picture for workforce sustainability. On one hand, short-term contracts and annual cycles create insecurity, limit progression, and make it difficult for organisations to plan long-term. On the other, many musicians value the flexibility and variety that freelance work can bring, and some actively choose this model over permanent posts. Evidence from our research suggests both realities coexist: practitioners often appreciate the autonomy but also highlight the strain of precarity, inconsistent pay, and limited access to CPD. This tension points to the need for YMI, and the wider youth music sector, to explore models that retain flexibility while improving stability, fairness, and professional development opportunities.

YMI's Role Today

After more than twenty years, YMI is no longer simply a music education programme. It has become part of Scotland's cultural, social, and community life. At its best, it nurtures creativity, confidence, belonging, and intergenerational cultural continuity. It is a trusted and valued presence across communities, often providing children and young people with their first experience of music, and in some cases, a lifelong pathway into creativity, identity, and careers.

Yet, without structural change and renewed investment, these achievements are at risk. The combination of rising costs, flat budgets, workforce precarity, and fragmented delivery systems threatens the sustainability of the programme.

Looking Forward

The future of YMI lies in:

- **Centring equity and sustainability:** Rethinking the original "first access" guarantee so that it is not only about providing every child with a set number of hours, but about ensuring equitable, meaningful, and varied music experiences for all children and young people. This means recognising different contexts, addressing barriers to participation, and embedding sustainability so that opportunities are consistent and lasting, not short-term or one-off.
- **Strengthening cross-strand collaboration:** Building progression routes and reducing silos.
- **Investing in infrastructure:** Supporting workforce development, CPD, and shared learning networks.
- **Redesigning monitoring and evaluation:** Ensuring frameworks capture relational, cultural, and wellbeing outcomes.
- **Creating space for innovation:** Resourcing experimental and youth-led projects that reflect Scotland's diverse communities.

As the following report highlights, the story of YMI is one of adaptation, resilience, and care. From a single entitlement-driven fund to a multi-strand programme supporting universal, inclusive, and sector-strengthening work, YMI has continually evolved to reflect changing cultural and social contexts. Its legacy is visible not only in musical skills, but in confidence, wellbeing, cultural identity, and intergenerational continuity.

YMI does not operate in isolation. It sits within a wider youth music ecosystem that includes Instrumental Music Services (IMS), the [Music Education Partnership Group \(MEPG\)](#), [Multi-Year Funded Organisations \(MYFOs\)](#), privately funded programmes, and activity directly led by young people themselves. Together, these elements create a complex and diverse music landscape across Scotland. YMI's consistent public funding provides stability within this ecosystem, but its greatest impact often comes when it connects with and complements these wider efforts — ensuring progression, reducing duplication, and supporting a thriving culture of music-making for young people.

The Youth Arts Open Fund has broadened the reach of YMI into wider artforms, creating new routes for youth-led practice and for connecting with marginalised young people through the youth and social work sectors. Its lighter-touch application process has made it more accessible to smaller and grassroots groups, enabling a wider diversity of organisations to engage. While smaller in scale and not music-exclusive, YAOF has extended YMI's principles - equity, participation, and youth leadership - into non-music activity across the youth arts ecology. Demand for this fund has significantly outstripped the levels of funding available, underlining both its impact and the appetite for greater investment.

At its heart, YMI affirms the value of music itself: as a form of play, expression, and communication; as a way of supporting emotional development, creativity, and learning; and as a cultural language that connects children and young people to their peers, communities, and traditions. This is why access matters - not only to nurture future musicians, but to give every child the chance to experience the joy, confidence, and belonging that music can bring.

Sustaining this legacy requires more than passion and resilience. It requires recognition that YMI is cultural infrastructure, deserving of long-term investment and policy alignment. With the right support, YMI can continue to put music at the heart of young people's lives and learning for decades to come. The budget, however, has not risen in line with delivery costs, creating real-terms reductions over time. Local authorities and delivery partners highlighted that increases in Musicians' Union pay rates, alongside higher equipment, access, and administrative costs, make it harder to sustain reach and quality within the 12-hour entitlement model. This financial pressure often forces trade-offs between ensuring universal coverage and delivering deeper, more meaningful musical experiences. The experience of YAOF shows how targeted investment can unlock new opportunities, but also highlights the limitations of under-resourced strands within the wider framework.

Our research suggested a refreshed aim for the Youth Music Initiative:

To support all children and young people in Scotland to create, learn, and express themselves through music in ways that are meaningful to them, by removing barriers, championing equity, and nurturing sustainable connections between children and young people, musicians, and communities.

Overview of YMI

These figures are drawn from reports submitted in 2023/24.

Strengthening wellbeing and belonging

Music activities foster confidence, self-expression, connection, and support for mental health and wellbeing.

Expanding access and opportunity

Children and young people from all backgrounds are supported to take part in creative, inspiring music experiences.

Building pathways for the future

From first encounters with music to opportunities for training and careers, YMI helps children and young people grow and progress.

Supporting Scotland's workforce and sector

YMI invests in people, strengthens skills, and helps the youth music sector to flourish. A trusted, valued presence More than a music programme, YMI is an enduring source of care, creativity, and opportunity across Scotland.

Putting music at the heart of children and young people's lives

YMI makes music a joyful and reliable part of growing up in Scotland.



204,681

children and young people supported through Formula Fund

242,644

children and young people supported through Access to Music Making⁰¹

15,714

individuals supported through Strengthening Youth Music

765

young carers/young parents supported through the Youth Arts Open Fund

2,673

participants benefited from training and CPD opportunities linked to YMI core delivery

6,044

children and young people supported with lived experience that means they are less likely to access and benefit from arts opportunities through Youth Arts Open Fund

201

volunteers supported the delivery of YMI activities

264

professional musicians were employed to work on Formula Fund projects (full time, part-time and freelance)

49

youth workers supported the delivery of Access to Music Making projects

⁰¹ Including 134,752 via the Scottish Book Trust

Recommendations

1. Facilitate Cross-Strand Collaboration

- Create regional and national networking opportunities across strands.
- Fund cross-strand planning time to enable collaboration between local authorities, freelance tutors, and arts organisations.
- Introduce referral pathways or shared progression planning tools to support continuity for children and young people.
- Support cross-authority working, so young people can access opportunities beyond their local area where provision is limited.

2. Reform the Funding Model to Support Long-Term Impact Over Universalism

- Move towards multi-year core funding for proven delivery partners.
- Develop a staggered funding model that allows for project continuity while accommodating new applicants.
- Include options for rolling, embedded programmes alongside time-limited pilots.
- Frame participation metrics around depth and diversity of experiences rather than hours alone.
- Review the Formula Fund entitlement target, exploring whether a more flexible benchmark could unlock deeper impact and address many local authority challenges.

3. Invest in a National Infrastructure for Learning, CPD & Peer Support

- Fund a centralised CPD and learning exchange across all YMI strands.
- Support communities of practice for specific focus areas (e.g. ASN, care-experienced children and young people, youth-led practice).
- Develop youth music leadership pathways that include mentoring, volunteering, and work experience.

4. Redesign Monitoring & Evaluation to Reflect the Work's True Impact

- Co-design new evaluation tools with practitioners and children and young people.
- Include narrative-based reporting, case studies, and wellbeing indicators alongside quantitative data.
- Map activities to UNCRC, SHANARRI, and CfE with clear guidance and language that supports reflective practice.

5. Create Dedicated Space and Funding for Innovation

- *Introduce a YMI ‘Innovation Pot’ for pilot projects, experimentation, and youth-led ideas.*
- *Reduce reporting burdens for these projects and emphasise learning, not success metrics.*
- *Encourage cross-sector collaborations (e.g. with health, libraries, LGBTQ+ organisations, social work) by funding relationship-building.*
- *Ensure innovation opportunities are open across the whole ecosystem, including Instrumental Music Services and all YMI strands (Formula, Access, Strengthening), to maximise learning and reduce duplication.*

6. Strengthen Links with Instrumental Music Services (IMS)

- *Encourage joint CPD and planning between IMS staff and YMI partners.*
- *Pilot blended models that combine formal instrumental tuition with creative, youth-led projects.*
- *Identify local youth music ecosystems and map existing provision across strands.*

7. Address Workforce Precarity and Sustain the Sector

- *Enable realistic budgets for coordination, admin, and pastoral care. Current limits on these costs are set within the application process, and applicants often feel pressure to prioritise delivery hours over essential “behind-the-scenes” roles. This issue is particularly acute in Formula Fund programmes, where administration and coordination are substantial but under-recognised, though it also affects Access projects. Clarifying guidance, raising caps, or offering dedicated allowances could help ensure these roles are properly resourced.*
- *Develop a national CPD framework and career pathway for YMI tutors. This would support professional development across the programme and help retain skilled practitioners, reducing reliance on short-term contracts.*
- *Advocate for recognition of youth music as a specialist profession. Delivery partners stressed that youth music work requires distinct expertise - blending pedagogy, pastoral care, trauma-informed practice, and community arts skills - yet it is not always recognised as a discrete profession. National advocacy (with sector partners, education bodies, and unions) could help establish standards, raise the status of the work, and attract and retain a skilled workforce.*

Shifts in Delivery Over Time

Since its launch in 2003, the Youth Music Initiative has continually adapted to changes in policy, practice, and the needs of children and young people. Initially designed to guarantee every child the chance to learn an instrument through the “12-hour entitlement”, YMI began as a largely school-based ‘universal’ offer. Over time, however, the programme has diversified into a multi-strand model that attempts to balance scale with depth, moving beyond a narrow focus on instrumental tuition to encompass a wide range of musical forms, pedagogies, and settings.

The current structure - comprising the Formula Fund, Access to Music Making, Strengthening Youth Music, the (currently paused) CPD and Training Fund, and the more recent Youth Arts Open Fund (YAOF) - has been in place in various forms for at least a decade. While YAOF sits slightly apart from the core music focus, its introduction has extended YMI’s reach into wider artforms and broadened opportunities for children and young people, particularly through its lighter-touch access for grassroots and youth-led organisations.

One of the most notable changes has been the diversification of genres and opportunities. Early YMI delivery tended to focus on traditional ensembles, classical repertoire, and Scottish traditional music, particularly within the Formula Fund strand. In recent years, there has been a marked expansion into contemporary and culturally relevant forms, including hip hop, grime, DJing, electronic composition, songwriting, and digital production. Local authorities have also experimented with projects rooted in local culture - such as Gaelic-medium provision in the Western Isles - as well as partnerships that expose pupils to large-scale professional art forms, for example residencies with Scottish Opera, while youth arts organisations have led the way in embedding genres that resonate with young people’s identities and everyday lives. This shift reflects a move from seeing music education as a uniform entitlement towards understanding music as a tool for cultural expression, identity and wellbeing.

Alongside this, the structure of YMI itself has developed. The Strengthening Youth Music strand was introduced over a decade ago to support workforce development, peer learning, and sector sustainability. For a

period, this sat alongside a separate CPD and Training Fund (which ran for over a decade) administered by the Scottish Music Centre, which is currently paused. Its integration into Creative Scotland's delivery framework created a clearer national structure but also reduced visibility; many practitioners continue to note that Strengthening is under-utilised compared to delivery-focused strands. Despite this, the strand represents an important recognition that sustaining a skilled workforce and building peer networks are vital for long-term impact, and that the youth music ecosystem requires investment not only in young people's access but also in the people and systems that support them.

The pandemic further accelerated shifts in delivery. During 2020-21, many local authority programmes were forced online, using digital platforms such as Charanga or Google Classrooms. Initially a stop-gap, this digital experimentation has since developed into more strategic hybrid approaches, combining in-school delivery with online resources to extend access, particularly in rural or isolated areas. Youth arts organisations also used digital tools to maintain relationships, often prioritising emotional safety and connection over musical outcomes during this period. Post-pandemic, there has been greater emphasis on embedding trauma-informed practice, wraparound supports (such as meals, transport, or childcare), and more intentional child and youth leadership pathways. While Access to Music Making projects have long worked in this way, this approach has expanded further in recent years, and elements of it are now being taken up within Formula Fund delivery as well.

YOU
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MUSIC
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Over its two decades, YMI has shifted from a relatively uniform, entitlement-led programme to a more pluralistic and values-driven initiative. Today, it spans universal provision, targeted projects for those facing structural inequalities, and sector development work that connects practitioners and organisations. While challenges remain – particularly the flatlining budget, annual cycles, and fragmentation between strands – the history of YMI demonstrates its ability to evolve in response to both structural pressures and the creative agency of those delivering it.

