

Department for Culture Media and Sport

Young musicians to get more practice spaces

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Feargal Sharkey asked to set up rehearsal studio network

A drive to encourage young musicians by giving them their own rehearsal spaces was launched today by James Purnell and Ed Balls.

The Culture and Young People's Secretaries have tasked Feargal Sharkey, former Chair of the Live Music Forum, with setting up a network of rehearsal studios for budding musicians throughout the country.

The move addresses the lack of affordable, well-equipped rehearsal studios which means many young artists have nowhere to practice and no access to professional equipment. A recent report found that 43 per cent of young people who wanted to participate in musical activity didn't because of the lack of facilities or huge costs.

Mr Sharkey will work with key music industry figures, local and regional government, equipment suppliers, the Music Manifesto Board and others to set up the network. Work will involve getting funding, finding suitable locations and premises and turning them into proper studios.

A pilot in Wrexham, which opened in January 2006, has already been a major success. The local council donated some space in a local building free of charge and the Music Industries Association provided instruments and equipment. Between May and August 2006, more than 700 people – the majority of whom were under 18 - used the rehearsal studio.

James Purnell said:

"Every band has to start somewhere. But too often that somewhere is their parents' garage or the spare room. I want young musicians – however good they are – to have access to a professional studio. This is about inspiring young people to take up music, giving them an outlet for their creativity and getting them off the streets."

Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, said:

"All young people should be able to develop their talents and achieve their ambitions. If their talent is for music then we want to give them an affordable and well-equipped place where they can practice and fulfil their potential. Both Feargal's report and the Music Manifesto identified a need for more facilities and this should help meet that.

"My department is already doing a lot to encourage music making in schools with a record £95 million this year to support music education for young people - including £10 million for a new singing programme.

"Our proposals to release unclaimed assets to invest in youth services could enable us to do even more"

Feargal Sharkey said:

"It's incredibly difficult to break into the music industry. To get a recording contract means everything to every young artist and being able to play well live is a vital ingredient of that. So it's obvious that young musicians need somewhere decent to practice. Without new musicians and performers there is no £6 billion music industry. Without them the UK wouldn't have such a fantastic reputation for groundbreaking music.

"But this isn't just about what we can do for the music industry. It's about ensuring young people have all the opportunity and support that we can possibly provide to get them into the creative industries. It's about giving them the confidence to play in front of an audience to discover themselves and discover their music. And it's simply about giving them somewhere to be creative."

Paul McManus, Chief Executive of the Music Industries Association said:

"Our mission is to get everyone playing a musical instrument. We're delighted to be working

with the Government to provide spaces and equipment to help people to do just that."

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Notes to editors

1. This announcement supports recommendations from the Live Music Forum and the Music Manifesto.
2. The Live Music Forum, chaired by Feargal Sharkey, was set up in January 2004. As well as working with partners across the live music world to ensure they make the most of the opportunities offered by the Licensing Act 2003, the Forum looked at a range of ways to promote live music and foster grass roots talent. **The Forum published its report on 5 July 2007.**
3. One of the recommendations in the report was that the Government should work proactively with local authorities and other partners to develop affordable and well-resourced rehearsal spaces.
4. The Music Manifesto is a campaign to provide every young person with access to a range of music experiences and to improve the support structures for music making. It launched in 2004 as a collaboration between Department for Education and Skills, Department for Culture, Media and Sport and partners from the music and creative industries - from music teachers to organisations like BBC and EMI. It has the support of over 1400 signatories from across the music sector.
5. **In January 2007, Alan Johnson, David Lammy and Shaun Woodward responded to the recommendations of the second Music Manifesto report Making Every Child's Music Matter** covering music inside and outside the classroom and routes into the music industry.
6. Musical Engagement of Young People aged 7-19, a Youth Music Report, found that 43 per cent of young people who didn't participate in musical activity cited the lack of facilities and costs as the reason.

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