



GIRLS ROCK ON!

Chard Foundation for Women in Music's
Groundbreaking Young Womens' Band Project

What a project... what a buzz...
what an opportunity...

Take a talented all-female music team, add 100+ musical young women, elicit the support of forward-thinking funders and stakeholders, light the blue touch paper and stand well back...

Before Girls Rock ON! my musical experience was singing into a permanent marker in my bedroom!

Lan Robinson (16)



above: Stef Miles of Nasgal recording at the Baseline Studio, Ferndown, Dorset

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Foreword

How satisfying to have found the best MusicMaker, an outstanding team, and had the backing of Youth Music and others to deliver the ultimate girls' band project.

Our pilot project, run intermittently over the last 10 years, lacked one if not two of these vital ingredients, but it did provide the learning curve and ground rules for Girls Rock ON!

Enjoy this report! And feel the sense of empowerment that participants in this project took away with them to keep for life.

**Angela Willes, Director,
Chard Foundation of Women in Music**

Introduction

Why are women so poorly represented as composers and musicians in popular music? Perhaps this is a question that you have never considered. But it is an important one. Without a gender balance in any sphere of creativity, research, in fact in life itself, we deny access to up to half the population and miss out on all that creative input.

With this notion of access and equality foremost in their minds, the Chard Foundation decided to create an opportunity for young women aged 13 - 18 years to come together and explore their potential as composers and performers.

The first young women's band evolved from a jazz school run by the Foundation in 1990. With a wealth of saxophonists, singers and pazz they composed collaboratively and performed at the Chard Festival, but little did they know that they had begun something really important...



Tina Sellick & Alice Shortland (Nasgal)

Over the succeeding years the Chard Foundation piloted several young women's band projects in Somerset and Dorset with generous support from local authorities and RALP funding. Then, in 2000, a major grant application to Youth Music firmly established the Girls Rock ON! programme as a key strand in Chard's mission to become an important provider of opportunities for young women in music. The current Girls Rock ON! Project may have ended but it is essentially a beginning, since our mission to work with young female musicians continues, and will do so until gender is no longer an issue in music composition and performance. So girls: **Rock ON!**

Yvette Staelens, MusicMaker, Girls Rock ON!

Project Aims

From the outset we were clear that we wanted to give participants the opportunity to develop their individual skills, to compose and perform together, and to utilize the confidence and self-esteem thus generated to continue with their music in the big wide musical world. Geographically, our project was located in South Somerset with the intention of targeting young women disadvantaged through rurality and lack of cultural facilities.

Our project design was simple:

- Set up from scratch six all girl bands aged 13 - 18 years. Deliver this in two phases with three bands in each phase. Locate the bands in Chard, Ilminster and Crewkerne, South Somerset.
- Set them the task of writing all their own music.
- Support them via weekly rehearsals and monthly specialist workshops.
- Perform to a professional standard at a debut gig.
- Collaboratively produce a promotional pack for each band comprising professional photographs, demo CD, and band biography.

Process

The Chard Foundation appointed Yvette Staelens as MusicMaker and project manager to develop and lead the project. In turn, she recruited an all female facilitation team to provide technical knowledge and creative input to the prospective bands. A guiding principle in the recruitment process was to appoint role models - talented female musicians and technicians who would inspire the young women into thinking 'hey, I could do that!'

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The Facilitation Team

The initial appointment was our trainee, seventeen year old Claire Farmer. Taunton-based Claire had emerged as an outstanding talent during one of our previous band projects. Already a fully-fledged gigging musician with her own band, Claire was keen to support the project and we felt incredibly lucky to have her on the team. Next we appointed three experienced music facilitators:

Jane Harwood - guitar, bass, flute, whistles
Jo Harvey - violin, voice
Shirley Screech - saxophone, clarinet

The Technical Crew

We really wanted to demystify certain technical aspects of working in a band, for example, using amplified sound, promoting your music, and studio recording. So we recruited the following experts:

Carolyn Tether - sound engineer.
Kim Wood - photographer, designer.
Jackie Calderwood - video.