Overview of the Current Core Strands

YMI is currently delivered through two overarching strands of funding:

1. Funding for Local Authorities – provided to all 32 local authorities and Jordanhill School through the Formula Fund, which offers “universal” entitlement of 12 hours of music making before children leave primary school, (predominantly P5, but also spanning other year groups). This ensures equitable access to music as part of the school day and connects with wider local authority education and cultural priorities.

2. Funding for the Youth Arts Sector – supporting freelancers and organisations to deliver high-quality projects for the benefit of children, young people, and the wider youth music and youth arts sector. This includes:

- **Access to Music Making**, which supports community and targeted projects for children and young people facing barriers to engagement.
- **Strengthening Youth Music**, which supports infrastructure and workforce development across the youth music sector.
- **Youth Arts Open Fund**, administered by YouthLink Scotland, which supports wider youth arts projects beyond music.

This report focuses primarily on the *three core sub-strands* of YMI - Formula Fund, Access to Music Making, and Strengthening Youth Music - as these form the programme’s long-standing foundation and main areas of delivery. However, because the Youth Arts Open Fund is now administered as part of the wider YMI umbrella with additional Scottish Government investment, it is referenced where relevant to highlight its contribution to access, equity, and the broader youth arts ecology.

This report draws on over 100 survey responses, 25 interviews, 3 focus groups, insights from a core advisory group of YMI experts, case study fieldwork, and over 100 documents of programme evidence and evaluation to offer insights across all three strands.

Sub-Strand 1: Formula Fund

The Formula Fund plays a critical role in ensuring universal access to music provision for primary school-aged children. Often delivered via Instrumental Music Services (IMS), this strand is particularly valued for its scale, reach, and ability to embed music within the school day.

The Instrumental Music Services (IMS) in Scotland are available in all 32 local authorities in Scotland. These provide instrumental tuition that generally operates independently of the classroom curriculum but often supports students taking national qualifications in music. IMS tutors are a mix of registered teachers and independent freelance practitioners.²

“*We have a situation where every child in P5–P7 gets instrumental tuition, regardless of background. That’s a powerful commitment to equity – and it’s only possible because of the Formula Fund.*”

Local Authority, Interviewee³

However, findings reveal a number of structural tensions. The annual funding cycle limits the ability of local authorities to plan strategically, making it difficult to embed programmes or retain staff over time. Rigid contracting models can constrain flexibility, particularly when trying to adapt delivery for children with additional support needs or in rapidly changing contexts.

² The most up to date information on Instrumental Music Services within local authorities can be found in the [Instrumental Music Service Report 2024](#) which is undertaken annually by the Heads of Instrumental Music Scotland (HITS).

³ Throughout this report quotes are attributed to either Local Authorities or Arts Organisations: these are to anonymise the respondents. Quotes are from a variety of sources within these two categories including fund managers, music tutors, youth workers, arts organisation managers, schoolteachers and arts workers.

The Formula Fund entitlement of 12 hours of music making before children leave primary school is valued as a universal guarantee, but many practitioners noted that it is not substantial enough to provide meaningful progression - especially when delivered to whole classrooms rather than smaller groups. This can result in first access being a brief exposure rather than a foundation for continued learning.

Workforce issues further compound this challenge. Many local authorities report difficulty recruiting and retaining tutors, particularly in rural and island communities where travel costs and limited contracts reduce sustainability. While some councils mitigate this by linking YMI to Instrumental Music Services or wider youth services, others struggle to maintain continuity year to year.

Finally, the disconnection between Formula Fund and Access-funded work emerged as a missed opportunity. Where the two strands operate separately, young people can experience YMI as isolated projects rather than as part of a wider pathway. This fragmentation makes it harder to build progression routes, share expertise, or ensure that inclusion and innovation flow across the whole programme. Addressing these structural tensions would allow YMI to realise its full potential as both a universal entitlement and a catalyst for deeper, longer-term engagement.

“We’re constantly in a cycle of reapplication. There’s no time to innovate, just deliver, report, and repeat.”

Local Authority, Focus Group

Sub-Strand 2: Access to Music Making

Access-funded projects are often described as the “heart” of YMI’s inclusive mission. They are often trauma-informed, youth-led, and responsive to complex needs. From ASN-focused programmes to work with care-experienced or justice-involved children and young people, these projects are widely celebrated for fostering trust, confidence,

and creativity in children and young people who may otherwise be excluded.

“Some of the most powerful work we do is through Access. It’s where we can be responsive, not just tick boxes.”

Local Authority, Focus Group

“We’re not looking for musical outcomes - we’re looking for connection, stability, safety. The music is the method, not the goal.”

Arts Organisation, Survey

Yet these projects often operate in highly precarious contexts. Annual cycles limit continuity, reduce the ability to build relationships, and burden practitioners with short-term planning. Additionally, access to Access funding remains uneven, with small or volunteer-led organisations sometimes unable to navigate application and reporting processes.

It is important to note that Access was designed as a project fund, not a source of long-term or core funding. This framing has allowed for innovation, piloting, and targeted interventions. However, the sector’s development and success now raises questions about whether a short-term, project-based model remains fully fit for purpose. Some organisations described the fund as developmental rather than purely precarious - offering a space to test approaches and build evidence for more sustained investment - but they also highlighted the need for clearer pathways into consistent and sustainable provision. In this sense, Access continues to act as both a lifeline and a stepping stone, while exposing wider structural questions about how best to resource youth music in the long term.

Sub-Strand 3: Strengthening Youth Music

The Strengthening strand remains underdeveloped compared to the other two strands but is increasingly seen as essential for supporting workforce sustainability, shared learning, and systemic change. Contributors consistently called for more structured investment in CPD, peer learning networks, and cross-strand collaboration - especially between Instrumental Music Services (IMS), Access, and community-based practitioners.

Despite recognition of need, the strand often attracts fewer applications than other areas of YMI. This is partly structural: delivery organisations are more experienced in writing bids for direct project work with children and young people than for sector infrastructure or workforce development. Some contributors also suggested that the co-location of Access and Strengthening within a single budget strand creates competition, with urgent delivery needs overshadowing long-term sectoral priorities.

“***This is the strand that could hold everything together. But it’s still under the radar, most people don’t even know it exists.”***

Arts Organisation, Focus Group

Participants urged that this strand become more visible and supported with increased, sustained investment, as the Strengthening fund holds the potential to unify the sector around shared values and long-term impact.

Sub-Strand 4: The Youth Arts Open Fund

The Youth Arts Open Fund (YAOF), delivered in partnership with YouthLink Scotland, was launched in 2023 with additional Scottish Government investment as part of the wider Youth Arts Fund structure. While closely connected to YMI, its remit extends beyond music to support children and young people to engage in a wide range of creative art forms.

In its first years, YAOF has been welcomed as a more accessible entry point for smaller and grassroots organisations, many of whom find the Access application process too complex or resource-intensive. Its lighter-touch design and emphasis on equity have enabled youth and social work organisations to secure funding, extending YMI’s reach into new sectors and communities. The decision-making process, which involves young people in assessing applications, has also been praised as a meaningful example of youth leadership in action.

However, the fund’s limitations are equally clear. With a relatively modest budget, the scale of awards is often too small to support long-term or ambitious projects. Demand for funding has significantly outstripped available resources, leaving many strong applications unfunded. In addition, while the multi-artform remit has diversified opportunities, it has also created ambiguity about YAOF’s position within a programme originally designed to guarantee universal access to music.

Despite these challenges, YAOF has demonstrated that the principles underpinning YMI - equity of access, youth-led decision-making, and targeted support for marginalised young people - can be applied successfully across the wider youth arts ecology. Its impact to date highlights both the value of broadening participation and the need for clearer positioning and sustainable investment if YAOF is to complement rather than compete with the music-specific strands of YMI.

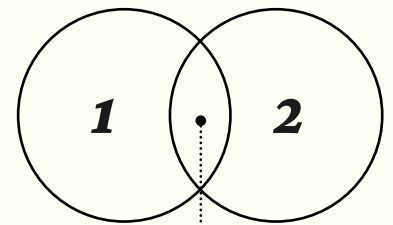
Thematic Exploration of YMI

This thematic review draws on extensive interviews, documentary analysis, focus groups, survey data, and advisory group sessions to surface the lived realities of those delivering and experiencing YMI. Rather than categorising impact solely through quantitative outputs, these themes explore the deeper values, challenges, and opportunities that define the programme's delivery.

Each theme reflects the interplay between practice and policy, between grassroots relationships and national frameworks, and between the aspiration for equity and the reality of structural constraints. Crucially, they highlight how YMI is more than a music education programme - it is a cultural, social, and emotional infrastructure for children and young people across Scotland.

Overview of Themes Across the Two YMI Strands

While the themes were drawn from all areas of delivery, each interacts differently with the strands of YMI:



1. Funding for Local Authorities:

Formula Fund – Scaling Access Through Schools

The Formula Fund provides universal access to music-making in schools, reaching children early in their education journey. It is the most widely scaled strand and often where first contact with music occurs. In many local authorities, YMI sits within wider networks that include education, social work, ASN, youth justice, and mental health teams. Where strong relationships exist, this enables highly responsive work - for example, creating tailored provision at short notice for children with additional needs or those facing crisis.

The strand plays a significant role in:

- **Reaching nearly all children** by embedding music within the school day, regardless of income or background.
- **Supporting children with additional support needs (ASN)**, often through adapted provision or partnerships with specialist organisations.
- **Leveraging partnerships and co-funding** with Instrumental Music Services, cultural organisations, and other local authority departments, which strengthens the overall offer and aligns with the Curriculum for Excellence.

However, the ambition of the Formula Fund is often stifled by the narrow 12-hour entitlement target. While this guarantee ensures universal access, many practitioners highlight that it offers too little time to enable meaningful progression, particularly when delivered in whole-class settings. As a result, the Formula Fund achieves scale but can struggle to provide the depth of experience that supports sustained engagement or progression into further music-making opportunities.

2. Funding for Youth Arts Organisations:

Access to Music Making – Reaching the Margins

Access funding supports targeted projects for children and young people experiencing poverty, trauma, exclusion, or marginalisation. Delivered by individuals, arts and community organisations, this strand is a key site for:

- **Relational, trauma-informed practice.**
- **Partnerships with youth services, care teams, and grassroots networks.**
- But it is also the most precarious, with **short-term funding cycles limiting long-term impact** and collaboration.

Strengthening Youth Music – Supporting the Sector

This smaller but vital strand invests in the sustainability of the youth music ecosystem, through CPD, networks, and infrastructure support. It directly supports:

- **Practitioner training and development.**
- **Sector-wide learning and policy alignment.**
- But it remains **under-utilised**, limiting its potential to foster joined-up progression and innovation across YMI delivery.

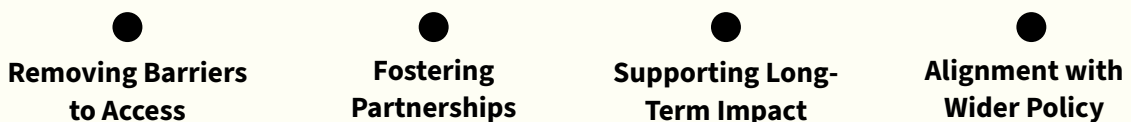
Youth Arts Open Fund – Reaching the Margins

The Youth Arts Open Fund extends YMI's reach beyond music into a wider range of artforms. It provides accessible funding routes for freelance artists, youth organisations, and smaller grassroots groups that may struggle to apply for or manage Access funding. This strand has been particularly valuable in:

- Opening up **opportunities for children and young people through multi-artform projects**, including those who may not engage with music-focused provision.
- Prioritising youth-led and equity-focused practice, with young people involved directly in decision-making processes.
- Connecting YMI to the third sector, broadening its reach into communities facing poverty, exclusion, and multiple barriers.
- But, awards are often too small to support sustained or ambitious delivery, and its non-music remit can create ambiguity about its position within YMI.

Thematic Structure

The thematic analysis that follows is organised into four interconnected themes:



Each theme is explored through the lens of direct practitioner and organisation experience, highlighting both the strengths of YMI and the changes needed to sustain its powerful work. Together, these themes offer a roadmap for how the YMI can evolve into an even more inclusive, connected, and transformational force for young people in Scotland.

Theme 1:

Removing Barriers to Access

The YMI plays a vital role in reducing the structural, emotional, and systemic barriers that prevent many children and young people in Scotland from accessing music-making. However, the phrase “removing barriers” does not always capture the nuanced and often relational work involved. Participants across the Advisory Group, focus groups, and interviews noted that the barriers facing children and young people - particularly those in poverty, rural locations, care settings, or with additional support needs - are often entrenched in wider social inequalities. In this context, YMI cannot always “remove” barriers entirely, but can offer flexible, inclusive, and trust-based routes through which children and young people may access music on their own terms.

