



YOUTH  
MUSIC

YOUTH  
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**YOUTH  
MUSIC** **NEXTGEN**

Photo by Jahiem Williams

**NEXTGEN  
FEEDBACK  
SURVEY**

**2023**

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## Introduction

The NextGen Feedback Survey is an annual survey to explore how much impact we are having and what more we could do to facilitate the development of young creatives’ careers. Respondents can then opt-in for a follow-up interview with our Insights team.

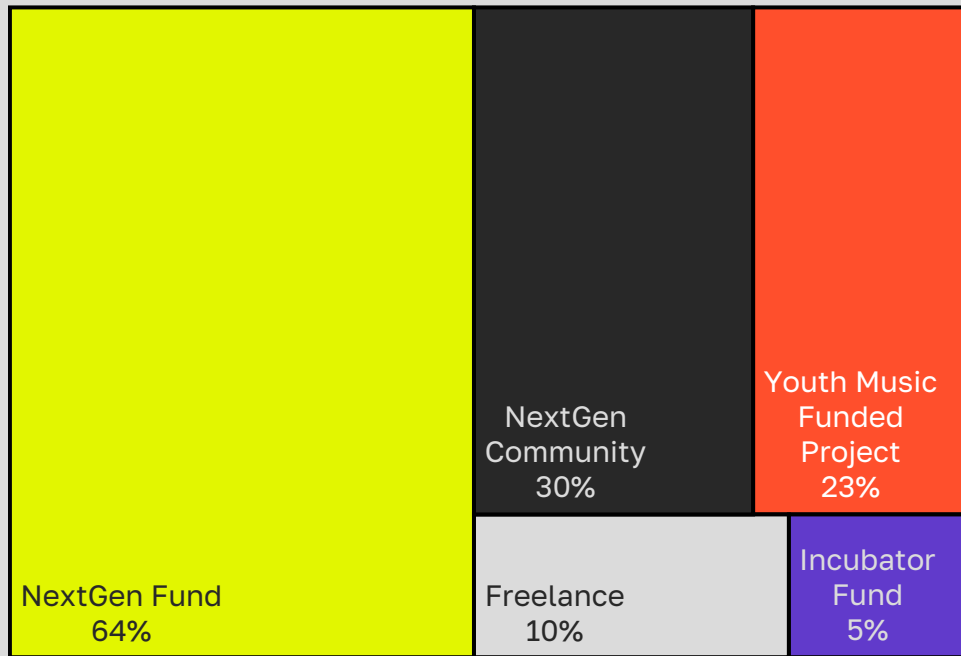
Interviewees included NextGen that have received the NextGen Fund, had a freelance opportunity, or have taken part in a Youth Music funded project. There were also young people who are part of the NextGen Community but were yet to have an opportunity with Youth Music.

This report includes an analysis of the interviews by our Insights and Communications Intern, titled “Rising Together: How Collaboration Will Shape the Future of the Music Industries”, which can be found on page 12. This is also followed by individual case studies for all the interviews.