Student Placement

At an early stage in the project we were contacted by Lois Gatley, a music undergraduate at Dartington Music College. Lois was keen to study the project as part of her studies on women in popular music and we were delighted to oblige. As a songwriter, guitarist, singer and performer, Lois worked alongside facilitator Jane Harwood with bands in Chard and Ilminster and used various media to document the musical progress of the bands.

Finding The Talent

We produced posters and application forms, distributing them to libraries, colleges, schools, and youth centres. We sent press releases to local and regional media both launching the project and publicising the auditions. Yvette, also gave presentations to school assemblies at Huish Episcopi, Chard, Colfox School in Bridport, and to students at Richard Huish College and Somerset College of Arts and Technology (SCAT) in Taunton.

Yvette was also interviewed by BBC Radio Somerset and the local independent radio station, Orchard FM. Finally, we contacted specific peripatetic music teachers to 'spread the word' and identify students who might be interested. Applications started to roll in and we responded by inviting everyone to the auditions.



above: Tammy Payne, percussion specialist, and Jo Harvey, facilitator

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Criteria

We wanted to recruit young women with something to offer the project, agreeing that it was not our remit to teach instrumental or vocal skills to complete beginners or to create 'popstars'. Therefore we determined and utilised a set of agreed criteria to ensure that the audition process was conducted in a fair and even-handed way. We planned to offer places to 5 instrumentalists and 5 singers per band applying the following criteria:

Essential

- Singers must be able to pitch notes accurately and be able to project their voice to a reasonable degree
- Instrumentalists must be able to play their instruments accurately to an intermediate standard
- Both singers and musicians should demonstrate accurate listening skills
- Applicants should demonstrate a willingness to try new musical directions
- Potential band members should be willing to input creative ideas

Desirable

- The ability to harmonise
- The ability to improvise
- Songwriting experience

'I applied because I really wanted to be in a band and to make my own music'

Sophie Kelly (13)

Auditions

The audition for the first three bands was held at Holyrood School, Chard on the 17th June 2001.

We received sixty-three applications, all of whom were invited to audition. Forty-six young women turned up on the day. It was clear from the outset that some of the participants were mostly interested in becoming popstars rather than making music. We anticipated that the audition criteria, correctly applied would deal with this issue.

At the audition, we assessed each applicant during group singing and or instrumental work and then via an exit interview with the facilitator working in their geographical area.

The Bands Begin

We selected ten participants for each band. This may seem an exceptional number of musicians for what is normally perceived as being a band, but we didn't want to be prescriptive at the outset and felt sure that there would be some 'drop out' or, alternatively, perhaps a couple of bands might emerge from one start-up group.

The process began with band members attending a songwriting Frockshop, which also gave them a chance to meet each other. Each band then commenced a programme of up to fifteen rehearsals, each of two hours in duration, with their facilitator.

The first phase of the project produced three bands: 'Looper', 'Fallen Angels' and 'Nazgal'.

above right: from left - Claire Broady, Hayley Woodford and Kate Westbrook

Looper

Clare Broady (16) - drums
Kate Westbrook (14) - vocals, cello, flute
Hayley Woodford (17) - vocals, guitar



Looper, based at South Petherton, began work with nine selected members from the locality with the final band comprising four and finally three members. Rehearsals were facilitated by Jo Harvey and held in the town's youth centre. The band worked mostly on Hayley's material, since she came to the band as a very competent singer and songwriter.

With a lovely combination of instrumental and vocal talent, this band recorded three super songs; 'Can't Cope With', 'Boy' and 'Take A Ride' all included on the first Girls Rock ON! Demo CD.

"I have learnt loads of stuff about pa and stagecraft and recording, but mostly I've learnt about how the music industry works and how you have to do things yourself and not just wait for someone else to do it e.g. getting gigs....Everyone was so supportive and helpful. It was great to have a team of funky gals in the know!"

Kate Westbrook (14)

Fallen Angels

Gemma Baker (15) - vocals
Hannah Bennett, (16) - vocals, digeridoo
Jaime Bishop (15) - drums
Kat Bowditch (15) - vocals
Kayleigh McDonogh (15) - vocals
Emelie Mousseau (15) - vocals
Kayley Thresher (15) - vocals, bass guitar
Donna Wadham (15) - vocals, keyboards
Cassie White (15) - vocals

This band was the largest in the whole project comprising nine members, mostly vocalists, which presented quite a challenge for facilitator Jane Harwood. They rehearsed at the New Generation Young People's Centre in Chard which had a supply of instruments as well as amplifiers and a minimal drum kit. Many of the band members were keen to develop their harmonizing skills and the resulting songs reflect this emphasis.

