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Case Study

# Leap into Live Music!

Building relationships with audiences  
from disadvantaged groups

Beth Wells, Leap into Live Music! Programme Manager,  
Liverpool Philharmonic



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Liverpool Philharmonic has engaged 1,950 new households with free and subsidised tickets and a personalised approach.

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## Background

In May 2013, as part of their 25th anniversary gifts, Paul Hamlyn Foundation announced the Paul Hamlyn Club Awards. The awards totalled £2.5 million to be shared among five UK performing arts venues.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic was one of five organisations awarded £500,000 over five years.

The awards would allow the organisations to make significant progress in their work to attract and build relationships with audiences from disadvantaged groups within their local communities.

The aspiration was that the venues would develop models that have a long-term impact on diversifying audiences and sustaining involvement and interest. Each organisation created their own scheme, tailored to local needs and building on the strengths of their work to date.

## Leap into Live Music!

Leap into Live Music! was designed to increase and sustain Liverpool Philharmonic audiences from economically disadvantaged communities in Liverpool.

The programme provides free and discounted tickets for people who have never attended a concert or event at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. The subsidy is designed to decrease gradually over the five-year period.

## About Liverpool Philharmonic

Liverpool Philharmonic was founded in 1840 and includes the world class Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, as well as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir. It also runs two venues: the Grade II\* listed 1,790 seat Art Deco Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and a smaller informal venue, Music Room.

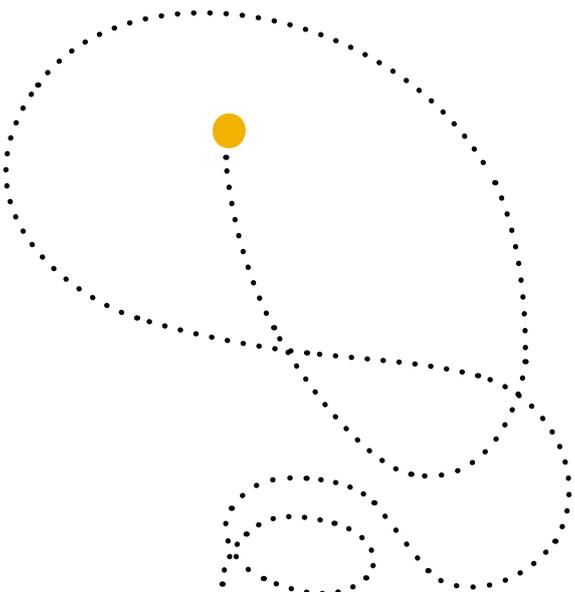
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[www.liverpoolphil.com](http://www.liverpoolphil.com)

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## About Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Paul Hamlyn Foundation is a leading charitable funder in the UK and also operates in India. Its mission is to help people overcome disadvantage and lack of opportunity, so that they can realise their potential and enjoy fulfilling and creative lives.



## Planning Leap into Live Music!

A cross-organisational working group was set up in order to decide what to do and how to focus the project.

We set up two half-day sessions with staff from across the organisation inputting into the workshop. Through those sessions we identified three groups we wanted to work with more closely:

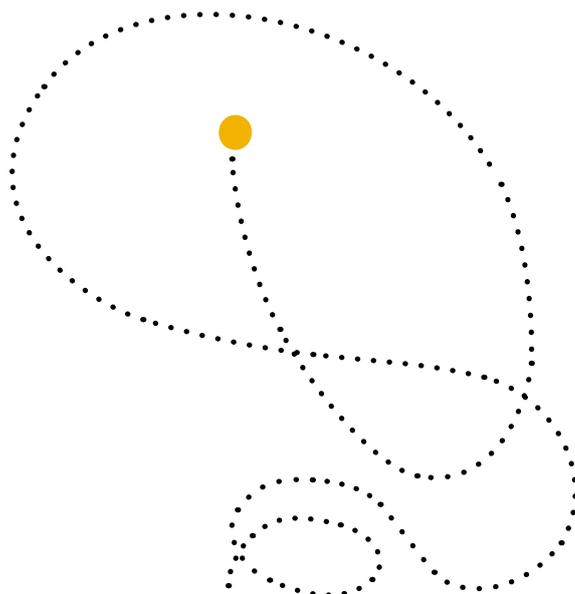
- Families - building on the strong links through our learning programme, particularly in North Liverpool
- Employers with a large minimum-wage or part-time workforce
- Community groups across Liverpool City Centre through Liverpool Centre for Voluntary Services (LCVS) and beyond

We then set up the Paul Hamlyn Working Group, which involved:

- A board representative
- Chief Executive
- Paul Hamlyn Club Manager
- Director of Audiences and Development
- Director of Learning
- Artistic Planning Executive
- Head of Programming
- Box Office Manager
- Marketing Manager

Other staff members from those departments also joined in depending on the focus of the meeting.