As one contributor noted:

“

“You need so much more than an invitation. You need so much more than an open door... Only by a bespoke approach are we going to in any way remove barriers to access, because one person will have a different barrier to another.”

1.1 Understanding the Landscape: Different Stakeholders, Different Barriers

A recurring challenge highlighted was the diversity of stakeholders and settings in which YMI operates. The programme spans classroom teachers, freelance tutors, youth workers, national arts organisations, small charities, and local authority leads. It involves children and young people from early years through to age 25, including those in mainstream education, ASN schools, and those disengaged from school entirely.

Within the Formula Fund strand, the entitlement was originally framed as 12 hours of music-making for pupils up to P6, but this has since been extended to P7, broadening the reach of universal provision within primary schools.

Because of this diversity, “removing barriers” looks very different depending on the context. For some children, it’s about emotional safety or a lack of trust in institutions. Others face logistical barriers such as transport or lack of infrastructure in rural or island communities. Some practitioners reported that a one-size-fits-all model cannot address this complexity:

“

“If barriers are effectively removed for a smaller group of people rather than a whole class, that is more effectively improving access.”

Local Authority, Advisory Group

1.2 The Role of the YMI Strands

Formula Fund: Scaling Access

The Formula Fund is the largest strand of YMI and plays a key role in embedding universal access within the school day. Formula Fund aims to provide a minimum of 12 hours of music-making for every child before they leave Primary School. This benchmark has shaped programme design across local authorities but has also led to tensions between quantity and quality, especially given fixed budgets.

Formula Fund sits alongside and intersects with a broad youth music infrastructure across Scotland - including Instrumental Music Services, classroom-based music specialists, and national music organisations. In many local authorities, YMI tutors work in close partnership with IMS colleagues, sharing resources and ensuring progression opportunities for children and young people. However, collaboration levels vary. It reaches thousands of pupils, many of whom would otherwise not access music education due to financial constraints. For many local authorities, it ensures music is not just an optional extra but a core part of the school experience.

A specific requirement of the Formula Fund is that local authorities must also provide access for pupils in ASN (Additional Support Needs) and SEBN (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs) settings. This has been particularly significant in expanding access to children and young people who are least likely to benefit from mainstream school-based music provision. Evidence from the evaluation suggests that while delivery approaches differ, and some local authorities have been more successful than others in embedding this provision, the requirement has nonetheless helped normalise inclusion within local authority planning and ensured that specialist settings are not left on the margins of music education.

The Formula Fund now reaches thousands of pupils, many of whom would otherwise not access music education due to financial

constraints. For many local authorities, it ensures music is not just an optional extra but a core part of the school experience, though the extent and depth of provision can vary across Scotland.

“**Many of the pupils we work with wouldn't be able to afford lessons or instruments - YMI means everyone gets a shot regardless of background.**”

Local Authority, Survey

However, the formal nature of delivery and the annual funding cycle can restrict responsiveness and creativity. A number of contributors raised concerns about the limitations of classroom-based work for children and young people who do not thrive in traditional educational environments:

“**You sometimes have to wait even up to 18 months to get that breakthrough... If it stopped tomorrow, this group of young people would not get music in their school.**”

Arts Organisations, Survey

Musically, Formula Fund covers a wide variety of styles - from traditional Scottish music to contemporary genres such as hip hop, electronic music, jazz, and folk. Many projects are increasingly culturally responsive, drawing on community and pupil interests to diversify musical forms. Delivery approaches include ensemble work, songwriting, improvisation, and digital composition, alongside instrumental tuition.

Access to Music Making: Meeting Children and Young People Where They Are

Access-funded projects are often designed to work with children and young people facing complex needs - those in care, excluded from school, living with trauma, or with additional support needs. These projects frequently adopt youth work, trauma-informed or relational pedagogies, which were widely praised for creating safer, more meaningful pathways into music.

“Access is about creating a safe space first. Once young people feel they belong, the music follows naturally.”

Arts Organisation, Interview

As can be seen in the case studies below, projects like Spartans in North Edinburgh and Tinderbox explicitly design their delivery around removing both practical and emotional barriers. At Spartans, youth-led DJ and songwriting sessions provided a rare safe space for care-experienced and neurodivergent children and young people to express themselves and build confidence.

“I think the biggest impact is seeing young people being inspired to do something they wouldn't usually have the chance to. Starting with rap or DJing makes music feel relevant – and from there they build confidence to try other things, even outside music.”

Arts Organisation, Interview

However, the precariousness of Access funding was a major concern. Short-term funding cycles make it difficult to build long-term relationships, retain skilled staff, or plan strategically. Many practitioners expressed

frustration that just as a breakthrough is achieved with a participant, the funding ends:

“There's no amount of money can make up for 10 years of relationship-building.” -

Arts Organisation, Interview

Strengthening the Sector: Supporting Those Who Do the Work

Though smaller in scale, the Strengthening strand offers crucial support for infrastructure, CPD, and peer learning - resources that are essential for equitable practice. Many stakeholders argued that stronger investment in this area would enable more consistent delivery for children and young people facing multiple barriers, particularly by enhancing practitioners' ability to work across education, community, and cultural contexts.

“We need more training on how to make sessions work for children and young people who have complex needs.”

Local Authority, Survey

The needs and expectations of CPD and training varied widely across the YMI strands, and were sometimes conflicting in nature. For example, Formula Fund leads often asked for more structured training opportunities, while many freelance practitioners and grassroots organisations highlighted that they lacked the time or capacity to engage in formal training. This points to a broader need for flexible models of professional development, where knowledge-sharing, peer exchange, and building connections across the sector may be as valuable as traditional training courses.

There was widespread consensus that cross-sector knowledge-sharing and better alignment between Formula and Access projects could reduce fragmentation and enable smoother progression for children and young people.

1.3 Practical Interventions: What Works?

Across all strands, YMI partners have developed practical, often innovative interventions to reduce barriers:

- **Transport:** Several projects offered taxi budgets or travel bursaries, especially in remote areas, to ensure children and young people could attend.
- **Instrument Access:** A growing focus of YMI and sector partners has been reducing barriers through free access to instruments. The *We Make Music Libraries* project, managed by the Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG), enables young people to borrow instruments through public libraries across Scotland.
- **Trauma-Informed Approaches:** Programmes like Spartans and Drake Music Scotland are explicitly designed around emotional safety and trust-building. As one local authority practitioner explained:

“*Inclusion is about more than just being in the room. It’s about how we make that room feel – safe, flexible, responsive. We work with young people who are non-verbal, who have high levels of anxiety, or who have been through the care system. We use instruments like Soundbeam, we run sessions where there’s no pressure to ‘perform’. When a young person who hasn’t spoken for six weeks suddenly sings a line—that’s not just a win for music, that’s a breakthrough for that young person’s whole sense of self.*”

Local Authority, Survey

These interventions are often small-scale and locally designed, yet they offer powerful examples of what it means to meet children and young people where they are - whether that’s in a care home, a rural school, or a youth centre.

“*The sixth time, they sang. That’s the work.*”

Local Authority, Interview

1.4 Reframing “Removing Barriers”

A key insight from the Advisory Group was that the language of “removing” barriers may not reflect the relational, iterative nature of the work. A more appropriate frame might be that of navigating, softening, or reconfiguring barriers - through care, creativity, and trust.

“*You need so much more than an invitation. You need so much more than an open door... We need to know exactly why somebody wouldn’t be coming through that door... Only by a bespoke approach are we going to in any way remove barriers to access because one person will have a different barrier to another person.*”

Arts Organisation, Advisory Group

“*If barriers are effectively removed for a smaller group of people rather than a whole class, that is more effectively improving access.*”

Local Authority, Advisory Group

This reframing also raises a broader strategic question:

What is YMI’s role within the wider ecosystem of social transformation - and how can its contribution be more clearly articulated, resourced, and supported?

Theme 2:

Fostering Partnerships

Strong partnerships are foundational to the delivery of the Youth Music Initiative. Whether through council-led collaborations, arts organisation networks, or informal practitioner alliances, much of YMI's most effective work is rooted in local, relational trust. Yet, despite many examples of powerful cross-sector work, participants highlighted the fragility of partnership models that rely on individual champions and the lack of infrastructure for shared learning across the sector. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the future of YMI: to move from isolated excellence to more connected, strategic collaboration.

Administration of Youth Arts Open Fund through YouthLink Scotland has expanded YMI's connections into the youth work and social work sectors, drawing in organisations that may not previously have accessed YMI funding. This has helped to bridge cultural and social support contexts, reinforcing YMI's role in wider networks of care and participation.

2.1 Council-Led Collaboration: Making Systems Relational

In many local authorities, internal YMI partnerships extend across departments, including education, social work, additional support needs, youth justice, and mental health services. These collaborations are often grounded in the personal relationships developed by YMI managers and instrumental music staff.

“The council's big, but we make it small by working relationally. I got a call from a social worker on a Friday—by Tuesday we had a music project running for that young person. That's not because we have loads of time or budget, it's because we trust each other and we know the value of saying yes quickly.” -

Local Authority, Interview

Where this trust exists, it enables highly responsive work, often benefiting children and young people facing significant structural or emotional barriers. In Aberdeenshire, the YMI team's ability to collaborate quickly with partners like Fèis Rois, Live Music Now Scotland, and the Tackling Poverty team ensured that programming was not only delivered but tailored to need.

“Having a strong working relationship with Fèis Rois meant that we were quickly able to reallocate... all the projects we had planned were delivered. We really do appreciate our fantastic partners.”

Local Authority, Interview

Yet this flexibility is not always institutionally embedded. Much of it depends on the efforts and capacity of specific individuals. In councils where these relational networks are not as strong, or where staff turnover is high, collaboration can falter.

2.2 Arts Organisation Partnerships: Connecting with Community

Arts organisations working under the Access to Music Making strand frequently partner with a wide range of services, including LGBTQ+ youth groups, refugee organisations, libraries, care settings, and community learning and development (CLD) teams. These partnerships are often essential for reaching children and young people who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

Tinderbox Collective, for instance, has long relied on relationships with organisations like to engage children and young people who do not connect with more formal or institutional pathways. As one interviewee noted:

“We have always relied on relationships. Working with LGBT Youth Scotland or Rock Trust helped us reach young people that traditional models miss.” -

Arts Organisation, Interview

Such partnerships demonstrate the value of YMI in supporting wider youth development outcomes - building confidence, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging through music. Yet these collaborations are not always easy to initiate. Smaller or newer organisations often lack the capacity or connections to approach schools or health providers for joint working.

“We’d love to collaborate with schools and health services more, but don’t know how to build those partnerships without extra support.” -

Arts Organisation, Survey

This highlights the need for intermediary or brokering support to facilitate connections across sectors - especially between education and community-based provision.

2.3 The Fragility of Partnership: Reliance on Individuals

While many partnerships across YMI are inspiring, they are also often precarious - reliant on the goodwill, stamina, or connections of specific individuals. Several interviewees noted that when a key staff member moves on, partnerships can dissolve.

“The best work happens when you stop asking who’s got the funding, and just focus on who’s got the connection.” -

Local Authority, Interview

This dynamic underscores the risk of informal networks without long-term institutional support or knowledge-sharing mechanisms. In councils with larger music teams, practitioners benefit from the presence of colleagues to lean on and develop ideas with:

“It can be a lonely old existence as an instrumental music teacher sometimes, so the chance to work with colleagues was very welcome indeed.” -

Local Authority, Interview

2.4 Gaps in Joined-Up Practice

Despite the rich web of local partnerships, participants frequently raised concerns about the lack of national connectivity. Many spoke of “brilliant work in silos,” with examples of learning and innovation going unnoticed due to the absence of formal peer-sharing infrastructure.

“**We used to have more networking and peer learning built into the programme, and that needs to come back... We’re all doing brilliant work in silos.”**

Local Authority, Focus Group

Some organisations only learned about powerful projects through informal chance meetings. There was a strong call for Creative Scotland to play a more active role in facilitating sector-wide connection - funding not only delivery, but collaboration.

“**...I heard about a project in another area that completely changed how I thought about engaging care-experienced young people - but I only found out about it by chance. We need Creative Scotland to help build that infrastructure - not just funding delivery, but funding connection.”**

Local Authority, Focus Group

“**We learned so much from another project in a different area - but it took a chance meeting to find out about it.”**

Local Authority, Survey

“**More visibility - at the moment we are doing all this great work in isolation. Sharing case studies or national examples would help us connect.”**

Arts Organisation, Survey

The fragmentation between different YMI strands, especially Formula and Access, was also seen as a missed opportunity. In some areas, these teams rarely communicate, resulting in duplication or disconnected services for children and young people.