During the project, the Fallen Angels developed a strong identity and met independently to work on lyrics and song ideas - they even generated interest from other young women who became motivated to work on musical ideas with them. The 'Angels' recorded two original songs on the demo, 'Universe' and 'Deprived'.

"I wanted to see if I had any talent for music and I wanted to learn about the music business. My experience of real music was minimal. I hadn't written many songs (or at least good ones) and I desperately wanted to be in a band"

Hannah Bennett (16)

"I think my singing has improved! I have become a lot more confident. I have found learning about the recording very valuable as hopefully I will be doing some more"

Emelie Mousseau (15)

"Thanx 2 every 1. it's been the best experience eva! Thanx Girls. U'll always be angels"

Gemma Baker (15)



right: back row - Kayleigh McDonogh, Gemma Baker & Kayley Thresher, **middle row** - Hannah Bennet, Emily Mousseau, Jaime Bishop & Cassie White, **front row** - Donna Wadham & Cat Bowditch

Nazgal

Carly Bowden (13) - vocals, violin
Stef Miles (14) - drums
Carla Peasland (14) - vocals
Ele Peasland (16) - vocals
Laura Roft, (15) - vocals keyboards
Tina Sellick (18) - guitar, keyboards
Alice Shorland (15) - vocals, bass guitar

Nazgal met at the Meeting House in Ilminster and were facilitated by Shirley Screech. Of all the bands in the project, this group had the widest range of instrumental talent plus a prolific songwriter, Tina, who came to the band with over three hundred songs that she had written already. Collaborative band arrangements for two of her songs were created, in addition to a new jointly written song supported by a dance routine.

This band saw people developing all sorts of new skills. For example, Alice came as a singer and, helped by Shirley and Tina, decided to try playing bass. Her confidence and competence astounded us and she now performs confidently on her chosen instrument and has developed her singing too.

Undoubtedly bolstered by their competence, this band developed a certain cohesiveness once they had established their final line-up. They were extremely motivated to perform live and achieved the most live performances of any band on the project. Perhaps the highlight was the invitation for them to perform at Brigwater Arts Centre as part of a programme of female talent celebrating International Women's Day 2002. They were utterly professional in spite of the pressure of opening the concert, dealing with a theatre venue, and a PA restricted by a decibel limiter.

Three of their songs are recorded on the demo CD; 'Tell Me Why', 'Think I'm Lonely', and 'Empty Space'.

above right: clockwise from left - Lucy Porter, Tina Sellick, Stef Miles, Ele Peasland, Laura Roft and Carla Peasland.



'I wanted to join a band and I saw it as a great opportunity. Female bands are scarce, so it meant that I could meet others that love music like I do'

Tina Sellick (18)

'I went to a workshop for songwriting during this course as I hadn't done much of that before. It was good fun and a cool learning experience'

Carly Bawden (13)

'Everything was great! I made new friends, learned more about songwriting and I learned about other musical instruments. Girls Rock ON! Is such a great experience...I hope it's gonna be as good for future members as it has been for me!'

Stef Miles (14)

Girls Rock ON Again...

The second phase of band recruitment began with the usual poster and application form distribution, presentations to school assemblies, local radio interviews, press releases, and auditions held at Holyrood School, Chard, on 21st October 2001.

We received applications from twenty-eight young women of whom thirteen attended for audition. We chose twelve to go forward into the bands, and then developed a strategy to target band members required for South Petherton plus additional instrumentalists for the other two bands. Primarily contacting peripatetic music teachers and local colleges.

As before, most of the applicants were vocalists and although some of these had benefited from some instrumental training they were reluctant to bring their instruments along to the audition. We gently encouraged them to do so as they developed in their bands, and indeed encouraged them to try different instruments if they showed any interest or aptitude. This strategy paid off with several band members taking up new instruments.