# Respondent Information

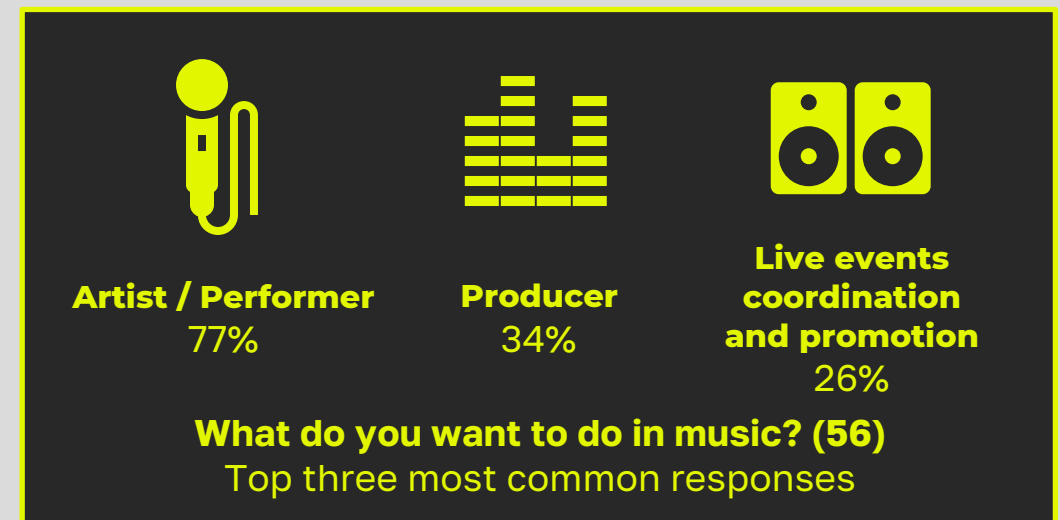
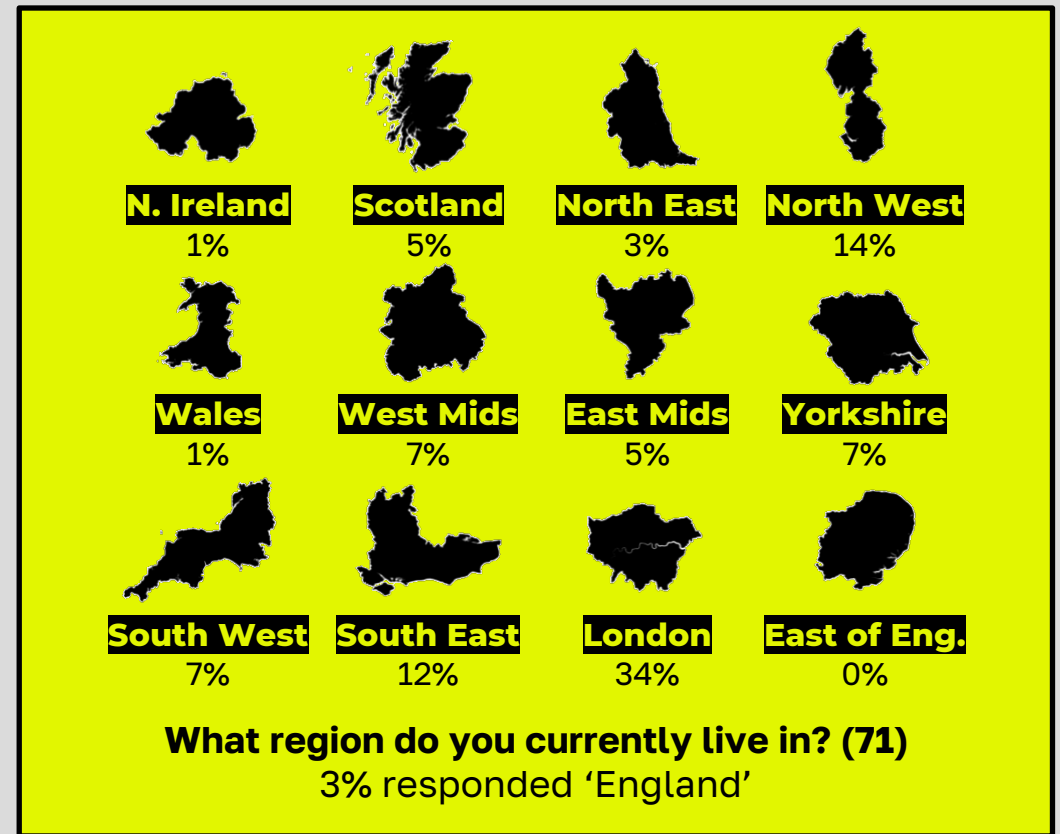


**Total responses: 73 (11% increase from 2022)**  
**63% had an opportunity with Youth Music**  
**Total opportunities: 94**  
**24 respondents had more than one opportunity**

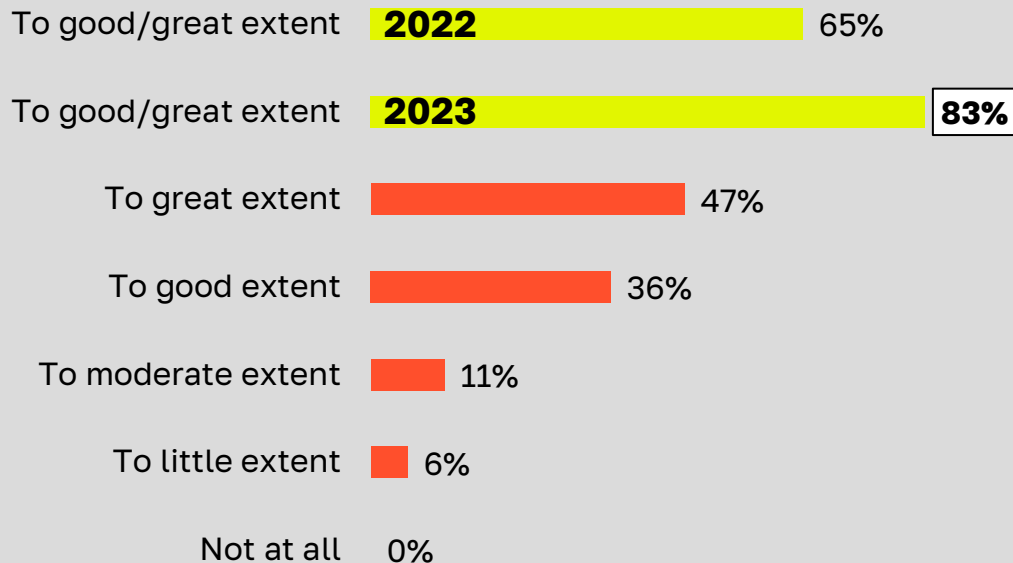


## Engagement with Youth Music opportunities (73)

- Applied for/had a NextGen Fund
- Taken part in a Youth Music Funded Project
- Taken part in an Incubator Fund Project
- Applied for/had a Freelance opportunity
- Follow Youth Music social media/Signed up to Newsletter



