



Developing inclusive ensembles

Feedback and tips on developing inclusive ensembles at music services, based on the NISG sessions with Open Up Music.

What does an inclusive ensemble session look and sound like?

- ▶ We should have high aspiration for individuals from all backgrounds.
- ▶ There is no difference in quality - it is shown in a different way.
- ▶ Plenty of opportunity should be given for people to ask questions.
- ▶ Parts / scores may be adapted in various ways.
- ▶ Musical instruments may be adapted.
- ▶ More time allowed for participants to engage in the rehearsal.
- ▶ The physical space may be set out differently.

What are the defining features we should look for in an inclusive ensemble?

Steps are taken to ensure everyone can access the session, feel supported and included in all the activities and feel valued.

Attempt to align with mainstream groups where possible so individuals do not feel that they are segregated or held to different standards.

How can we encourage colleagues to change how they deliver ensembles?

- ▶ Develop a greater understanding of what an inclusive ensemble is, how it can be run and why it's important.
- ▶ Leaders should have an open and flexible outlook.
- ▶ Develop a regional ensemble structure with staff development visits to see and observe other groups (based on National Open Youth Orchestra model).
- ▶ Peer to peer reflection and sharing of best practise.
- ▶ Give opportunities for young people to share their perspectives. Youth Music: IDEAs framework can help music services focus also on their organisational structure through the lens we wish to apply to children and young people's provision.



What practical changes could you implement at your music service?

- ▶ Give background information to participants; what to expect, what is the plan for the rehearsal?
- ▶ Pre-teaching posters (key language, this term's work, what to expect next).
- ▶ Provide a walk-through video of the rehearsal space and photo / video of teachers.
- ▶ Provide tracks to listen to prior to the rehearsal.
- ▶ Be open and transparent to ensure the session still meets the needs of the young people.
- ▶ Provide sentence stems to enable EAL students to contribute.
- ▶ Have a meet and greet protocol - know how to welcome students into the rehearsal.
- ▶ Include leaders from similar backgrounds.
- ▶ Consider the shape of the session based on trauma informed practice.
- ▶ Consider marketing materials; do they show inclusivity of the individual attending?
- ▶ Incorporate feedback from students and parents.

What could you do to enable disabled, including neuro-diverse, participants in your rehearsals or concert spaces?

- ▶ Check access - can they get in there?
- ▶ Do you need to change venue?
- ▶ Can people move around freely in the venue?
- ▶ Is there a safe/breakout space that can be used if people need to re-regulate?
- ▶ Is there a changing places toilet?
- ▶ Consider lighting and sound - are there any potential triggers?
- ▶ Is there a video walk-through available for the venue?
- ▶ Consider BSL interpretation or Makaton signing?
- ▶ Incorporate youth voice in marketing and communications.
- ▶ Create a welcome space where neurodiverse people feel that the space is open and designed for their needs.



How could your approach to repertoire and musical content change in order to be more inclusive?

- ▶ Represent composers and arrangers from under-represented groups.
- ▶ Audit repertoire being used.

What is your starting point to implement positive change?

- ▶ Audit what currently exists / current good practise.
- ▶ Build in ED&I management and monitoring.
- ▶ Establish robust systems for sharing additional needs with tutors.
- ▶ Availability of resources for ensemble leaders.
- ▶ Use technology to help individuals; different instruments / different presentation of repertoire.
- ▶ Grow a community of students and teachers to develop a holiday PMLD ensemble.
- ▶ Be curious, ask questions, be reflective, be empathetic



Learn more about inclusive ensembles from this report by the National Open Youth Orchestra and Sound Connections - noyo.org.uk/report/

Feedback from young people from the NOYO Key findings from pioneering an inclusive national youth orchestra report.

“Lots of the music we play, you wouldn’t really get that in a stereotypical classical music concert. You wouldn’t have the instruments! It brings a different kind of element of programming. I really enjoyed the process of having the workshop with Alexander Campkin, just talking about what he wanted with the piece and how we should transfer that to how we play it. ‘Creative’ is one of the really good words to describe NOYO.”

Holli Pandit
NOYO harpist

“NOYO was the first musical group I’d joined in three years, with previous opportunities being ignored for fear of having to mask my autistic traits, overstimulation, or having my needs downplayed or flat-out ignored. The first rehearsal established rules and boundaries for all musicians. Our Music Leaders were open and receptive to all feedback and suggestions, and they offered support and accessibility before anyone needed to ask for it. NOYO saved me as a musician. It restored my confidence and joy for performing.”

Jamie Moody
NOYO saxophonist

“I liked playing at my hometown concert hall because I sat in the audience before, and now say to myself, I play on that stage. Being part of this journey, it makes me feel proud, honoured, buzzing! I liked it all - the experience of working as a team with friends, and showing what we can do, playing with BSO Resound, the fact we sounded different in different places. An idea for future concerts? Joining with other orchestras.”

Torin van Breda
NOYO Tenor horn player

“The sound that we create, we work hard at it. It’s definitely not like waving a magic wand. There is this stereotype of disability and having this superpower which is quite unrealistic and adds to the idea of ‘otherness’. It’s important to me that we work for the music. Inclusivity, and making brilliant music, I’d say we’re pretty damn good at.”

Oliver Cross
NOYO Harmonica and Bass Synthesizer,
Composer of ‘Barriers’

A collaboration between Hertfordshire Music Service and the following organisations.