Random Cactus

Gemma Baker (15) - vocals
Hannah Bennet (16) - vocals, digeridoo, percussion
Alice Brown (14) - drums
Sophie Kelly (13) - guitar
Emily Kelly (13) - keyboard
Lan Robinson (16) - vocals
Kayleigh Thresher (16) - vocals, bass

Random Cactus rehearsed in Chard at the New Generation Young People's Centre and included some members of the Fallen Angels, namely Gemma, Hannah, and Kayleigh who were keen to work with another band.

This band had access to an electric guitar, electric bass guitar, plus amplifiers and a drum kit available at the centre. It was gratifying to have a range of instrumental skill in this band, especially since their facilitator Shirley Screech is an instrumental specialist.

All band members confidently wrote lyrics and some people tried new instruments, notably Kayleigh who took up the bass guitar and Hannah who introduced the digeridoo into her music. Alice came to the band having recently started learning to play drums. This was her first experience of playing in a band.

Random Cactus recorded two original songs on the demo CD; 'Heat From The Sunset' and 'Alice's Paradise'.



above: clockwise from left - Sophie Kelly, Alice Brown, Hannah Bennet, Emily Kelly and Lan Robinson.

'Now I want to go on and join other bands and to do Music GCSE'

Alice Brown (14)

'Before I joined Random Cactus I only really played guitar at my music lessons with my teacher'

Sophie Kelly (13)

Bob

Naomi Baker (18) - vocals, Celtic harp, bass
Jaime Bishop (16) - bass, Celtic harp
Heidi Edmonds (18) - vocals, guitar

The second Ilminster band initially attracted six young women but finally settled down as another three piece comprising two students, Naomi and Heidi from the BTEC Popular Music course at SCAT in Taunton, and Jaime who had worked with two other project bands before.



The inclusion of a Celtic harp in the instrumental mix was an interesting prospect and a delight to their facilitator, Jane Harwood, who had some experience with the instrument. The band worked mostly upon Heidi's material since she is a very talented writer and also experimented with a blues song with harp accompaniment and had lots of adventures in improvisation too.

The maturity and experience of the band members in Bob, plus all the hard work put in at rehearsals, meant that they performed with confidence and panache at their debut Girlzone Gig, mixing accomplished musicianship with a relaxed performance style.

They recorded four numbers in the studio, including three on the demo CD; 'In Your Head', 'Hungry', and 'January Blues'.

'I now want to learn the harp and keep playing the bass'

Jaime Bishop (16)

'Jane has helped when I'm not sure what keys I'm playing in! Yvette is very good at giving me a lift when I can't get anywhere. Carolyn was a great laugh, the stories she told us!!! Oh and she was great at the job in hand too!!'

Heidi Edmonds (18)

above: clockwise from left - Naomi Baker, Jamie Bishop and Heidi Edmonds.

Knickerline

Lauren Rosenberg (17) - vocals, guitar
Flow McKay (14) - vocals, bass guitar
Shelly Vaughan (15) - vocals, guitar

Knickerline began as a six-member band and finally gelled as a three piece. They were facilitated by Jo Harvey and initially rehearsed at South Petherton Youth Centre and then at the Meeting House in Ilminster.

A significant feature of this band was their interest in singing, all three members being keen to develop this aspect of their band work, especially harmony singing.

Lauren came to the band as a competent guitarist and songwriter but was very reluctant to sing in public. During her band work, her confidence in her vocals increased dramatically and revealed a beautiful voice. Meanwhile, under the guidance of Jo, both Shelly and Flow were keen to try amplified instruments with Flow acquiring a bass guitar and Shelly an electric guitar.



above: from left - Flow McKay, Lauren Rosenberg and Shelly Vaughan.

Each band member contributed their own songs, recording all of them on the demo CD, 'Fly Away' - a sad bluesy ballad by Flow about a brother who left home and doesn't keep in touch; 'Because of You' - an angry funk/punk/soul sister song with lyrics by Shelly and music by the band inspired by a Kung Fu boyfriend who stirred up trouble between Shelly and her best friend; and 'A Thousand Suns' a beautiful, angry eco-song by Lauren.