# Youth Music's Impact



## To what extent do you find the opportunities Youth Music offer impact your career progression? (36)

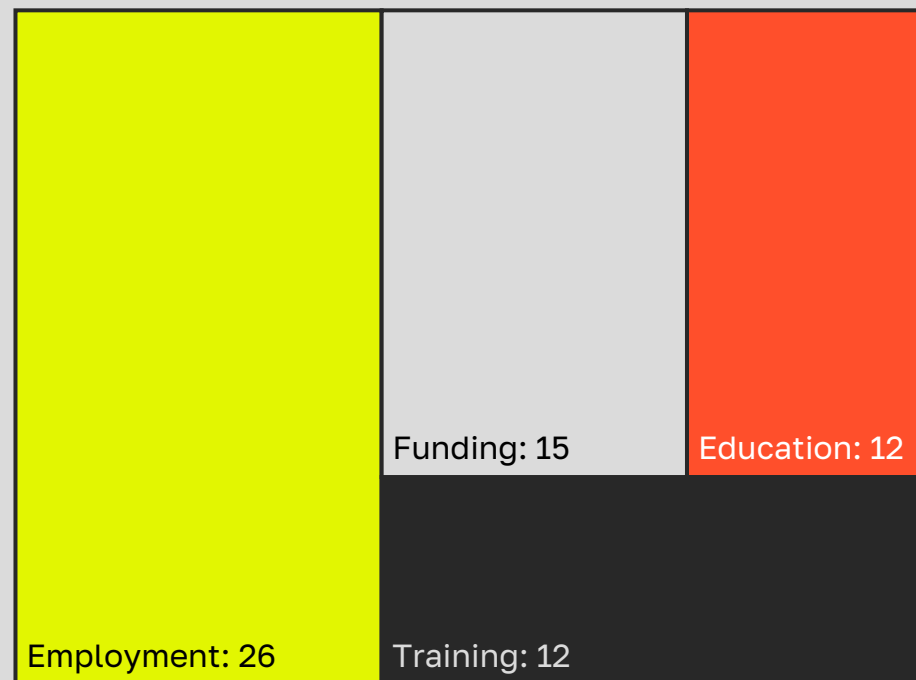
When asked to tell us more about why they had selected this, most comments provided examples of how their Youth Music opportunity had progressed their career:

“Being awarded the Youth Music NextGen Fund has **catalysed my development as an emerging artist**. This generous grant has provided the empowering means to fully devote myself to creating music and producing my debut EP. The funding has **enabled invaluable growth** - from upgrading my home studio tools to pursue my artistic vision, to **gaining industry connections through the Youth Music network**. With support covering mixing, marketing costs and more, **the NextGen Fund has given me immense creative freedom** and **belief in my potential** and **boosted my confidence** as a young artist.”

There was a **total of 65 employment, funding, education and training opportunities** NextGen have gone onto since their Youth Music opportunity. This is 40 more than 2022.

The majority of these opportunities were people who had a NextGen Fund grant (40), followed by previous Youth Music funded project participants (18), freelance (4) and Incubator Fund (3).

These opportunities included regular live performances, signing with a publisher, Wired4Music Generate funding, training with Repräsent and freelance audio editor/radio producer work with the Economist and the BBC.



## As a direct result of your Youth Music opportunity, have you progressed to any further: (45)

# Accessibility and Inclusion

We asked respondents to select and rank the biggest barriers they are currently facing while pursuing a career in the music industries.

Consistent with previous years, **financial barriers continue to be the biggest and most widely experienced barrier faced**. Beyond this, the proportion of people reporting **a lack of industry connections** as a barrier increased since last year, making it joint second.

However, when looking at the number of times a barrier is **ranked first in importance, a lack of opportunities in my local area ranks higher, overall**. This suggests that while the barrier is experienced by less people, it is prominent for those that do experience it. Also, this barrier is **more likely to be selected by those who live outside of London** (79% outside of London vs 46% in London).

