

Start Local Community Music



Workshop Planning

In preparing a workshop, the following should be considered:

Length and timing of session

Allow realistic 'get-in' time. Arriving out of breath in the nick of time is neither impressive professionally, nor conducive to a good frame of mind for group facilitation. Pace the session itself to avoid getting behind and missing your objectives. Be prepared to drop items to keep the workshop on track.

Number and nature of participants

Make sure you get this information beforehand. Find out approximate age range, levels of musical experience, nature of any disabilities. Have a 'virtual' group in your head as you prepare the workshop.

Resources needed

Find out in advance what the host organisation has that is available for use. Make a list of what you need to provide yourself. If technology is involved, check for compatibility in advance (e.g. multimedia projector, appropriate software, matching leads/sockets etc).

Physical layout of working space

Questions to think through for each different group – Are we better on chairs or on the floor? If chairs, how should they be laid out? Should I be set apart, or one of the group? Is there ample space for instruments/equipment? Is there adequate access to the door? What's the best lighting out of the available options? Are there noise distractions that could be eliminated?

Health and safety issues

Any organisation with a staff of 5 or more should have its own written health and safety policy which you can ask to see if concerned. However, it's your responsibility to ensure a safe working environment for any activity that you are leading. If you're running a workshop alone, make sure you're familiar with fire evacuation procedures. Issues particularly relevant to music workshops include:

- Adequate space for using and handling instruments.
- Sharp or jagged parts of instruments.
- Properly maintained electrical equipment (ideally PAT tested).
- Safe routing of electric cabling.
- Safe handling and lifting of heavy items.

Risk assessment

Host organisations would normally do these internally, but there may be circumstances in which you have to provide one yourself – for example, if you were designing a project and 'selling' it to an organisation or funding body.

Child protection issues

Organisations will have their own written child protection policies which it would be a good idea to familiarise yourself before working in an environment with children and young people. These will include things like:

- Who the staff member responsible for child protection issues is.
- Signs to watch out for which may be indicators of abuse/neglect.
- What to do if you are concerned about possible signs of abuse/neglect.
- What to do if a child confides in you about an abusive situation.

To protect yourself from accusations, you should follow certain guidelines:

- Beware physical contact.
- Where possible, try to ensure double-staffing.
- Avoid one-to-one situations with a child.
- Don't give lifts to children.
- Don't give/take phone numbers, or develop social relationships.

Aims and Objectives

These are your starting point:

Aims. What the session will achieve in broad terms.

Objectives. The means by which those aims will be achieved.

Whether these have been set by the host organisation, or have been developed yourself, the structure and content of the workshop will hang on them. They are also what post-project evaluation is measured against.

Structure of session

The following is a tried and tested formula:

- Introduction/names.
- Warm up activity (*possibly linked to*):
- Whole group activity.
- Setting of tasks for smaller groups.
- Coming together for final sharing.
- Evaluation where appropriate.

Consider – Do the group already know each other? Name labels or learn names? Is there a separate space available for working in groups? What's achievable in the time available? Should we include a break?

Content of session

This will depend on:

- what your speciality is.
- are you working alone or part of a team.
- what the aims and objectives agreed with the host organisation are.
- whether the emphasis is on process or product.
- whether the workshop is a one-off or part of a series.