“**We never talk to the Formula Fund folks... That’s a big problem.”**

Arts Organisation, Interview

2.5 Investing in Shared Learning

While the Strengthening strand has begun to support some of this infrastructure - for example, through national networks like the Scottish Youth Music Exchange - participants felt this work needs greater investment and strategic focus.

Moving forward, practitioners across all stakeholder groups called for structured opportunities to reflect, share practice, and build partnerships more intentionally. Whether through regional convenings, cross-strand learning days, or a national learning hub, the appetite for collaboration was clear.

Alongside delivery-focused funding, YMI has also supported professional development historically through the CPD and Training Fund. This fund, while modest, has been valued by practitioners for enabling skill development, peer learning, and access to inclusive pedagogical training. However, many stakeholders noted the need for more consistent and coordinated opportunities for development, especially for freelance tutors. The needs and expectations for CPD varied across the strands and were sometimes conflicting: while Formula Fund leads frequently requested structured training, others - particularly freelance practitioners and grassroots organisations - stressed that they lacked capacity for formal courses, and would benefit more from flexible opportunities for knowledge-sharing, peer support, and connection-building.

Theme 3:

Supporting Long-Term Impact

One of the most consistent and impassioned messages across interviews, focus groups, surveys, and Advisory Group sessions was the need for sustained delivery and long-term relationships within YMI. While the initiative has provided crucial, ongoing access to music for over two decades, its annual funding cycles and project-based model were repeatedly identified as barriers to deeper, more lasting impact. Practitioners, managers, and tutors alike described the transformational potential of consistent engagement - but also the limitations imposed by short-term structures.

3.1 The Power of Consistency: Relationships That Last

At its best, YMI enables music to become a constant in the lives of children and young people who may otherwise face instability, exclusion, or limited opportunities for creative expression. Tutors, youth workers, and local authority staff all pointed to the significance of building long-term, trusting relationships.

“We’re not teaching music for the sake of it, we’re using music to build people up... When they know there’s a music tutor who comes every week, who knows their name, who smiles when they walk in the room, that’s a foundation.”

Local Authority, Interview

This depth of connection is especially important for children and young people with experience of trauma, care, or poverty, for whom continuity can be rare.

“The best outcomes we’ve seen come from relationships built over years, not months.”

Arts Organisations, Survey

Several projects have managed to maintain multi-year involvement, leading to intergenerational participation and embedded creative cultures.

“YMI has been part of our journey for over a decade. It’s not just funding, it’s allowed us to build a whole ecosystem.”

Arts Organisations, Interview

“We’re now seeing second-generation participants - parents who did YMI bringing their children to sessions.”

Arts Organisation, Interview

The success of YMI is rooted in the expertise, creativity, and care of its workforce. Tutors, many of whom are practising professional musicians, bring deep pedagogical knowledge, trauma-informed practices, and cultural responsiveness to their work. This professionalism not only supports high-quality music-making but helps foster trust, belonging, and confidence in children and young people.

Although modest in budget, Youth Arts Open Fund has supported a number of smaller-scale, experimental projects that have piloted youth-led models and offered progression into creative leadership. In this sense, Youth Arts Open Fund complements the Access strand by providing an additional space for experimentation and leadership development, though its limited award sizes constrain ambitions for scale or continuity.

3.2 Growth Pathways: From Participant to Leader

Sustained engagement also opens the door to developmental progression – where children and young people grow into leadership, facilitation, and artistic careers. This was seen as one of the most tangible examples of long-term impact.

“She came to the group for the first time because her friend asked her to... Now, 10 years later, she’s leading the session. That kind of trajectory... only happens because we were able to be consistent over years. YMI made that possible.”

Arts Organisation, Interview

Organisations such as Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have developed clear leadership pipelines, with children and young people moving from participants to volunteers, trainees, and eventually tutors.

“She’s gone from being a volunteer through being a trainee and has become... a Lead Tutor for a couple of projects.”

Arts Organisation, Interview

These pathways not only build individual confidence and employability but contribute to the sustainability of the youth music workforce – a key ambition of the Strengthening strand. Importantly, workforce development and the creation of traineeships are built into the criteria of several YMI funds. Access and Strengthening, in particular, encourage organisations to embed traineeships, mentoring roles, and youth leadership into their proposals, recognising this as a key way of sustaining practice and building a future workforce.

3.3 Short-Term Funding: A Barrier to Belonging

Despite these successes, practitioners across all strands highlighted the difficulty of sustaining work within the current one-year funding model. The precarity of funding creates stress for staff, limits continuity for children and young people, and constrains strategic planning. The annual nature of the Access fund (and other strands), alongside recent delays in confirmation, was a key concern. While short-term cycles allow responsiveness, they undermine stability. Some participants noted that limited multi-year funding was available pre-pandemic and continues in some cases, but transitioning from one-year to two-year agreements requires significant administrative capacity and clearer support through the Scottish Government’s Fairer Funding agenda.

“I’m so grateful to the YMI... but it’s increasingly hard to plan anything beyond a year at a time. We’re always just getting somewhere when the funding stops.”

Arts Organisation, Survey

“We’ll keep parachuting projects in without any real development... that’s the danger with long-term temporary funding.”

Local Authority, Survey

This issue was particularly acute in youth work-led programmes, where practitioners often hesitated to deepen relationships with children and young people in case the work could not continue.

“It’s stressful... from a youth work perspective, it makes me less likely to sometimes invest further or deeper into young people, just in case you can’t be there a year down the line.”

Arts Organisation, Interview

The effects are not only operational but emotional. Several contributors expressed frustration at having to rely on passion and resilience in the face of systemic insecurity.

“You can’t live off passion alone.”

Local Authority, Interview

“I’m actually surprised that sometimes the arts are still standing... because of how we get treated.”

Arts Organisation, Advisory Group

3.4 Disconnects and Drop-Offs

Another barrier to long-term impact is the lack of joined-up progression between different YMI strands - particularly Access to Music Making and Formula Fund. While both strands often serve the same children and young people, practitioners reported very limited communication or strategic alignment between them.

“There’s no youth music ladder. It’s like, ‘thanks for joining, now disappear’... I’ve worked in YMI for nearly ten years and never spoken to someone from Formula Fund in my local area.”

Advisory Group Member

This disconnect makes it difficult for children and young people to move seamlessly through different stages of musical development or transition from school-based to community-based opportunities. The result is often a sense of fragmentation, with children and young people hitting “walls” in their journey.

“We’re building something with these kids and then they hit a wall.”

Advisory Group Member

3.5 Intergenerational Practice and Cultural Continuity

Beyond individual impact, participants emphasised the broader cultural legacy of long-term youth music work. Projects like Beat It! in Aberdeenshire embed music as a living, intergenerational practice - connecting past and present participants and building collective memory and identity.

“YMI isn’t just music - it’s identity, culture, wellbeing. That needs time.”

Arts Organisations, Focus Group

“It’s a lifeline to us... but there’s always that element of worry. What’s going to go first? And it’s often arts and culture.”

Local Authority, Focus Group

This long-view approach is crucial not only for individual development but for sustaining Scotland’s diverse cultural ecosystems. However, it requires resourcing models that value time, trust, and embeddedness - not just short-term outcomes.

“The pledge of one year of free music tuition is, you know, just the opposite of supporting a long-term impact.”

Local Authority, Advisory Group

Theme 4:

Alignment with Wider Policy

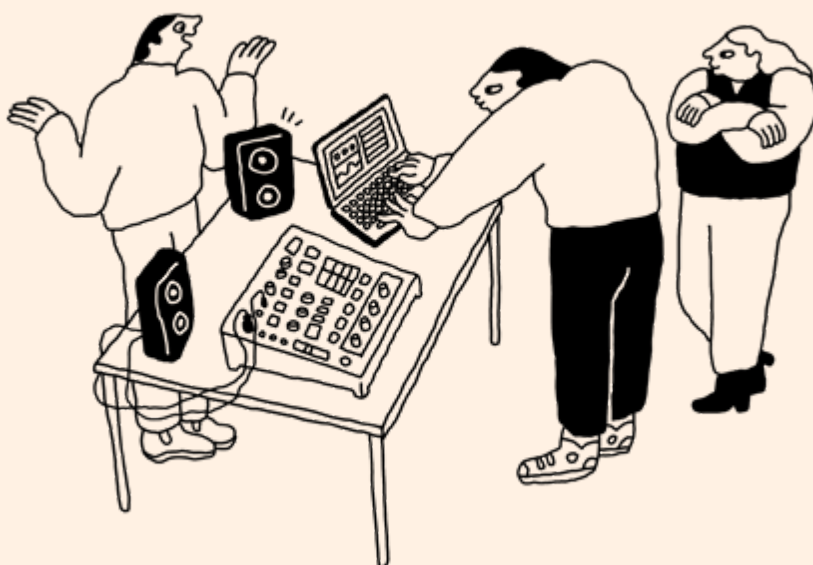
The YMI has long positioned itself as a programme that supports wider policy goals in Scotland, including the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), UNCRC, SHANARRI, Fair Work, and the Attainment Challenge. Participants across the fieldwork affirmed that, in practice, YMI projects frequently contribute to these aims - supporting mental health, equity, cultural rights, and wellbeing. However, there is also a disconnect between the rhetoric of alignment and the structures of delivery, with many contributors noting that bureaucratic frameworks, data systems, and reporting processes fail to capture the full impact of their work.

“We do work that supports mental health, learning recovery, and equity – but that isn’t always captured by reporting templates.”

Local Authority, Survey

Despite the breadth of YMI’s ambition, the overall budget has remained static for several years. When adjusted for inflation, this represents a substantial decrease in real terms. With Musician Union pay rates rising in line with Fair Work expectations, and equipment, access and administrative costs increasing, many delivery partners report struggling to maintain reach or quality. In real terms, the budget represents a substantial decrease in spending power once inflation and rising costs are taken into account. Delivery partners report that Fair Work expectations, alongside increases in equipment, access, and administrative costs, mean they are able to reach fewer young people or must make difficult trade-offs between breadth and depth of provision. While YMI continues to achieve impressive scale, the gap between available resources and the ambition of providing a truly universal offer for Scotland’s 0–25 population remains significant.

Alongside YMI, Creative Scotland has also introduced the Youth Arts Open Fund, delivered in partnership with YouthLink Scotland. Although not focused solely on music, YAOF reflects many of the same policy ambitions - equity of access, youth voice in decision-making, and tackling barriers for marginalised groups. Its introduction signals a recognition that the principles underpinning YMI are relevant across the wider youth arts ecology, and that policy alignment requires consistent investment not only in music but in children and young people’s creative lives more broadly.



4.1 Aligning with National Frameworks

YMI's contribution to national priorities is evident across all three funding strands. In Formula Fund projects, alignment with Curriculum for Excellence is a common focus, especially in school-based instrumental learning. In Access to Music Making, projects routinely promote rights-based, participatory, and locally tailored approaches, reflecting both the UNCRC and SHANARRI wellbeing indicators.

“The programme is aligned with... Curriculum for Excellence... UNCRC Article 31 - children's right to participate in cultural life.”

Local Authority, Interview

“YMI delivery is rights-based, participatory, and rooted in local need.”

Local Authority, Interview

However, this alignment is not always visible in the monitoring tools used. Several respondents shared that while their work clearly supports key policy outcomes, the evaluation frameworks in place don't always allow these contributions to be articulated.

“Alignment is there, but it's not well evidenced - the reporting tools don't let us tell that story properly.”

Local Authority, Focus Group

“We feel like the work is strategic, but we're constantly having to prove its worth through data systems that don't value the same outcomes.”

Local Authority, Interview

This creates a disconnect between the real-world impact of YMI and the systems used to measure it, which can contribute to a lack of recognition or influence in broader policy spaces.

While some participants described the Strengthening strand as under-resourced, it is important to note that Strengthening and Access share a single budget pot. As such, the level of investment depends heavily on the volume and quality of applications. This joint structure may unintentionally deprioritise infrastructure and workforce development, even when the need is high.

4.2 Tensions with Bureaucracy and Top-Down Approaches

Several participants described tensions between YMI's inclusive, relational ethos and the bureaucratic or top-down processes sometimes imposed by national policy frameworks or funder requirements. While practitioners deeply value the ability to respond flexibly to children and young people's needs, this flexibility is often hampered by rigid reporting requirements or unclear expectations around policy alignment.

“We've tried to map our work to UNCRG and SHANARRI, but it often feels like an add-on rather than something supported from the top.”

Local Authority, Survey

“The national narrative can be quite top-down, but we try to make sure young people are shaping what's delivered, not just receiving it.”

Arts Organisation, Interview

“It's not just what we do, it's how we do it - kindness, respect, consent.”