'I have never played the bass before I came here but that's what I want to do in the band'

Flow McKay (14)

'I have learnt to express myself a lot more in my music which helps in my songwriting and working musically with other people'

Lauren Rosenberg (17)

'I have learnt how to let go when I sing and to listen to the other people so it sounds great'

Shelly Vaughan (15)

Frockshops & Frocklabs

We planned and delivered a six-session development programme of workshops, dubbing them 'Frockshops' and 'Frocklabs'. The programme was repeated and slightly amended for the second batch of bands following feedback from bands in phase 1. Our main venue was Holyrood School in Chard a local secondary school with excellent music facilities, a large performance space, and practice rooms. We also used The Meeting House in Ilminster and the 'Keyboards & Computers' Frocklab was held at the Music Department of Yeovil College, led by Paul Chousmer.

Attendance at Frockshops was variable. Some attracted all band members, for example the PA workshop, whilst others had few participants, for example the 'vocals' Frockshop. Feedback indicates that a key factor leading to poor attendance is prioritisation of time, given that many young people need to work at weekends and also have the pressure of study to balance against leisure-time interests.

'I think we all learnt a lot from Carolyn and now we aren't scared to shout down the mic!!'

Ele Peasland (16)

'I attended photography and stagecraft they were very useful and fun. It's good to learn about other aspects to music than just playing'

Tina Sellick (18)

'The songwriting was good fun. It was also a good experience to have under my belt because I hadn't done much songwriting before'

Carly Bawden (13)

'I have more confidence whilst singing and have learnt how to harmonise and improvise'

Lan Robinson (16)

'Working with other people and learning how to write songs'

Sophie Kelly (13)

Frockshop & Frocklab Programme

July 1st 2001	Songwriting Collaboratively
July 29th	Drum Kits, Percussion & Vocals
September 9th	Horns, Wind & Strings
September 30th	Using PA systems & Stagecraft
November 3rd	Keyboards & Computers
December 2nd	Marketing & Promotion
January 12th 2002	Songwriting Collaboratively
February 3rd	Vocals
February 16/17th	Computers & Keyboards
March 3rd	Introduction to PA & Applied Percussion
April 7th	Using PA systems & Stagecraft
May 19th	Marketing & Promotion



Laura Roft (Nasgal)

Performing Live



Creating songs in the comfort of your bedroom or in the seclusion of a rehearsal space is only one part of band life, it was important that our bands experienced performing live. The PA and Stagecraft Frockshop was designed to lead on to this next stage of development with a whole day dedicated to working with the Chard Festival PA system and focusing upon both technical aspects and stagecraft.

'I have learnt how to do a sound check and that you have to plan positioning on the stage'

Ele Peasland (16)

Following this foundation work, performance and stagecraft skills were then developed by the facilitators at rehearsals leading to a debut Girlzone Gig performance for each band on either the 12th October 2001 or the 13th April 2002.

In addition, opportunities were sought for the bands to perform elsewhere with the result that a programme of gigs was available to whichever bands wanted them. The plan was that we would create gig opportunities but that individual bands would be responsible for organizing themselves to rehearse, arrange transportation, and so on for these gigs. This enabled bands to gain the knowledge, experience and confidence eventually to organize their own gigs.

The Girlzone Gigs

All the participants at the first ever Girlzone Gig at The Meeting House in Ilminster agreed that it was a huge watershed for the project. A stunning success by any measure: a capacity house, an effective bonding process for the bands, terrific audience feedback, and our first ever 'Girls Rock ON! Live!' video.

On the day of the gig, the venue was transformed with jewel-coloured drapes, Chard Festival of Women in Music banners, and twinkly lights to create a really cool atmosphere. In addition, we hired a professional lighting rig, set up a Green Room, promoted the gig via press releases, posters, and radio interviews, and sold one hundred tickets!

The bands excelled themselves both in performance and team spirit - cheering each other on and creating a fantastically supportive atmosphere, strengthened by an audience of family and friends.

There truly is something magical about the process of performance, of engaging with an audience, that brings out something rather special in a band. Somehow the late entries, perhaps the odd 'bum' note, don't seem to matter if there is an upbeat positive vibe being expressed by the performers. It is this positive energy effectively communicated to an audience that results in a cycle of mutual enjoyment and everyone leaves having had 'a good gig!'. It is a lesson that can only be learned by actually performing live in front of an audience. A rite of passage in band life as critical as writing your first collaborative song.