	2023	2022	2022 to 2023
Lack of access to relevant opportunities that pay enough to cover living costs	81%	74%	+7%
Lack of industry connections	77%	66%	+11%
Lack of financial support to allow you to pursue opportunities	77%	84%	-7%
Lack of opportunities in my local area	64%	57%	+7%
Lack of knowledge around the different pathways into the industry	59%	52%	+7%
Lack of relevant work experience	48%	48%	0%
Other (please specify)	14%	14%	0%

**What is the biggest barrier you are currently facing while pursuing a career in the music industries? (69) – Most commonly ranked first in importance**

**#1**



Lack of financial support to allow you to pursue opportunities

**29%**

**#2**



Lack of access to relevant opportunities that pay enough to cover living costs

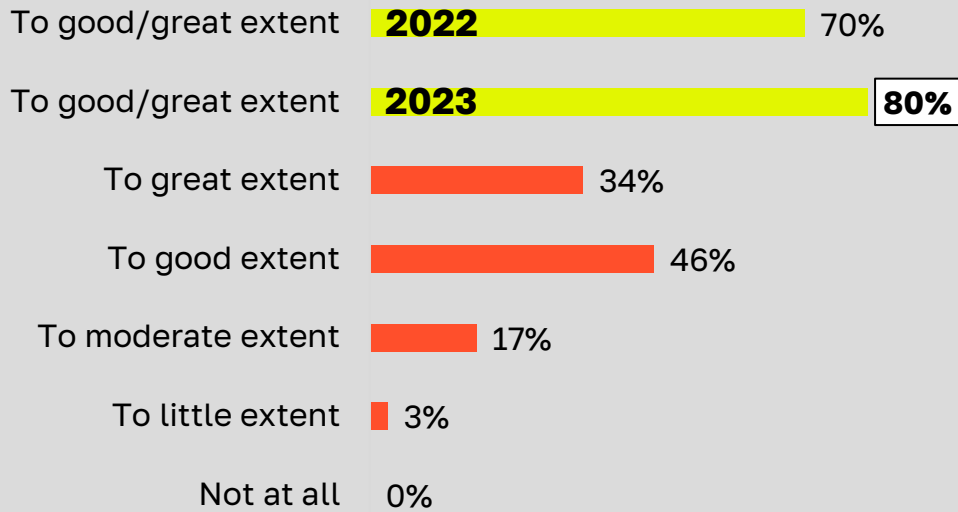
**26%**

**#3**

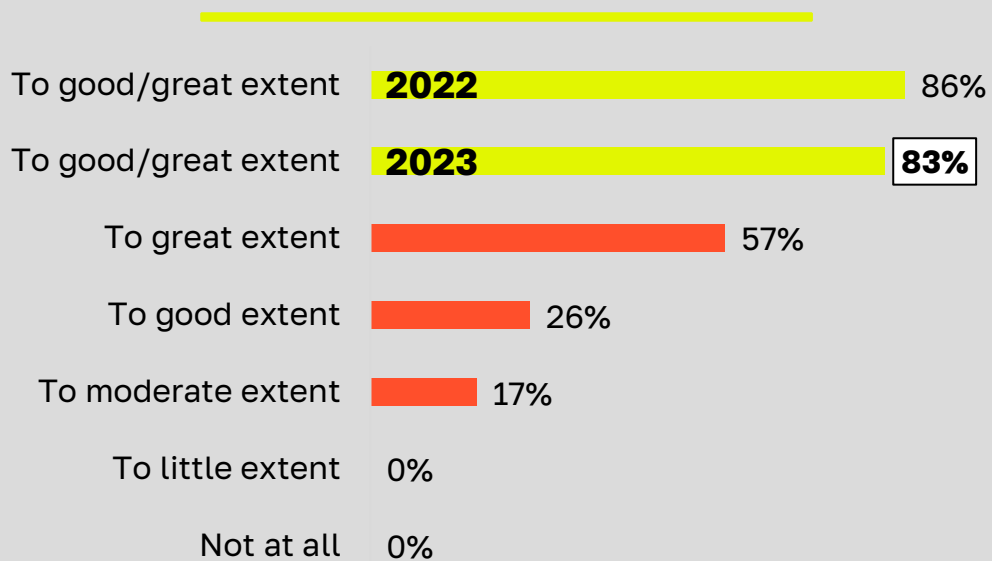


Lack of opportunities in my local area

**17%**



**To what extent do you find the opportunities Youth Music offer to be accessible (35)**



**To what extent would you say that Youth Music are inclusive in their approach to creating opportunities for young people (35)**

We saw a **10% increase** in those reporting that the opportunities we offer are **accessible to a good/great extent**, compared to 2022. Many respondents used the comment section to provide **general praise of our work**:

“Youth music have great accessible measures such as travel compensation and dedicated safeguarding”

“Youth music are supportive and understanding of individual differences and requirements”

Other comments praised our **newsletter and socials** the opportunities it provides:

“Once you're signed up to the newsletter and following the socials, it's very easy to see all the opportunities.”