The group was deliberately created with high level members of staff to ensure that the programme was firmly embedded within Liverpool Philharmonic and that links to the strategic plan were strong.



## Building connections

Once we had decided on the groups that we wanted to focus on we took a bespoke approach for each of them. We wanted to ensure that there was a two-way conversation and that we were responsive to their needs as new audiences.

For families we had connections through previous learning projects within the community so we met and spoke to key workers about the project and what we were trying to achieve.

For employers and community groups The Paul Hamlyn Project Manager presented to the entire Liverpool Philharmonic company and ancillary groups such as the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir and asked for warm leads. We specifically asked for contact details within either employers or community groups that they felt might be interested or who they could help us to make connections with.

In the past Liverpool Philharmonic had run a 'Tickets in the Community' scheme. It offered tickets for performances with spare capacity to groups affiliated with the Liverpool Centre for Voluntary Services. We had only ever really been in touch with group leaders so we were never sure who was actually attending. We wanted to look at how we could work better with these organisations as well as building relationships with the individuals involved.

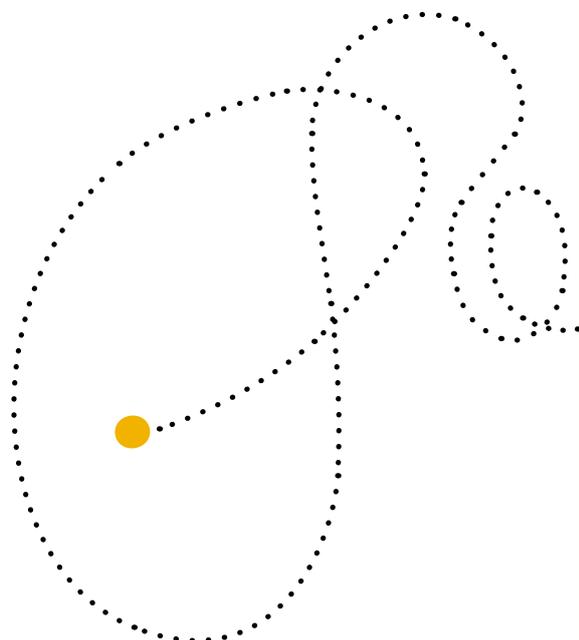
## Communicating eligibility

We were candid with key contacts about what the funding was given to us for. However, when discussing this scheme publicly we have been deliberately vague with the criteria.

We say the scheme is for 'people who wouldn't normally get the chance to attend performances at Liverpool Philharmonic'. We couch it in terms of a variety of reasons: access needs, cost, not wanting to take the risk, or not being on people's radars.

View the Leap into Live Music!  
web page: [www.liverpoolphil.com/leap-into-live-music](http://www.liverpoolphil.com/leap-into-live-music)

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## Managing Leap into Live Music! bookings

We register individual households (key contact name and details) so that we are able to track their progression through the scheme. Each one is tagged on our Box Office system as a Leap into Live Music! member, with a record of whether they came to us through the learning programme, community groups or employers.

Once they are registered onto the scheme they are entitled to:

- Free and discounted tickets
- A personalised approach - all bookings are handled by the Leap into Live music! staff (consists of one Manager and a part-time assistant)
- A simplified booking system - we have a paper form that people can fill out and return, if they don't have email or internet access, and a dedicated Leap into Live Music! phone line
- The opportunity to make last minute amends or cancellations

Between November 2013 and September 2014 we ran Leap into Live Music! as a pilot with no limit on the number of tickets people could have.

Once the pilot stage came to an end we decided that we would offer the first three performances for free and then charge £5 for adults and £2 for children. Members have the choice to pay in advance or when they collect on the night.