Local Authority, Interview

These tensions suggest that alignment should not only be measured by content, but by values and approach. Participants emphasised that values such as care, respect, and youth voice are central to YMI's delivery and should be recognised as core policy contributions, not just 'soft' or secondary outcomes.

4.3 Need for Policy-Enabling Infrastructure

Beyond aligning with national priorities, many contributors felt that policy should better enable the types of work YMI already delivers. There was a call for Creative Scotland and national government partners to invest in the infrastructure that supports alignment - such as shared training opportunities, cross-sector connections, and evaluation tools that value cultural and relational outcomes.

“Providing central training programmes and opportunities for shared practice across Scotland would be beneficial for all involved.”

Arts Organisation, Survey

“The focus on training practitioners to deliver meaningful outcomes that align with Curriculum for Excellence has been strong, but we're still working in silos.”

Arts Organisation, Survey

This need for infrastructure was not limited to CPD. As explored in earlier themes, many participants identified the lack of integration between different strands - particularly Formula Fund and Access - as a missed opportunity for building joined-up progression pathways and creating a clearer youth music journey that supports long-term wellbeing, inclusion, and learning.

Recommendations: Towards a Sustainable and Connected Youth Music Ecosystem

The recommendations that follow reflect both the ambition and the deep care shown by practitioners, organisations, and partners involved in YMI delivery. They are grounded in the lived realities of those delivering youth music across Scotland - balancing passion and ingenuity with structural limitations, precarity, and underinvestment.

We recognise that these recommendations are not simple tweaks. Many call for a significant shift in how the Youth Music Initiative is resourced, structured, and connected to Scotland's wider music education and youth support infrastructure. From the fragmentation between strands to the impact of flatlining budgets and rising costs, it is clear that systemic change will require strategic investment and long-term vision. Delivering change will require action not only from Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government, but also from local authorities, delivery organisations, and wider partners such as the Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG), Instrumental Music Services (IMS), multi-year funded organisations, and the National Performing Companies.

At their core, these recommendations are about supporting children and young people through music in ways that are equitable, sustained, and meaningful. This includes moving beyond short-term outputs to a deeper focus on outcomes like confidence, creativity, and belonging; reimagining funding models to reflect the true cost and value of relational work; and building the connective tissue between strands, sectors, and services.

We also acknowledge that many of these proposals would require additional staff, coordination time, and financial support to deliver effectively. Some - such as integrating Formula Fund more closely with Access and Strengthening strands - may call for national-level leadership and a rearticulation of the programme's purpose, moving away from a purely universal offer towards one that centres equity and progression.

These recommendations are not blueprints, but starting points - offered to provoke dialogue, policy reflection, and, most importantly, shared action. The strength of the YMI has always been in the relationships at its heart. With the right support, those relationships can be the foundation for an even stronger, more connected future for youth music in Scotland.



1. Facilitate Cross-Strand Collaboration

“We’re all working with the same young people – but we’re not talking to each other... Imagine what we could have done if we’d known that earlier.”

Why: Practitioners report working with the same children and young people across Formula, Access to Music Making, Strengthening Youth Music, and IMS, but often without communication or alignment. This leads to duplication, missed opportunities, and fragmented experiences. Bringing strands and services closer together would create coherent pathways and reduce duplication, particularly if the Formula Fund evolves beyond its current “12-hour baseline” model towards a focus on the *quality and breadth of experiences available*.

While there is widespread appetite for stronger connections between the Formula Fund, Access, Strengthening, IMS, and now YAOF, several challenges were highlighted. Capacity constraints, stretched budgets, and rising travel costs often make it difficult for project leads or freelance tutors to participate in national networking or training. For smaller organisations or rural projects, the cost of travel and time away from delivery can be prohibitive. Added to this, the sector expressed different and sometimes conflicting expectations of professional development - with some seeking formal training, and others preferring lighter-touch opportunities for sharing practice and building connections. This raises the question of how realistic it is to achieve full cohesion within such a diverse national programme, where projects are rooted in very different local contexts and geographies.

At the same time, participants emphasised that Creative Scotland and national partners could take a more active convening role - not by imposing a top-down model, but by resourcing facilitation, creating accessible spaces (including online/hybrid options), and ensuring that peer learning is designed with delivery partners’ realities in mind. Stakeholders stressed that cohesion should be about enabling connections and reducing duplication, not enforcing uniformity.

Recommendations:

- *Create regional and national networking opportunities across strands.*
- *Fund cross-strand planning time to enable collaboration between local authorities, freelance tutors, and arts organisations.*
- *Introduce referral pathways or shared progression planning tools to support continuity for children and young people.*
- *Support cross-authority working, so young people can access opportunities beyond their local area where provision is limited.*

2. Reform the Funding Model to Support Long-Term Impact Over Universalism

“It’s stressful... it makes me less likely to invest deeper into applying for funding... I’d love to get to a three-year model.”

Why: Annual funding cycles limit planning, prevent staff retention, and make trust-based work harder to sustain. The Formula Fund’s “12-hour entitlement” has guaranteed access but often stops short of deeper engagement. Stakeholders suggest moving towards an equity-driven, experiences-based model, which would allow for deeper work with young people facing complex barriers, while still maintaining reach.

Recommendations:

- *Move towards multi-year core funding for proven delivery partners.*
- *Develop a staggered funding model that allows for project continuity while accommodating new applicants.*
- *Include options for rolling, embedded programmes alongside time-limited pilots.*
- *Frame participation metrics around depth and diversity of experiences rather than hours alone.*
- *Review the Formula Fund entitlement target, exploring whether a more flexible benchmark could unlock deeper impact and address many local authority challenges.*

3. Invest in a National Infrastructure for Learning, CPD & Peer Support

“We used to have more networking and peer learning built into the programme... that needs to come back.”

Why: Peer learning is currently ad-hoc and driven by chance. Practitioners want structured opportunities for shared development, reflection, and collective improvement. Greater alignment between strands could make CPD more efficient and equitable. However, the sector’s needs and expectations for professional development are not uniform - some delivery partners request formal training, while others emphasise the importance of flexible knowledge-sharing and connection-building. A national infrastructure would therefore need to balance these approaches, and would also require dedicated budget and staffing.

Recommendations:

- *Fund a centralised CPD and learning exchange across all YMI strands.*
- *Support communities of practice for specific focus areas (e.g. ASN, care-experienced children and young people, youth-led practice).*
- *Develop youth music leadership pathways that include mentoring, volunteering, and work experience.*

4. Redesign Monitoring & Evaluation to Reflect the Work's True Impact

“Where’s the space to say this young person felt seen, or came back after six months because they felt safe?”

Why: Current reporting frameworks focus on outputs (hours, numbers) rather than outcomes like belonging, confidence, or creative growth, especially important in trauma-informed or inclusion-based settings. A more values-led framework would support alignment across strands and demonstrate the value of moving beyond the 12-hour Formula Fund baseline - focusing on equity, inclusion, and the depth of young people’s experiences rather than narrow metrics alone.

Recommendations:

- *Co-design new evaluation tools with practitioners and children and young people.*
- *Include narrative-based reporting, case studies, and wellbeing indicators alongside quantitative data.*
- *Map activities to UNCRC, SHANARRI, and CfE with clear guidance and language that supports reflective practice.*

5. Create Dedicated Space and Funding for Innovation

“Practitioners feel pressure to innovate within narrow guidelines... we need space to try new things.”

Why: Local authorities and organisations feel pressure to deliver safe, known models rather than try new things, especially with short-term funding. This discourages risk-taking and innovation. Dedicated innovation funding would require additional budget allocation but could help ensure YMI adapts to emerging needs.

Recommendations:

- *Introduce a YMI ‘Innovation Pot’ for pilot projects, experimentation, and youth-led ideas.*
- *Reduce reporting burdens for these projects and emphasise learning, not success metrics.*
- *Encourage cross-sector collaborations (e.g. with health, libraries, LGBTQ+ orgs, social work) by funding relationship-building.*
- *Ensure innovation opportunities are open across the whole ecosystem, including Instrumental Music Services and all YMI strands (Formula, Access, Strengthening), to maximise learning and reduce duplication.*

6. Strengthen Links with Instrumental Music Services (IMS)

“I’ve worked in YMI for ten years and never spoken to someone from Formula Fund in my local area... that has to change.”

Why: Despite shared goals and staffing overlaps, IMS and YMI delivery often happen in isolation. Bridging this gap would support youth progression and allow for a richer, more inclusive offer. Closer alignment could also help redefine the purpose of Formula Fund, shifting it from entitlement towards targeted equity.

Recommendations:

- *Encourage joint CPD and planning between IMS staff and YMI partners.*
- *Pilot blended models that combine formal instrumental tuition with creative, youth-led projects.*
- *Identify local youth music ecosystems and map existing provision across strands.*

7. Address Workforce Precarity and Sustain the Sector

“You can’t live off passion alone.”

Why: Burnout, reduced hours due to static budgets, and sessional contracts are pushing experienced practitioners out of youth music. Without investment in the workforce, quality and reach will decline. Addressing precarity will require not just more funding overall, but also a clearer recognition of how budgets are structured and how the profession is valued.

Recommendations:

- *Enable realistic budgets for coordination, admin, and pastoral care. Current limits on these costs are set within the application process, and applicants often feel pressure to prioritise delivery hours over essential “behind-the-scenes” roles. This issue is particularly acute in Formula Fund programmes, where administration and coordination are substantial but under-recognised, though it also affects Access projects. Clarifying guidance, raising caps, or offering dedicated allowances could help ensure these roles are properly resourced.*
- *Develop a national CPD framework and career pathway for YMI tutors. This would support professional development across the programme and help retain skilled practitioners, reducing reliance on short-term contracts.*
- *Advocate for recognition of youth music as a specialist profession. Delivery partners stressed that youth music work requires distinct expertise - blending pedagogy, pastoral care, trauma-informed practice, and community arts skills - yet it is not always recognised as a discrete profession. National advocacy (with sector partners, education bodies, and unions) could help establish standards, raise the status of the work, and attract and retain a skilled workforce.*

Reframing the YMI Logic Model: From Outcomes to Values

Rather than continue with a logic model based on inputs, outputs, and outcomes, this report proposes a shift towards a values-led framework, informed by analysis of frontline experience across all YMI strands. These core values reflect what makes YMI distinctive and impactful in practice:

- **Equity:** A commitment to ensuring that all children and young people, regardless of circumstance, can access music making.
- **Trust:** Relationships are foundational - between tutors and children and young people, between organisations, and across the YMI ecosystem.
- **Care:** YMI programmes prioritise emotional safety, responsiveness to need, and youth wellbeing.
- **Creativity:** Music is recognised as a tool for self-expression, identity formation, and joy - not only skill development.
- **Youth Voice:** Participation is shaped by children and young people's input, ideas, and lived experiences.
- **Collaboration:** Cross-sector partnerships, peer learning, and co-design underpin YMI's strongest work.
- **Continuity:** Long-term relationships and sustained engagement are key to meaningful impact.
- **Place-based Responsibility:** Delivery reflects the distinctiveness of Scotland's musical communities, languages, and geographies.

These values are not just aspirational - they are already embedded across the programme. However, they are often delivered despite the structural constraints of short-term funding and bureaucratic delivery systems. Future development of YMI will require realigning its systems and funding frameworks to fully support and honour these values.

Place based
responsibility
and continuity

Collaboration

Youth Voice

Trust

Creativity

Equity

Care



Children and
young people

Final Reflections

The Youth Music Initiative continues to be one of Scotland's most significant cultural infrastructures for children and young people, enabling creative participation, access, and progression across diverse geographies and contexts. This review has surfaced both deep appreciation for what YMI has achieved - and urgent concerns about how it can be sustained and strengthened in the years ahead.

At its core, YMI is built on relationships: between tutors and children and young people, between schools and communities, and across the broad network of organisations, artists, and educators that bring youth music to life. These relationships are often the foundation for creative expression, cultural identity, and confidence-building among young people and children. However, they are increasingly delivered *in spite* of structural constraints - not because those structures are enabling.

One of the most consistent concerns raised was the static nature of the YMI budget. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Formula Fund, which remains the most scaled part of YMI. While its intention to offer 12 hours of music tuition per child by the time they leave primary School appears generous at face value, practitioners consistently emphasised that this is a limited timeframe to achieve meaningful outcomes - particularly in whole-class settings. This short window often places pressure on tutors to prioritise delivery over depth, making it difficult to adapt sessions to diverse needs or foster long-term musical development.

Moreover, the current framing of Formula Fund as a universal offer risks obscuring the structural inequalities it operates within. Many contributors suggested a shift in purpose - from quantity-based universalism to an equity-focused, responsive model that acknowledges differing levels of need. This could better align YMI's goals with the realities of workforce capacity, funding limitations, and Scotland's wider educational and cultural policy landscape.