When we asked **how we can make our approach** to making opportunities for young people **more inclusive**, responses included:

- Providing more opportunities
- Supporting with collaborations
- Increased regional spread of opportunities

# NextGen Fund Feedback

	Not at all	To little extent	To moderate extent	To good extent	To great extent	To good/great extent	2022 to 2023
Application form	0%	0%	3%	58%	39%	97%	+26%
Application guidance	0%	0%	13%	52%	35%	87%	+18%
1-1 support from Youth Music	0%	3%	23%	16%	58%	74%	+19%

To what extent were the following resources useful for you when applying to the NextGen Fund? (31)

	Not at all	To little extent	To moderate extent	To good extent	To great extent	To good/great extent	2022 to 2023
Application form	0%	0%	0%	42%	58%	100%	+23%
Application guidance	0%	0%	13%	39%	48%	87%	+16%
1-1 support from Youth Music	0%	3%	23%	16%	58%	74%	+1%

To what extent were the following resources accessible for you when applying to the NextGen Fund? (31)

When asked about the **usefulness**, we saw **significant increases for all resources** in respondents saying **to good/great extent** compared with 2022. We also received similar increases when asked about **accessibility**, including **100% saying the application form is accessible to a good/great extent**.

We asked successful NextGen Fund respondents if they had any **feedback on our grant management**. The majority of responses provided **positive feedback**:

“Great communication throughout the process. Offered up good advice whenever I've needed it and kept me in the loop.”

“Kind, friendly, helpful, pleasure to liaise with.”

Areas for improvement that were identified were **increased contact with their grant manager**:

“My grant manager is very responsive to my emails and I feel supported by them personally. That said, **I think it would be nice to have more frequent conversation** and mentorship surrounding the grant project without there having to be a particular reason for me to reach out (i.e. just a general chat about the project and steps towards the future, every now and then).”



# Where can we improve?

We asked respondents what **further opportunities** Youth Music could provide to help them achieve their career goals. The most common response was **mentoring and/or training opportunities**:

“Meeting with A&R's and industries. I definitely think a session with PRS / MCPS & PPL about setting up and registering music correctly so you get paid royalties correctly as this has been a big learning struggle for me and every artist I know”

“Opportunities to shadow an array of professionals and learn how the industry works, since it can be so closed off”

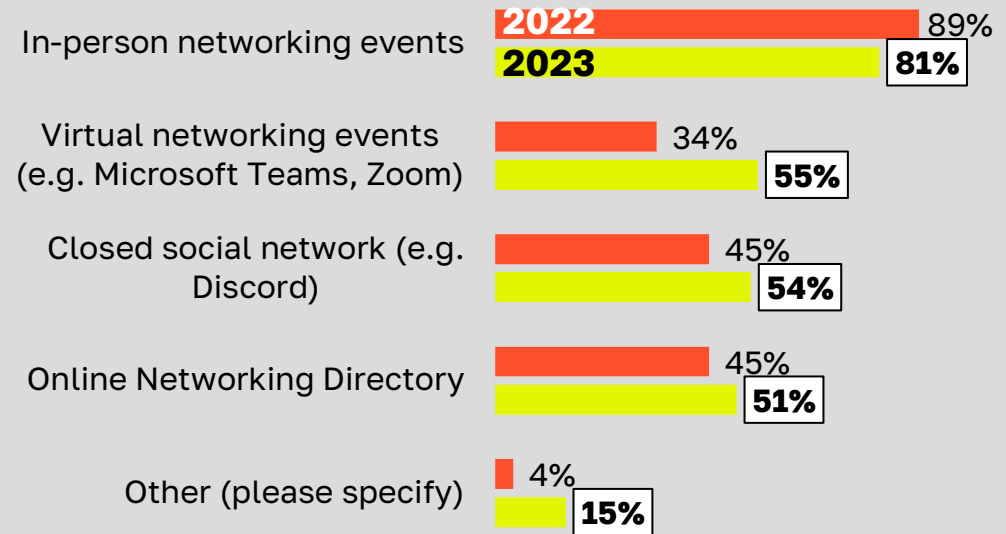
Many other requests were for **more funding** and **networking opportunities**:

“I think provide more support for NextGen recipients to achieve their goals at the end of the project. I felt quite lost at times and sometimes I felt too scared to reach out. More funding to help with costs for projects would be great too. Even if it was from £2500 to £3000 it would make the world of a difference.”

“Development funds for furthering knowledge in the industry or for attending conferences (great escape for instance in Brighton)”

“More networking opportunities with industry professionals and established artists”

Consistent with 2022, **in-person networking events was the most selected option** when asked how we can help NextGen collaborate. We also saw an increase in the other answer options, including a **21% increase in respondents selecting virtual networking events**.