The first Girlzone Gig video produced by Looper band member Clare Brody's father is a superb record of an exceptional evening in the life of the Girls Rock ON! project. All band members received their own copy and were encouraged to evaluate their own and other people's performances.

Our second batch of bands had their debut Girlzone Gig on 13th April 2002. This time we invited all six bands to perform, although unfortunately Looper were unable to make the gig on the night. Again, it was a sell-out. Up went the banners, twinkly lights, and the groovy Green Room. We also hired a smoke machine for that authentic rock concert ambiance and engaged Jackie Calderwood, a professional video artist, to document the gig. Again, the bands excelled themselves in performance.

Gig Programme

The Chard Foundation has always enjoyed a cordial relationship with Bridgwater Arts Centre and we were delighted when they asked us to provide bands for their 2002 International Womens' Day celebration. Nazgal were available and it was especially good to note that this was a 'home territory' gig for band member and Bridgwater resident, Tina Sellick.

Early in the project Yvette researched the Youth Music web site for similar projects and made contact with Colin Spencer of 'Rock On' in Devon. Colin kindly offered our bands the chance to perform with his project as part of Newton Abbot Festival on Saturday 1st June 2002.

On the following Monday (3rd June), our bands took the stage at an outside gig as part of the Chard Town Council Jubilee celebrations and on 6th June, Bob gave a star performance at the opening gig of the Chard Foundation's Hotbed symposium at the Taachi Morris Arts Centre in Taunton, in front of an international audience of women composers.

On 7th July, Nazgal and Bob performed at the 'Something for the Weekend' gig in Bridgwater, amongst an all-day programme of all male rock, pop and indie bands. In spite of a few technical hitches, they performed well in front of an appreciative audience.

The 8th July saw Nazgal, Bob, Random Cactus and Knickerline travelling to Ilfracombe to perform at the National Youth Arts Festival on 'Young Women's Band Night'. As it turned out, only one other band performed and it thus felt like another Girlzone Gig, but this time with a peer audience. Our bands went down a storm and got a taste for the popstar life-style, signing autographs, meeting fans, and selling CDs after the gig.

'Performing at the Girlzone gig, watching people enjoying OUR music was incredible! It was a real buzz'

Hannah Bennett (16)

'I loved singing with the other bands at the Meeting House because it was a great atmosphere and everyone got up and moshed'

Ele Peasland (16)

2001

12th October

Girlzone Gig

Looper, Nazgal, Fallen Angels, Lois Gately

2002

8th March

International Women's Day

Bridgwater Arts Centre
Nazgal

13th April

Girlzone Gig

Bob, Knickerline, Fallen Angels, Random Cactus,
Nazgal, Kayleigh and Cassie

1st June

Newton Abbot Festival

Fallen Angels, Knickerline, Bob

3rd June

Chard Jubilee

Knickerline, Fallen Angels, Random Cactus

6th June

Chard Foundation - Hotbed Symposium Opening

Bob

7th July

'Something for the Weekend'

Bridgwater
Bob and Nazgal

8th July

National Youth Arts Festival

Ilfracombe
Bob, Knickerline, Random Cactus, Nazgal

Studio Recording



Nazgal with Carolyn Tether, Sound Engineer, at Baseline Studio

'My best experience of the project was the recording because it was good working as a team'

Emelie Mousseau (15)

'The best experience was the recording studio. A new experience and a rare opportunity. Also the band got even closer'

Lan Robinson (16)

'Recording, because I found it far more valuable the second time around and I found it excellent fun'

Hannah Bennett (16)

'It was great spending a couple of days at the recording studio with the sound engineer. She's wicked!!!'

Heidi Edmonds (18)

Musicians may be live artists or studio artists. They may be both. We wanted our bands to experience both the excitement of gig work and the rigour of studio recording.

Recording is precision, concentrated work resulting in a musical output that you want to share with other people. The process can be both scary and wonderful, and has an important part to play in band bonding. All our bands recorded at an individual weekend studio session at the Baseline Studio in Ferndown, Dorset. Recording on a Saturday, sleeping over and mixing on the Sunday. The intention was to create a time-limited hothouse environment for each band.