As part of this reframing, it's important to situate YMI within the broader youth music infrastructure across Scotland. While the report references IMS, classroom-based music provision, and national music organisations in the recommendations, these connections also shape day-to-day delivery. In some local authorities, there is strong collaboration between YMI-funded and IMS staff; in others, these relationships remain siloed. Without strategic alignment, young people risk encountering disjointed music pathways - or worse, falling through the cracks between systems.

Several stakeholders noted that, pre-pandemic, Access to Music Making and Strengthening Youth Music had operated on two-year funding cycles, which supported deeper impact and longer-term planning. They questioned whether more tailored multi-year options could again offer a more sustainable model. In contrast, the Formula Fund has always been delivered on annual cycles, which limits opportunities for strategic planning and continuity. While such shifts would introduce new challenges, the current system is heavily reliant on goodwill, resilience, and a freelance workforce with limited security.

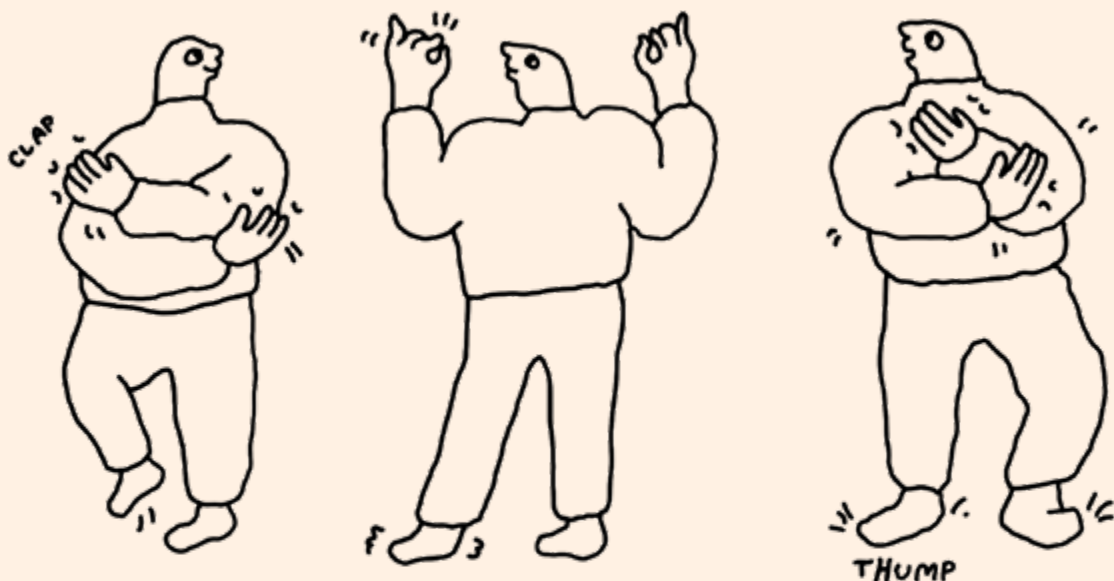
The inclusion of the Youth Music Initiative in a new 'Fairer Funding' pilot programme from the Scottish Government, launched in 2025, is a welcome step towards greater security for those benefitting from the fund. The programme's focus on eradicating child poverty is especially suited to the social aims of YMI and work continues to develop emerging strategy into concrete action.

It is worth underlining the extraordinary skills, care, and creativity of the youth music workforce in Scotland. Whether salaried tutors or sessional musicians, the people delivering YMI are not only musically skilled but pedagogically and relationally expert.

Their ability to deliver inclusive, responsive, and culturally relevant experiences is central to YMI's success - and must be recognised as such in future planning and investment.

In the advisory group, we invited participants to think imaginatively about what a new aim for YMI might look like. This opened up space for bold ideas, collective reflection, and future-oriented thinking. Participants shared that the new aim should better reflect values of equity, trust, care, and creativity, and move beyond access alone to consider empowerment, sustainability, and the long-term wellbeing of children and young people and their communities. Some emphasised the importance of recognising diverse ways of making and experiencing music, while others highlighted workforce support and the need to embed young people's rights and voices at the heart of YMI's purpose. From these imaginative conversations, we have identified a new umbrella aim to which YMI may be aligned:

To support all children and young people in Scotland to create, learn, and express themselves through music in ways that are meaningful to them, by removing barriers, championing equity, and nurturing sustainable connections between children and young people, musicians, and communities.



Appendix

Appendix 1: Methodology

This report draws on a mixed-methods approach designed to gather diverse insights from across the Youth Music Initiative (YMI) landscape in Scotland. The research aimed to reflect the experiences, needs, and ambitions of those delivering, managing, and participating in YMI-funded programmes across all strands: Formula Fund, Access to Music Making, Strengthening Youth Music, and the CPD and Training Fund.

To capture this breadth and depth, the research team undertook the following activities:

1. Advisory Group Sessions

Three facilitated sessions were held with a core Advisory Group comprising 15 participants, including fund managers, freelance music tutors, arts organisations, and local authority YMI leads. These sessions provided space for strategic discussion, cross-sector reflection, and the identification of key themes across the strands.

2. Focus Groups

Three focus groups were conducted with 29 participants, primarily frontline delivery staff. These sessions enabled peer-to-peer dialogue on operational challenges and opportunities, with a focus on practitioner experience, youth engagement, and local context.

3. In-Depth Interviews

Twenty semi-structured interviews were carried out with stakeholders from across sectors and regions. Interviewees included local authority coordinators, youth work specialists, community musicians, arts managers, and music education leaders. These interviews allowed for detailed exploration of lived experience and institutional practice.

4. Sector-Wide Survey

An online survey generated over 100 responses from local authorities, arts organisations, freelance practitioners, and others involved in

YMI delivery. The survey captured quantitative and qualitative data on delivery models, challenges, impact, and views on future priorities.

5. Documentary Analysis

More than 100 documents were reviewed, including funding guidance, evaluation reports, case studies, and local policies. This analysis provided crucial context and helped situate the findings within broader policy and practice frameworks.

Appendix 2: Case Study: Aberdeenshire (Formula Fund)

Overview

Aberdeenshire's YMI programme exemplifies a wide-reaching, inclusive, and place-sensitive approach to universal music access. With delivery embedded across all 150 primary schools, the local authority has taken deliberate steps to target rural deprivation and structural exclusion, ensuring that postcode is not a barrier to music-making.

Removing Barriers

Aberdeenshire's approach to "removing barriers" focuses on integrating music into all primary settings while tailoring delivery to local needs. Special attention is given to isolated communities, areas of high SIMD, and non-school-based provision. The inclusion of community hubs and pre-school offers - such as Happy Little Tunes and Upload - has reached children under five, those who have experienced trauma, and families seeking asylum or refuge.

Instrument choice and delivery models are adapted to meet diverse needs. Tools such as the Soundbeam 5 and partnerships with Drake Music Scotland have enabled accessibility for children with complex disabilities. Transport costs, a frequent challenge in rural settings, are also fully accounted for in budgets - a signal of the team's deep understanding of place-based disadvantage.

“There’s a recognition here that access isn’t just about opening the door—it’s about making sure children can get to the building in the first place.”

Crucially, Aberdeenshire’s inclusive ethos is supported by a trauma-informed approach that prioritises trust, safety, and adaptability. This ethos is visible in tutor practice and organisational strategy.

“We don’t assume young people will fit our delivery model, we adapt to them. That’s what makes them feel seen.”

Increasing Access and Inclusion (including ASN)

Aberdeenshire has developed a strong track record in delivering accessible music education to children with a wide range of additional support needs. Kodály-based methods are used successfully across both mainstream and ASN-specific settings. The Beat It! programme has empowered teaching staff and Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) to continue inclusive delivery long after external sessions conclude, embedding sustainability.

Ongoing collaboration with Drake Music Scotland brings specialised CPD and mentorship to local practitioners, reinforcing inclusive pedagogies and building long-term capacity. This partnership approach has made a tangible difference in ASN settings.

“We’ve seen that when CPD is part of delivery, not just an add-on, teachers really take it forward. It doesn’t just stop when the project ends.”

Several contributors noted that inclusive practice in Aberdeenshire is not a standalone strand—it’s woven into the design of every project.

“Our model isn’t about dropping in a six-week project - it’s about being open to longer journeys and following where the young people take you.”

Workforce and Sustainability

The team in Aberdeenshire recognise the importance of a supported and stable workforce. Practitioners receive regular training and are encouraged to experiment with new approaches. Embedded CPD has created ripple effects across schools, building a community of confident music educators.

However, long-term sustainability remains a concern, particularly in securing resources to continue intensive, tailored projects. Staff raised the tension between delivering short-term projects and sustaining momentum.

“There’s still always that worry - what happens after the funding runs out?”

Reflections

Aberdeenshire’s YMI model demonstrates that place-based, inclusive, and strategic approaches to music-making are not only possible but impactful. Success here is rooted in a strong ethos of trust, care, and adaptability, alongside practical investments in transport, workforce development, and cross-sector collaboration. Continued success will depend on longer-term planning frameworks, sustained investment, and opportunities for learning exchange with other regions.

Appendix 3: Case Study: Glasgow (Formula Fund)

Overview

Glasgow City Council delivers a comprehensive and strategically focussed Formula Fund programmes in Scotland, reaching all primary one (P1) pupils through a whole-class music model. This universal entitlement is supported by a salaried workforce and integrated within the city's broader education strategy. Tutors are embedded in schools and are part of a coordinated CPD and planning structure aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence.

This scale and consistency allow for strong integration across schools, with music positioned not only as a subject but as a contributor to wellbeing, learning, and equity. Music sessions are often co-delivered with classroom teachers, and planning meetings ensure alignment with broader school priorities.

“Music is not an add-on in Glasgow - it’s part of how we teach, how we build relationships, and how we support young people’s learning.”

Strengths in Planning, Integration and Workforce Development

The Glasgow model benefits from robust infrastructure. Tutors are employed by the council and supported through coordinated CPD, planning time, and access to digital tools. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the service pivoted quickly to online delivery due to existing digital capacity, and continues to use blended learning approaches where appropriate.

There is also a clear commitment to embedding inclusion and trauma-informed approaches across the tutor workforce. Tutors are offered regular professional development in behaviour support, mental health, and inclusive pedagogy.

Strong lines of communication between central teams, schools, and tutors create a sense of shared purpose.

“We don’t just give tutors a school and send them in. We work with headteachers, with class teachers, to make sure what we’re doing is connected.”

Barriers to Progression and Upper Primary Reach

Despite its strong universal offer at early stages, delivery beyond P3 is more limited due to staffing capacity. The current workforce cannot stretch to offer whole-class music throughout all primary stages, and some pupils lose access to music just as their interest and confidence begin to develop.

This discontinuity poses challenges for progression and sustained impact. While some pupils are referred to community-based provision or instrumental lessons, this varies by school and is not universally accessible. Staff expressed concern that pupils from more advantaged backgrounds may be better placed to continue their music journeys beyond the P1–P3 offer.

“We see such excitement and confidence in P1–P3, but we can’t always sustain it. The danger is that the young people who need music most are the ones who lose out when it stops.”

Need for Cross-Strand Connections and Referral Routes

There is limited integration between Formula Fund delivery and Access or Strengthening strands. Practitioners noted that children with additional needs, trauma histories, or care experience might be receiving support from

community organisations, but there is no systematic way to coordinate provision or share learning between sectors.

“We’re all working with the same children, but we’re not having the same conversations. That’s where we need to do better - not just deliver, but connect.”

Staff suggested that clearer referral routes, shared CPD opportunities, and more joined-up planning could help bridge this gap. There is also a desire for a more flexible model that allows for bespoke delivery in certain schools or contexts, particularly where universal models may not meet every child’s needs.

Reflections

Glasgow’s YMI team articulated a clear vision of music as a universal right, not a luxury. Their work is underpinned by a commitment to children’s rights, cultural equity, and lifelong learning. However, they cautioned that this vision is at risk without increased investment, particularly to expand delivery in upper primary and ensure sustainability.

“We’ve proven that it’s possible to deliver a universal music offer at scale. The question now is: how do we sustain it, deepen it, and make sure it lasts?”

Appendix 4: Case Study: Tinderbox Collective (Access to Music Making)

Building Long-Term Impact Through Creative Youth Work

Tinderbox Collective is a dynamic youth music organisation based in Edinburgh that has been funded through YMI’s Access to Music Making strand for over a decade. Known for its creative orchestras, youth bands, and grassroots innovation, Tinderbox has evolved into a trusted space for young people facing complex life circumstances. Through a trauma-informed and relationship-led approach, the organisation offers continuity, belonging, and transformative pathways into music, creativity, and leadership.