**What could Youth Music do to help you collaborate with others involved with Youth Music? Select all that apply (66)**

# Rising Together: How Collaboration Will Shape the Future of the Music Industries

Written by Conall Conway, Insights & Communications Intern

For the past 25 years, Youth Music has been working to expand access and opportunities for young people in the music industry, regardless of background. As part of our latest research into the views of the young people we work with, we talked in depth with seven of our NextGen community members about their career, skills, and hopes for the future. We found a vibrant community of young creatives and musicians; an incredibly driven and passionate group of people striving to create a career for themselves. All of them have varying ambitions and dreams of success, but there was something that united them – a deep routed desire to help others in the music industry.

Charlie is a 24-year-old from London, who worked as a content creator for both the Youth Music Awards 2022 and Give a Gig Week 2023. Charlie's long-term goal is to eventually set up her own social media agency working within the music industry. Having personally experienced the low or non-existent pay for entry level roles in the industry, she wanted to start an agency where she could better support and offer opportunities to people.

“I think that it would be really nice to bring together my community and the people in my inner circle, create an agency and provide training opportunities,” Charlie told us. “I'd quite like to teach people about social media, but not only that about digital marketing, branding, just the things that I've overall learned because I feel like a lot of that is very gate kept.”

It was clear from the interviews that a sense of community is important for young people in the music industry. “I feel like it's a very like a lovely kind of close knit, creative community,” said 23-year-old NextGen Fund Creative, Jen, on the support she receives from fellow creatives in Liverpool. It was the support from one of these people that helped Jen apply for the NextGen Fund: “[It's] given me the confidence to search for those people and make sure that I can connect with people and saying, ‘We should grab a coffee, have a little chat and maybe work together in the future.’”

Similarly, after some initial hesitation, Abdullah, a 23-year-old from Leicester, reached out to another artist about collaborating and reaped the reward for it. “It's not really been easy for me to reach out to other young people,” he told us. “But last month [a friend] recommended to me that I should work with this guy I've known for a long time. And now we have one of my favorite songs I've ever made. I made a beat and then he came to my house because I've got a new studio, it was like fireworks! Literally, the song was made in like 5-10 minutes.”

Jen and Abdullah certainly aren't alone in wanting to collaborate with others. Ruairi, a 26-year-old from Belfast, better known as Lemonade Shoelace, spoke of how he likes helping others creating music, saying he liked spending time in studio spaces with other artists and collaborating: "I think I am just better suited to studio environments; I can help other people's songs come and work with people in my own music. I'll be doing lots of different writing sessions with people, which has been quite successful so far." Lok, on the other hand, spoke about how she wants to help artists within live music. While Lok continuously seeks out opportunities to improve their own skills as a musician, she hopes to one day host her own events for other musicians as well: "I would like to organise a concert for myself [...] But not only for me, but also for 30 other musicians!"

Lok went on to say, "I think it's quite important for people who are from different backgrounds to have a platform to share their music or the music industry." This is echoed by Sophia, a 24-year-old from Coventry who works for Positive Youth Foundation, a Youth Music funded partner. Following on from her participation in Youth Music funded project, she thought, "Wow, why would I not want to give this opportunity to other people with the insight that I have?" This led to her working for the organisation, herself; while she never envisioned herself as a youth worker, she is happy that she became one. She's now able to gain valuable skills to help her achieve her long-term goal: "My dream is to work for an art gallery and to do something similar to what I do in terms of community engagement."

Why is this important? In this crisis that the youth and community music sectors are currently facing, an aspiration from those in the industry to help others could be crucial to continuing to provide support to those who need it the most. As reported in our [Sound of the Next Generation 2024](#) report, more than two thirds of local authorities have cut, or plan to cut, their arts and cultural budgets; in the last decade youth services have had over £1 billion in budget cuts.

While it won't be able to solve all of these issues, the willingness to work with others within the industry that we have found is a healthy sign for the future. It could help to alleviate some of the impacts of the funding and access crisis that we find ourselves in. A new government hints at potential for increase funding and support, but even still the desire to help others will always be invaluable.

## Case Study: Jen, North West

Jen is a 23-year-old from Liverpool. Though they currently work as a boom operator on various television shows, her real passion is in music, having studied music and created compositions at university. She is interested in creating her own music projects, working with other artists, and even composing music for film.

[She has created her own EP](#), using the funding provided by her NextGen Fund grant to get it professionally mixed. It also helped fund still photography and [a music video](#) to accompany the EP.

“I think the music video was another really important collaboration for me. Because I’m quite a visual person and I also always wanted my music to go along with a video – maybe that also ties into why I’m interested in like composing for film, as well.”

Speaking more about their grant, Jen felt that it took a lot of pressure off their usual creative process. It allowed her to network, collaborate with other artists, and not have to do everything by herself. She feels that this collaboration has been a boost to her creative process.

She also feels that the networking afforded to her by the grant has potentially opened up the possibility of touring thanks to the contacts she made while producing her EP. For future projects, she has the confidence to reach out to other artists for help, support, and collaborate.