As many musicians who self-produce their music will know, studio time is precious and expensive. You have to be well rehearsed and in good condition physically, mentally, and emotionally to deliver your best. We wanted our bands to get a sense of this even though they weren't paying for their own recordings which of course is normally the greatest pressure on new bands.



right: Carly Bawden recording at Baseline

Evaluation & Outcomes

So did we meet our targets in terms of access, breadth, coverage, and quality?

In seeking answers to some of these questions we have been evaluating the project as an on-going process, with regular project meetings convened by Yvette for the facilitation team, trainee, relevant specialists, and also attended by the Chard Foundation Director. In addition, participants completed evaluation questionnaires or were interviewed on a one-to-one basis after attendance at Frockshops, and all band members were given a post-project evaluation questionnaire to complete. Key supporters have been interviewed and the facilitation team completed post-project questionnaires. Detailed evaluation is available as a separate report.



above: Flow McKay (Knickerline)

Access

The Girls Rock ON! is located in rural Somerset - a culturally deprived area with few amenities and poor transport links with larger towns. Our project succeeded in helping young women access an area of music-making that is traditionally, socially restricted to boys.

We know from our evaluation that many participants had very little previous involvement with music and yet harboured hidden yearnings to try and make music. Other girls had followed a formal music training route on classical instruments but had not had the opportunity, or confidence, to experiment or perform with others. Girls Rock ON! succeeded in attracting ninety-one applicants to pursue their music.

During the planning stage we ensured that all the venues chosen for rehearsal, recording, and performance had disabled access, although we did not succeed in attracting anyone with a known disability to participate in the project

Breadth

We planned opportunities for all abilities with a two-phase approach, with more experienced musicians taking up band opportunities immediately and others, less experienced, able to audition in phase two following access to Frockshops and Frocklabs. It has to be said that the Frockshop programme did not attract the number of participants that we planned for, and evaluation has indicated that we need to reconsider the timing and regularity of this programme. We may also need to place more emphasis upon working with amplified sound, vocal, and microphone technique, plus more recording studio work.

Coverage

Transport was the key issue here. We planned to engage the assistance of the County Youth Service to assist with minibus transport (as they had done previously) for young people from outlying places. However, the proximity of successful band members to rehearsal venues meant that we did not need to pursue this service. In addition, we varied the location of Frockshops to ameliorate the transport issue. We did, however, include funding for minibus hire in the project design to enable people from dispersed locations to participate in gigs both locally and regionally. And, finally, the entire facilitation team were happy to give lifts to project members whenever required.

Quality

The central aim of the project was the creation of original music and we employed a team of experienced, trained, musicians alongside technical specialists to facilitate this.

Evidence of band members recognising the originality of their creative output as a quality issue can be illustrated by the following occurrence. At the Rock ON! Gig in Newton Abbot, members of the Fallen Angels, witnessed the first performance of the day, two girls singing a cover and dancing to a backing track and turned to the facilitators and asked in amazement 'Why are they doing covers?'

Through employing professionals, and monitoring project progress, we maintained a professional approach to music development and band work at all times. An imperative was to equip the bands with the tools, knowledge, and skills required for the business of music, as well as the pleasure.

'The facilitation team were all wonderful and treated us like professionals'

Gemma Baker (15)

Jane has been fantastic, she's really supported us through everything and has given us invaluable advice too! Yvette is a really talented singer and was really helpful at the gig. Carolyn is fantastic too, she's incredible in the recording studio'

Hannah Bennett (16)

'They have been very helpful and supported us to keep trying when we were stuck. We couldn't have done it without them'

Laura Roft (15)

We endeavoured to provide quality equipment and learning resources at spacious, comfortable venues. Evaluation indicates that this was acknowledged by participants as being of particular value;

The equipment we used has made us feel professional and it was good to use new things'

Laura Roft (15)

'I found the venues and equipment brilliant. A better place couldn't have been found'

Tina Sellick (18)

We also felt that it was important to give our bands quality performance experiences and set up opportunities such as the Girlzone Gigs and appearances at events organized by other agencies. These provided just the sort of professional experiences we anticipated and evaluation indicated that the participants rated these events highly.