Inclusive Practice and Removing Barriers

Tinderbox adopts an expansive definition of musical participation. Young people are welcomed into sessions regardless of their musical background, confidence, or ability. Simply being present is acknowledged as a meaningful first step. This is particularly important for young people navigating trauma, mental health challenges, neurodivergence, or exclusion from education.

“They weren’t initially engaging with music, really... they were there because it was a place they felt safe and with friends.”

The organisation’s approach is deliberately non-exclusionary, offering repeated opportunities for re-engagement even when participants display aggression or distress. Trust is built over time, with youth workers prioritising emotional safety and relationships above formal outcomes.

Pathways into leadership are intentionally informal. Rather than relying on applications

or structured volunteering programmes, young people are invited into expanded roles organically. This avoids replicating exclusionary systems and makes leadership accessible to those who may not self-identify as “ready.”

“The people we want to be trainees... would not apply and don’t even know they want to do it.”

Cross-Sector Collaboration and Innovation

Partnerships are central to Tinderbox’s reach. Collaborations with organisations such as LGBT Youth Scotland, the Rock Trust, and Multicultural Family Base enable the team to engage young people who may be missing from mainstream provision. Through these partnerships, young people are introduced to the Tinderbox Hub - a creative space in North Edinburgh - and signposted into long-term music-making opportunities.

Tinderbox has also been a key driver of sector-wide collaboration. Through its role in the Scottish Youth Music Exchange - funded via specific targeted funding - the organisation facilitates peer learning, shared practice, and collective reflection across youth music organisations in Scotland.

One particularly innovative initiative is the *Instrument Libraries* programme, which began in Muirhouse Library and has since expanded to over a dozen local authorities, with additional support from YMI, the Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG), and the *We Make Music Libraries* campaign. Libraries are reimagined as creative hubs, with instruments available for free loan and local youth groups encouraged to use the space for rehearsals and events.

“It reframes what a library can be. It’s not just books...”

Pathways and Progression

Tinderbox is structured around long-term, relational progression. Young people often journey from being tentative participants to workshop leaders, festival organisers, and even paid staff. One young person who first joined as a participant is now a lead tutor across multiple projects.

“She’s gone from being a volunteer through being a trainee and has become... a lead tutor for a couple of projects.”

These journeys are made possible by the organisation’s deep investment in mentoring, trust-building, and peer leadership. At events like the North Edinburgh Community Festival, young people take the lead in planning, logistics, and performance - demonstrating both artistic growth and civic engagement.

“They say it’s like their family... they worked all day and performed... they wouldn’t stop.”

Participants have gone on to pursue careers in music, youth work, and instrument repair. Tinderbox’s work exemplifies how creative youth development can foster identity, confidence, and employability.

Structural Barriers and Gaps

Despite its successes, Tinderbox operates in a context of financial and systemic uncertainty. Flat budgets, rising operational costs, and delays in government decision-making have created pressure on staffing and planning.

“Everyone’s drowning in an overpromising situation, with less money coming in and more money going out.”

The annual funding cycle also undermines long-term relationship-building. Without multi-year commitments, it becomes difficult to retain staff, assure young people of continued support, or invest in strategic development.

“It would be absolutely devastating if we didn’t manage to fund it... there’s no amount of money can make up for ten years of relationship building.”

Tinderbox also highlighted the siloed nature of YMI’s structure. Despite a strong presence in Access-funded work, the team has no active dialogue with those delivering Formula Fund provision in the same city. This disconnect limits opportunities for referrals, shared CPD, or holistic planning across the sector.

Reflections

Tinderbox credits YMI as the foundational support that enabled its youth programme to grow and thrive. The values of inclusion, responsiveness, creativity, and youth leadership that underpin YMI are deeply embedded in the organisation’s DNA.

“It would be impossible, really, to overstate the importance of YMI to Tinderbox and our development.”

For many of the young people involved, YMI-supported activity is the only consistent space they have to feel heard, be creative, and build community. As one contributor put it:

“This is not your money, it’s not our money - it’s the kids’ money.”

Appendix 5: Case Study: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles) (Formula Fund)

Overview

The Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have long prioritised music education as a central part of the curriculum, offering universal instrumental tuition from P5 onwards. Delivery is managed internally through the Instrumental Music Service (IMS), with salaried tutors teaching a broad range of instruments. Gaelic language and culture is central to the programme’s identity, and traditional music, particularly piping, is widely seen as a strength. This embedded, culturally specific offer gives young people access to creative expression that reflects their heritage and surroundings.

Workforce Fragility and Recruitment Challenges

Despite its strong foundation, the programme is under increasing pressure due to workforce fragility and increased numbers of pupils at secondary level. The combination of geographic isolation and challenges in attracting applicants has made recruitment and retention difficult.

While schools and education staff are supportive, the programme relies heavily on a small, overstretched team. This makes innovation, expansion, and experimentation difficult, particularly in response to emerging needs.

Gaelic Music as Strength and Challenge

Music is also viewed as a vehicle for preserving and celebrating Gaelic language and identity. Staff described a deep commitment to teaching through Gaelic and maintaining strong traditions. Yet they also recognised that balancing this cultural continuity with openness to more diverse musical genres and identities requires care.

Building Towards Stronger Cross-Strand Collaboration

Access Fund projects are limited in the Western Isles, although there is growing interest in building stronger links between IMS and the third sector. Staff are keen to see more joined-up working between Formula Fund and Access strands, but noted that the structural and administrative complexity of YMI funding can be a barrier to innovation.

They also emphasised the potential of the Strengthening strand, particularly in providing targeted CPD, space for peer learning, and more tailored support for tutors working in remote island contexts.

Reflections

Staff across the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are committed to deepening and sustaining their youth music offer. They see strong potential in cross-sector collaboration, increased investment in tutor development, and expanded opportunities for inclusive and culturally relevant provision. In particular, they emphasised the importance of long-term, stable investment in Gaelic music and rural delivery, and called for YMI structures to better reflect the unique strengths and challenges of island communities.

Appendix 6: Case Study: Spartans Community Foundation (Access to Music Making)

Finding Voice Through Music in North Edinburgh

Spartans Community Foundation, based in North Edinburgh, delivered a powerful year-long music project supported by the Youth Music Initiative (YMI) Access to Music Making strand. Partnering with social enterprise Turn the Tables, the project centred on DJing, digital production, rap, and songwriting – creating a safe, youth work-led space for young people often excluded from mainstream education.

Rather than imposing a fixed curriculum, Spartans offered choice, responsiveness, and emotional safety. Sessions were trauma-informed and built around small group or one-to-one engagement, prioritising trust and creativity. Many participants had experienced disrupted education, trauma, or neurodivergence, and for some, this was their first experience of music that felt truly welcoming.

“They weren’t typical music students. Some had been excluded from school, some were in care, others were living with complex diagnoses. But here, they could be creative – and be seen.”

Inclusive Practice and Co-Creation

Seventeen young people participated, with twelve attending regularly. Rather than following a set learning path, participants explored beat-making apps, wrote lyrics, mixed

tracks, and shared their own creations. Sessions were structured around what they wanted to do – and importantly, how they wanted to do it.

A key element was the presence of a female freelance tutor, who learned DJing alongside the young people. This shared journey became a model of confidence-building, showing participants that learning doesn't require perfection.

“The young people started a petition to get more music time with her – that’s how much it meant to them.”

When the funded year ended, Spartans retained the tutor using their own resources and secured DJ equipment on loan from Turn the Tables, later investing in their own kit to ensure sustainability.

Skills, Confidence, and Progression

- 14 out of 17 young people developed new music skills
- 100% of regular participants said they enjoyed the sessions

Feedback from participants showed how deeply they valued the experience:

“DJing is minted – I want to do more.”
“It’s chill and a good way to relax.”
“It’s way less stressful than English and Maths. We have a laugh in Music.”

The work also had academic crossover: some participants used their self-written lyrics to support National 4 and 5 literacy qualifications. Technical skills such as beat matching, track selection, and rhythm building emerged quickly – often from young people considered disengaged in other contexts.

“Some of them were leading the room by the end – sharing their mixes, helping each other. They were absolutely buzzing.”

Leadership and Ownership

Young people co-created every aspect of the project – from musical direction to how their work was shared. In one example, participants composed an original soundtrack for a short film they had produced, avoiding copyright issues and showcasing a growing professionalism.

Sessions were entirely optional, yet uptake remained strong. The project respected the agency of each participant, meeting them where they were and adapting to their pace and preferences.

Long-Term Impact and Learning

Beyond the music sessions, the project had ripple effects. Participants gained confidence, re-engaged with education, and began to imagine new futures. Guest DJs visited to share their stories, exposing young people to the creative industries and alternative career paths.

For Spartans, the project reinforced the value of creative, relational youth work. By training a staff member and investing in equipment, the team ensured that the work could continue beyond the funded period – embedding music into their long-term offer.

“The music is brilliant, but the real outcome is belief – in themselves, and in what they can do when someone listens.”

Structural Barriers and Reflections

Despite the success, the project was not without challenges. Short-term funding made it difficult to plan, sustain staff, or commit to long-term pathways for participants.

“Trusted long-term relationships are key to trauma-informed delivery... but short-term funding doesn’t allow us to retain the high-quality staff we’ve invested in.”

Nonetheless, the project stands as a compelling example of what can be achieved when music is offered flexibly, relationally, and with trust in young people’s creativity. Spartans continues to champion this approach – and the young people they serve continue to thrive because of it.

Appendix 7: Case Study: National Piping Centre (Access to Music Making)

Overview

The National Piping Centre (NPC), based in Glasgow, delivers youth music projects through the Access to Music Making strand of YMI. Best known for its world-class tuition in bagpiping, the NPC has broadened its reach in recent years through a series of inclusive, partnership-based projects focused on breaking down barriers to traditional music education. Their work combines specialist musical excellence with a deep commitment to accessibility, youth voice, and community engagement.

Inclusive Approaches to Traditional Music

NPC has worked deliberately to make traditional piping more accessible to children and young people who might not otherwise encounter the instrument - or who might not see

it as “for them.” Projects have targeted schools in SIMD areas, ASN settings, and communities with limited access to live music or music tuition. Tutors are supported to adapt their teaching approaches, incorporating elements of youth work and trauma-informed practice.

Sessions are built around fun, energy, and peer encouragement. Tutors use storytelling and group activities to engage learners, ensuring that early experiences with piping are not intimidating or overly formal. By reducing the focus on notation and technical perfection, NPC helps demystify traditional music and open doors to participation.

“We want young people to feel like piping is something they can be part of - not something they have to be perfect at before they begin.”

Pathways into Progression and Performance

NPC’s Access-funded projects are designed with clear progression routes in mind. Young people who show interest or aptitude are supported to move into more formal piping tuition, join bands, or participate in national events. These progression routes are flexible, however, and grounded in individual relationships and motivation - not rigid assessment.

“The weekly club gives young people a chance to hang out, have fun, and grow as musicians without pressure. And for those who want to go further, we’re here to guide them.”

Supporting Tutors and Building Capacity

The NPC places a strong emphasis on tutor development and sector support. Through Strengthening Youth Music funding, they have led CPD events for piping tutors across Scotland,

sharing inclusive approaches and youth-led methodologies. This has included workshops on trauma-informed practice, adapting for ASN needs, and exploring decolonial approaches to traditional music.

NPC staff also collaborate with schools and other organisations to co-design delivery models, ensuring that projects align with local needs and values. This partnership-based approach has led to sustainable delivery in multiple areas and built trust between sectors.

“We don’t just parachute in. We work with people locally to build something that fits their setting, not ours.”

Tackling Stereotypes and Broadening Representation

NPC recognises that piping can carry connotations of elitism, masculinity, or cultural gatekeeping. Their outreach work actively challenges these narratives. Projects have focused on reaching girls and young women, neurodivergent young people, and communities who may not feel an immediate connection to Scotland’s piping heritage.

One initiative worked with girls in schools who had never previously encountered traditional instruments. Tutors used songwriting and remixing alongside chanter tuition, helping participants build confidence and pride in their cultural expressions.

Reflections and Ongoing Challenges

NPC has built a strong foundation for inclusive, progressive piping education - but ongoing challenges remain. As with other organisations, funding constraints limit the scale and duration of some programmes. Staff also noted the need for more consistent cross-strand connection within YMI, especially in linking Access projects to wider musical ecosystems, including IMS and local bands.

Despite these challenges, NPC remains committed to evolving what piping education can be: creative, inclusive, and youth-driven.

“We’re proud of the heritage - but we’re just as proud of the young people shaping its future.”