She has gone onto other projects and programmes since her NextGen Fund grant, applying for Arts Council England’s Developing a Practice fund, and is currently part of the TikTok creative academy, run by Catch 22. As part of the creative academy, she has gotten the chance to engage with other creatives, assist in rebranding campaigns, and has had one on one mentoring. Their end goal is landing a stable job at the end of the programme to help support her while she works on her music.

Her long-term aim is for her music to be able to financially support her instead of having to rely on her other work.

“I want the music to be able to support me financially long term. Because at the moment, [my] boom operating job and other little jobs is kind of what’s funding my life.”

## Case Study: Charlie, London

Charlie is 24 years old and has been living in London for the past 2 years. She currently works a range of jobs, including as a full-time social media executive, hosting her own radio show, and as the creative manager of a Scottish artist.

Her goal is to create her own agency working with social media and the music industry, with the aim to use the experience she has gained while working in a variety of freelance positions to help other people who are up and coming within the industry.

“I’d quite like to teach people about social media, but not only that about digital marketing and branding; just the things that I’ve overall learned because I feel like a lot of that is very gatekept.”

Her interest in social media developed while working for a radio station, where she was given the opportunity to help run the social media accounts. This then led her to Youth Music, where she found support getting into roles she was passionate about.

“I saw you guys were hiring a content creator for the [Youth] Music Awards, and then I applied and here we are.”

Talking more about work, she expressed her frustrations with the low or non-existent pay for entry roles into the industry. She spoke about her disappointment at having to turn down an offer for her dream role as they were not willing to pay a living wage, highlighting that such practices mean these organisations are not as inclusive and supportive as they claim to be.

She feels that Youth Music has contributed to her attaining her current role as a creative manager working with a group of artists. Her opportunity with us helped to increase her overall comfort and confidence within the industry and was also her first paid role within social media.

“It is looking more likely that I can be self-employed and start my own agency and start my own company. Because now I’m actually getting money from this.”

## Case Study: Ruairi, Northern Ireland

Ruairi is a 26-year-old from Belfast, Northern Ireland, who currently works in London. He mainly supports himself with his music, as Lemonade Shoelace, though also works part time as a bartender to help supplement his income. His current music projects mostly consist of him and session players performing live; though he enjoys live performance, he wants to shift more towards studio-based songwriting and production.

He has been successful with his projects so far, beating out over 30,000 other applicants from across the globe to win [Vans' "Musicians Wanted" competition](#). This afforded him the opportunity to perform in Mexico, alongside artists like Youngblud.

“[It] was a pretty amazing opportunity to have very early on in my career.”

Ruairi found out about Youth Music’s NextGen Fund through word of mouth among other Northern Irish musicians. After receiving funding, he felt like part of a community rather than just a recipient.

“I’ve got funding before where you just get the money and then nine months later, they’re like, ‘Oh, do you wanna fill in this form?’ And [I feel] there wasn’t much of a development there [...] but through Youth Music, I’ve watched other people develop and I’ve seen other people use their money in certain ways that I wouldn’t have thought about.”

The grant allowed him to further his music career in ways he wasn’t able to previously, working with a production team to produce a music video for his song [“Do Whatever Makes You Happy”](#). Ruairi has found success within the industry, including landing a publishing deal, and doesn’t feel that it would have been possible without the funding made available to him via his NextGen Fund grant.

Talking more about his creative process, Ruairi explains that while he previously considered himself to be a very DIY and solo creative, his recent success has given him the confidence and ability to reach out and work with other creatives for future projects.

“I learned how to trust other people in my project [...] I’m becoming more accepting of how other people can help. So that’s definitely a huge positive of receiving [the NextGen Fund].”

## Case Study: Anusha, London

Anusha is a 25-year-old from south London. While she currently works as a senior admin assistant for a charity, her goal is to become a full-time musician in the future.

Though she did study at a music school when she was younger, she didn't have a great experience there. It wasn't until the pandemic-caused lockdown that she got the time to reevaluate and rediscover her passion and ambitions in music. Despite barriers faced due to illness and her disability, she found unique ways and tactics to function as a musician.

After finding out about Youth Music via a friend, she successfully applied to the NextGen Fund. She used her grant to fund a zine, a single, and [a music video](#) as part of her 'Burden' project.

“Within the year I've gone from sort of being an online musician [...] then at the end of the year, I've done a whole mini tour of performances.”

She feels that the grant has significantly helped her career progression, being able to hire producers, and get her music professionally mastered.

Her confidence and experience have been boosted massively through this process, and it has opened up even more opportunities for her in the future. She is now exploring how best to further her music career while working with her disabilities, thinking about how she can use online platforms to connect with her audience.

“I think I've realized the power of online and social media. So I was able to double my social media audience with this project, which I was really excited about.”

In the next 12 months, she is working towards releasing a mixtape, and is immensely proud of her journey so far.