Tickets are collected on the night at the dedicated Leap into Live Music! desk. This allows us to keep track of people who might order tickets and not attend. It also enables staff to meet guests and ensure that they know where they are going. We show them to their seats, deal with any access needs and generally help them to find their way around the building in a more personalised manner.

We only offer a range of around 12 performances at any one time. This enables us to be present at all qualifying performances. It also avoids overwhelming new audiences with too much choice.

The events are promoted through three brochures a year that mirror Liverpool Philharmonic's What's On schedule. We rework the copy to ensure it's suitable for new audiences.

Leap into Live Music! members are offered the best seats in the house (the ticket cost being covered by Paul Hamlyn funding) so they have the best possible experience.

## Cost

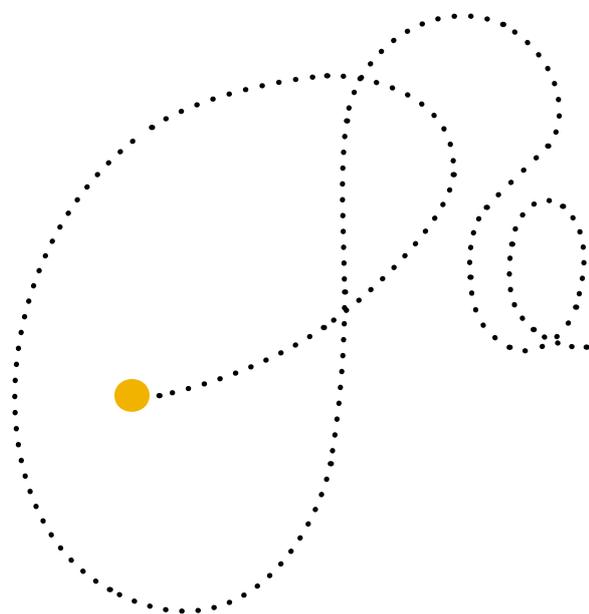
The project is still ongoing and is funded with a grant of £500,000 by Paul Hamlyn until August 2018.

The biggest expenses have been staffing costs for the Programme Manager and, since the growth of the programme, an administrative position and purchasing the tickets.

We are now offering a combination of performances that we know have spare capacity, and are therefore able to gain free tickets to, and ones that we know will sell well where the project buys or subsidises tickets.

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[View the Leap into Live Music! brochure.](#)



## Results

- Over 8,000 tickets have been distributed
- 1,950 households currently signed up
- 1,500 tickets allocated through the 2015 December/Christmas period alone

Now in year three, Leap into Live Music! is working with over 50 different groups and employers. These include social housing, community groups and large employers across the city. We have also increased links in our Learning programme through In Harmony and Mersey Care.

Audience Spectrum profiling by The Audience Agency demonstrates that 60% of Leap into Live Music! postcodes are made up of profiles least likely to engage with the arts

## Recommendations

Plan progression into the start - we started by running a pilot programme for the first year and then checking that the offer was right before rolling it out further. The offer was listed as 'free and discounted tickets on us' and then we settled on £5 for adults and £2 for children. Some people have attended numerous times and it would have been helpful to have a further progression route for them clear from the start.

Be patient - the first year was quite slow and it took time to build those relationships. However, once they were established, the scheme grew very quickly.

Involve senior management - having a working group made up of senior management meant that the programme was embedded as important from an early stage and that all departments understood both the programme and how they could support it.

Look at the relationships you're good at building and adapt the process for new audiences. We are very good at developing relationships with high-net-worth individuals, cultivating donors and developing relationships with regular audiences. We examined how we could apply some of these experiences to new audiences.

Communicate the offer clearly - we had some teething issues with staff in some organisations who signed up as members getting confused about which performances they could access. This was particularly true with NHS staff, as they are able to access lots of offers to theatre and entertainment anyway and they were not clear on how this was different.

## Conclusions

As this is a long-term programme we will need to determine what success looks like.

With the numbers of people we are working with, we hope that some will develop a love of Liverpool Philharmonic and will transition into our 'normal' audience.

Other groups we are working with will always struggle with cost and transport. We continue to work across the organisation with those particular groups to see what we can realistically put in place to continue to support them.

We have proved that it is possible to reach the hard-to-reach.

Interestingly, the majority of the work done has been very decisively offline. We work with people who do not necessarily have regular access to the internet so communications have either been over the phone or via direct mail.