Appendix 8: Overview of 2023/24 Awards Across All Strands

YMI Formula Fund

Local Authority	YMI Award
Aberdeen City Council	£191,499
Aberdeenshire Council	£527,836
Angus Council	£197,736
Argyll and Bute Council	£195,748
City of Edinburgh Council	£361,629
Clackmannanshire Council	£61,119
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar	£87,110
Dumfries and Galloway Council	£333,567
Dundee City Council	£154,330
East Ayrshire Council	£170,352
East Dunbartonshire Council	£145,344
East Lothian Council	£135,113
East Renfrewshire Council	£126,103
Falkirk Council	£175,599
Fife Council	£465,300
Glasgow City Council	£540,644
Highland Council	£487,157
Inverclyde Council	£97,571
Jordanhill School	£11,501
Midlothian Council	£112,832
Moray Council	£159,443
North Ayrshire Council	£190,347
North Lanarkshire Council	£400,155
Orkney Islands Council	£61,008
Perth and Kinross Council	£245,208
Renfrewshire Council	£208,853
Scottish Borders Council	£221,861
Shetland Islands Council	£75,024
South Ayrshire Council	£161,112
South Lanarkshire Council	£409,901
Stirling Council	£144,483
West Dunbartonshire Council	£112,075
West Lothian Council	£220,896
TOTAL	£7,188,456

Access to Music Making and Strengthening Youth Music

Organisation	Funding	Funding Amount	Local Authority
A.R.Ts Afternoon	Access to Music Making	£30,000	City of Edinburgh, East Lothian
Alchemy Film and Arts	Access to Music Making	£30,000	Scottish Borders
ARTSPRAY HIGHLAND	Access to Music Making	£30,000	Highland
Beatroute Arts	Access to Music Making	£29,348	Glasgow City
Bigton Collective	Access to Music Making	£14,934	Shetland Islands
Canongate Youth	Access to Music Making	£29,949	City of Edinburgh
Catriona Hawksworth	Access to Music Making	£14,626	Perth and Kinross
CENTRESTAGE COMMUNITIES LTD	Access to Music Making	£14,980	East Ayrshire
City of Edinburgh Council	Access to Music Making	£29,913	City of Edinburgh
Cosgrove Care	Access to Music Making	£14,982	East Renfrewshire
David Boyter	Access to Music Making	£12,478	Shetland Islands
DRAKE MUSIC SCOTLAND	Access to Music Making	£68,165	Aberdeen City, Dundee City, City of Edinburgh, Inverclyde
Duncan MacKinnon music and arts trust ltd	Access to Music Making	£24,226	Scottish Borders
ELUTHERIA COMPANY Ltd	Access to Music Making	£4,985	North Lanarkshire
Fèis Rois	Access to Music Making	£69,673	Highland
Glenkens Community and Arts Trust	Access to Music Making	£29,996	Dumfries and Galloway
HAPPYNESS DRUM CIRCLES LTD	Access to Music Making	£14,935	Highland, Moray
Hear My Music	Access to Music Making	£30,000	Glasgow City and City of Edinburgh
Horsecross Arts	Access to Music Making	£29,914	Perth and Kinross
Irvine and Dreghorn Brass	Access to Music Making	£3,988	North Ayrshire

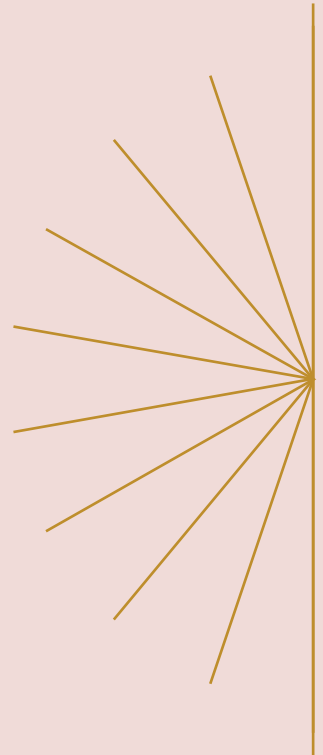
Jenny Sturgeon	Access to Music Making	£12,668	Aberdeenshire
KIBBLE EDUCATION AND CARE CENTRE	Access to Music Making	£14,662	Renfrewshire, West Dumbartonshire
Limelight Music	Access to Music Making	£29,400	Clackmannanshire, Glasgow and Renfrewshire
LYRA	Access to Music Making	£15,000	City of Edinburgh
Mobilize Music Project	Access to Music Making	£23,484	South Lanarkshire
Music Broth	Access to Music Making	£30,000	Argyll and Bute, Glasgow City and Highland
Music Education Partnership Group	Access to Music Making	£28,619	All of Scotland
musicALL	Access to Music Making	£25,000	Glasgow City
RADIO BUENA VIDA CIC	Access to Music Making	£28,200	Glasgow City
Rebecca Hill	Access to Music Making	£18,500	Argyll and Bute
RIG ARTS LTD	Access to Music Making	£30,000	Inverclyde
Rioch and Robertson	Access to Music Making	£8,146	West Lothian
Rock n Role Models	Access to Music Making	£14,890	East Ayrshire
s9Fifty	Access to Music Making	£29,751	Fife
SCOTTISH BOOK TRUST	Access to Music Making	£65,530	All of Scotland
Scottish Music Centre	Access to Music Making	£30,000	All of Scotland
Shetland Islands Council - Youth and Employability Service	Access to Music Making	£21,647	Shetland Islands
Sonic Bothy	Access to Music Making	£29,976	Glasgow City
Sound Waves SCIO	Access to Music Making	£29,800	Argyll and Bute
SOUNDSYSTEMS PROJECT C.I.C.	Access to Music Making	£29,500	Dumfries and Galloway, Argyll and Bute, North Ayrshire, Glasgow City
Stanley Development Trust	Access to Music Making	£28,521	Perth and Kinross
THE NATIONAL PIPING CENTRE	Access to Music Making	£29,998	All of Scotland

THE NATIONAL PIPING CENTRE	Access to Music Making	£70,000	Glasgow City, Highland, Perth and Kinross, Dundee City, Na h-Eilleanan Siar, Aberdeenshire
The National Youth Choir of Scotland	Access to Music Making	£59,927	East Ayrshire, Moray, Highland
THE NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRAS OF SCOTLAND Ltd	Access to Music Making	£30,000	All of Scotland
The Scottish Brass Band Association	Access to Music Making	£70,000	All of Scotland
The Scottish Schools Pipes and Drums Trust	Strengthening Youth Music	£20,000	Aberdeenshire
Tinderbox Collective	Access to Music Making	£70,000	City of Edinburgh
Tynecastle Youth Community Pipe Band	Access to Music Making	£13,000	City of Edinburgh
WHERE'S THE ONE? LTD.	Access to Music Making	£27,995	Scottish Borders
Wide Events CIC	Access to Music Making	£30,000	All of Scotland
Yvonne Wyroslawska	Strengthening Youth Music	£17,600	All of Scotland
TOTAL		£1,508,906	

Youth Arts Open Fund

Organisation/Artist	Art Form	Awarded Amount	Local authority
Touch of Love Outreach	Multi-art form	£7,910	Aberdeen City
Other Ways to Care	Music	£13,650	Aberdeenshire
Digital Maker	Digital	£14,451	Aberdeenshire
Templar Arts and Leisure Centre Trust	Multi-art form	£12,990	Argyll and Bute
Dunoon Burgh Hall Trust	Multi-art form	£15,000	Argyll and Bute
Barnardo's	Multi-art form	£15,000	North/South Ayrshire
WHALE Arts	Visual Arts	£14,959	City of Edinburgh
The BIG Project	Theatre	£8,019	City of Edinburgh
Scottish Youth Film Foundation	Film	£15,000	City of Edinburgh
City of Edinburgh Council	Multi-art form	£14,535	City of Edinburgh
The Rock Trust	Visual Arts	£14,956	City of Edinburgh
The Young Women's Movement	Multi-art form	£15,000	National
Media Education CIC	Film	£14,970	City of Edinburgh
Deaf Action	Multi-art form	£14,639	City of Edinburgh
Snap Elastic Ltd	Multi-art form	£16,150	City of Edinburgh
Spartans Community Football Academy	Multi-art form	£12,916	City of Edinburgh
Canongate Youth	Multi-art form	£13,743	City of Edinburgh
Starcatchers Productions Ltd	Multi-art form	£15,000	City of Edinburgh
Axé Boom Boom	Multi-art form	£13,998	City of Edinburgh
All or Nothing Aerial Dance Theatre	Other	£15,000	City of Edinburgh
Lyra	Multi-art form	£14,963	City of Edinburgh
Ochil Youths community Improvement	Theatre	£14,027	Clackmannanshire
The Stove Network	Multi-art form	£11,510	Dumfries and Galloway
Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre Ltd	Multi-art form	£14,148	Dundee City
Yusuf Youth Initiative	Traditional Arts	£10,000	Dundee City
Glass Performance	Theatre	£14,944	Dundee City
Ayrshire Film Company CIC	Film	£14,945	East Ayrshire
Kat Healy (freelance)	Traditional Arts	£7,720	East Lothian
Cosgrove Care	Multi-art form	£15,000	East Renfrewshire
What Moves You CIC	Multi-art form	£14,610	Fife
Priya Shrikumar (freelance)	Multi-art form	£8,000	Fife
Fleur Darkin (freelance)	Dance	£8,000	Fife
PEEK (Possibilities for Each and Every Kid)	Multi-art form	£15,000	Glasgow North East
Toonspeak Young People's Theatre	Multi-art form	£15,000	Glasgow North East
YDance (Scottish Youth Dance)	Dance	£13,500	Glasgow North East
LGBT Youth Scotland	Multi-art form	£12,533	Glasgow North East
SiMY Community Development	Multi-art form	£14,768	Glasgow North East

Haver Quartet	Multi-art form	£7,782	Glasgow North East
Intergenerational Mentoring Network	Multi-art form	£15,000	Glasgow North East
Halo Arts (Education) Ltd	Theatre	£9,690	Glasgow North West
SambaYaBamba	Multi-art form	£15,000	Glasgow North West
The National Autistic Society	Multi-art form	£8,424	Glasgow North West
The Pearce Institute	Multi-art form	£14,440	Glasgow South
Hayley Earlam (freelance)	Dance	£8,000	Glasgow South
Jhankar Beats	Dance	£11,252	Glasgow South
Govanhill Baths Community Trust	Crafts	£1,298	Glasgow South
The Wee Retreat CIC	Multi-art form	£12,859	Glasgow South
Spider Arts (SCIO)	Multi-art form	£14,790	Glasgow South
Vanilla Ink Jewellery School CIC	Crafts	£13,600	Glasgow South
High Life Highland	Multi-art form	£7,197	Highland
Connecting Young Carers	Multi-art form	£13,762	Highland
Lyth Arts Centre	Multi-art form	£14,380	Highland
High Life Highland	Visual Arts	£8,926	Highland
Cromarty Arts Trust	Multi-art form	£3,813	Highland
Eden Court Highlands	Dance	£12,800	Highland
Julia McGhee (freelance)	Multi-art form	£4,914	Highland
Magic Torch Comics CIC	Literature	£14,500	Inverclyde
Cutting Edge Theatre	Theatre	£15,000	Midlothian
The Loft Youth Project	Other	£9,162	Moray
M:ADE	Digital	£13,728	Moray
Ron Jappy (freelance)	Music	£7,869	Moray
Elgin Youth Development Group	Multi-art form	£14,340	Moray
Getting Better Together Ltd	Multi-art form	£8,295	North Lanarkshire
Pier Arts Centre	Visual Arts	£14,994	Orkney Islands
Soulisquoy Printmakers	Visual Arts	£15,000	Orkney Islands
Esolperth	Traditional Arts	£4,800	Perth and Kinross
Kinross-shire Youth Enterprise (KYTHE)	Traditional Arts	£9,000	Perth and Kinross
Waterbaby Arts SCIO	Dance	£9,180	Renfrewshire
Oor Space Youthy	Multi-art form	£14,947	Scottish Borders
Cheviot Youth	Multi-art form	£12,694	Scottish Borders
Interest Link Borders	Theatre	£11,209	Scottish Borders
Jane Cockayne (freelance)	Multi-art form	£7,940	Shetland Islands
David Boyter (freelance)	Multi-art form	£7,301	Shetland Islands
Crag Community Arts SCIO	Multi-art form	£15,000	South Ayrshire
Stirling Champs	Digital	£9,661	Stirling
Creative Stirling	Multi-art form	£15,000	Stirling
Clifftop Projects	Multi-art form	£14,695	West Dunbartonshire
Passion4Fusion	Multi-art form	£14,666	West Lothian
TOTAL		£953,462	



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