“I found a community of people that I just wouldn't have found before. I think with 'Burden' and the project as a whole, I'm very proud of myself. For putting myself out there ... there's a reason why I do this. I do this for community and to document what's going on. So yeah, I've definitely found my purpose as a musician over the past year.”

## Case Study: Abdullah, East Midlands

Abdullah is a 23-year-old from Leicester. He has been passionate about music since he was young, after a friend introduced him to a Youth Music funded programme at 16. The project helped to turn his writing and poetry into lyrics, working with the staff to learn the basics of audio engineering and how to make his own songs. He feels that this opportunity has been an incredibly positive and helpful.

“I’m learning guitar. I can put all this ADHD energy into something a lot more productive [...] I’m happy to be developing.”

It has also afforded him the opportunity to work with other musicians, make a music video, and even to perform live at a local music festival. He feels that this experience has been good for his mental health and has offered guidance for the future, giving him a safe space to go and express himself when he needs to. Taking part in the project also encouraged him to go to university; while his friends said it was a waste of money, a youth leader helped him reconsider:

“[He] just challenged my mentality, like to why not believe in myself?”

He has persevered with his music post university, creating music to help him deal with some of the problems in his life. The positive feedback he received about his music encouraged him to create an EP with some friends. The EP project was a stabilising force for him, helping him to deal with missing out on opportunities due to some mental health problems.

He would later be awarded a NextGen Fund grant, which has been a major springboard for his music and helped his workflow.

“I’ve got a new studio now from the NextGen Fund. And like, it was like fireworks. Literally the song was made in like 5-10 minutes.”

Moving forwards, he is interested in working to build a career in the industry. But he can find himself struggling with solitude and access to other opportunities, so is also interested in attending Youth Music’s NextGen Community Events.



## Case Study: Sophia, West Midlands

Sophia is a 24-year-old from Coventry. She currently works for a Youth Music funded project called Changing Trax run by the Positive Youth Foundation. Her role involves using music and art as a creative platform to develop skills, talent, and relationships with young people. Despite never envisioning herself as becoming a youth worker, she has always been involved in volunteering. When she got the chance to work in a music focused youth programme, she seized the opportunity, as being a singer she has always had a passion for music.

“I thought, ‘Wow, why would I not want to give this opportunity to other people?’”

While she currently works for a Youth Music funded partner, she has previously worked in more industry focussed roles. She held a placement working in live music, getting to work in a variety of venues, shadowing an engineer and learning more about mixing.

Talking more about her current work, she explains how her experience with her placement has given her the skills that she uses daily in her work with young people. She helps them with their writing skills, familiarising them with music studios and how they operate, breaking down the technical information provided by sound engineers and technicians into useful feedback.

“I feel the skills I gained in live sound really helped [...] it just made life a million times easier. I love just being able to use my skills to help other people, so I feel like it was really beneficial.”

She feels that though there are still some barriers that would stop her from furthering her career within the music industry, Youth Music has helped her and is interested in attending NextGen Community Events.

“I do feel like networking events and live music events are such a great place to bring creatives together.”

In the future, while she is still passionate about music, she is interested in exploring other aspects of the arts. Her dream is currently to work at an art gallery, running community engagement and outreach programmes.

## Case Study: Lok, Scotland

Lok is a 25-year-old who lives in Edinburgh, originally from Hong Kong. While she does have a passion for creating music, she is currently still figuring out what she wants to pursue as a career. So far, she has tried out roles as a digital marketer, an event organizer, and more recently has looked at working towards becoming a festival or event producer.

She has always enjoyed singing and creating music, participating in a few singing competitions when she was younger. But it was only after she took part in a foreign exchange programme that she began to consider music more seriously as a potential career path.

“I grew the interest to do it more and then went to quite a lot of live events and some jam sessions to improvise. So I think that's how I started.”

Free time afforded by Covid-19 led to exploring her musical passions and taking the time to learn how to use music software and practice some instruments. Because of this, she was able to land her first job opportunity within the music industry.

Finding the opportunity wasn't easy, though. Lok expressed frustration that as someone who comes from outside of the UK, it was hard to find opportunities herself compared to someone who grew up here. This is amplified by living in a region like Scotland where opportunities are even more scarce.

“I would like to have the opportunity to get trained as a music/festival producer. But I see [them] mostly happening in England, not so much in Scotland. Within Scotland, it is always about giving out funding, but not a lot of training opportunities”

Despite these frustrations, she is still interested in pursuing a career within the music industry. She is very interested in attending Youth Music's NextGen Community Events to network and get to know more people within the industry, and is interested in applying for the NextGen Fund in the future.

# YOUTH MUSIC

THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR YOUTH MUSIC  
STUDIO LG01, THE PRINT ROOMS  
164-180 UNION STREET, LONDON, SE1 0LH

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1075032  
LIMITED COMPANY NUMBER: 03750674