'The Girlzone Gig. It was great fun. I love to perform! Performing is the biggest aspect to a band and it was a brilliant opportunity to show everyone our work.'

Tina Sellick (18)

'I think that the Girlzone Gig was the best experience on this project, because after all the hard work from everyone it turned out to be a success for all of the bands'

Carly Bawden (13)

Skills

Focusing upon individual skill development has enabled our young women to gain confidence and raise their self esteem, either through the acquisition of new skills, or through increased proficiency at existing musical or performance skills.

In addition there was noticeable learning in social and team working skills for example; listening, sharing, communicating, giving honest feedback in a positive way, taking responsibility, not letting others down, learning your part, and compromising. As part of the evaluation process we asked them what skills they had acquired?

'I have improved my song writing skills and I have learned how to deal with using a pa system'

Carla Peasland (14)

'The project helped me working with other musicians as I've mainly worked on my music alone it was a change hearing other people's ideas'

Tina Sellick (18)

'Songwriting, confidence in myself, working as a team and what the music business is like'

Hannah Bennett (16)

'I have improved on my song writing and stagecraft'

Gemma Baker (15)

Other Outcomes

A really exciting aspect of a project like Girls Rock ON! is unexpected success. For example, we are grateful to Lois Gately, for her involvement with our bands at Ilminster. Lois assisted Jane Harwood, performed in her own right at the first Girlzone gig, and inspired the bands. She also shared her knowledge and experiences about music making first hand with band members. Reciprocally, our project gave Lois a great assignment subject and we hope very much that she continues to be successful in her music career.

Our trainee, Claire Farmer unfortunately injured her back early in the life of the project and was unable to continue. However, her support was critical at the outset in planning the project, inputting her views at project meetings, and bringing her experiences as a professional currently working in the music business to inform and inspire the bands.

We were thrilled when Colin Spencer of 'Rock On' in Devon asked the members of Bob to take part in a Girls Rock workshop that he was running as part of his programme. The notion of the trained becoming the trainers is a very exciting one indeed.

As trainers, the facilitators have also sought development opportunities with the project. Jane and Jo, for example, undertook and completed a part-time Instrumental Facilitator Course (Level 3) run by 'Access to Music', in Bristol. This also included participating in four training days at The Creative Factory, based in the Wiltshire Music Centre, which was run by tutors from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

Inspiration often works both ways. Inspired by the bands, the facilitators decided that they should also go through the process of creating a band and writing and arranging original material, which we did. Our band, The Felicitators, also performed their debut gig at the first Girlzone Gig in October 2001.

The Future?

We posed the following question to project participants:

Q : What are your musical aims now as a result of the project?

'Be better at my singing and get on with my guitar'

Shelly Vaughan (15)

'I definitely want to be a session musician now'

Lauren Rosenberg (17)

'I really want to be a full time singer at local gigs'

Flow McKay (14)

'To get a better guitar'

Sophie Kelly(13)

'I would like to take on music as a career and maybe do further education'

Emelie Mousseau (15)

We also asked our bands how they could help Girls Rock ON! in the future?

'by joining other bands and helping new band members'

Alice Brown (14)

'by playing at gigs and talking to new members'

Hannah Bennett (16)

'to be an example of what the girls turn out like as a result of the project - like performing in-front of some girls and showing them'

Jaime Bishop (16)

'To tell people how good it is'

Flow McKay (14)

'To do talks or perform to new people and say it's what you can achieve and maybe help with it'

Naomi Spiller (17)

The Last Word...

'I think that the issue of females in music is important as the industry is dominated by men, so I'd support the project to the best of my ability ...thanks for running such a great project!'

Tina Sellick (18)

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Rock On, Devon
Chard Town Council
Bridgwater Arts Centre
Baseline Youth Centre & Studio, Ferndown, Dorset

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We would especially like to thank Phil Rosenberg, peripatetic guitar teacher, for putting us in touch with budding guitarists, bass players, drummers, and singers.

Colin Spencer of Rock On in Devon for inviting us to the fantastic Rock On gig in Newton Abbot.

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