

BASINGSTOKE MUSIC INITIATIVE MENTORING SCHEME

Background

Like many towns across the UK, Basingstoke has seen the small live music scene it once had disappear almost completely. This has not just been due to the pandemic, but in the 2 or 3 years prior to the Covid lockdowns, venues and festivals in the Basingstoke and Deane area had been slowly closing down, reducing the spaces for bands and musicians to play. Basingstoke is not a University town and therefore also lacks the organic DIY scene that emerges from a student population that places like Cardiff or Southampton benefit from. So, emerging from the pandemic in 2023, when Proteus was looking to programme some live music for its 'Smallest Festival In the World' event, it was hard to find a locally based diversity of talent ready to play.

To address this lack of opportunity for bands and musicians in Basingstoke, Proteus collaborating with RB Music, funded by the BDBC Cultural Compact via the Governments' Shared Prosperity Fund, created the Basingstoke Music Initiative.

The project is due to run initially over three years and sees Proteus and RB Music management working together to establish opportunities at a grass roots level for musicians and bands to develop in Basingstoke. The first year of this project will enable the development of Basingstoke based music artists as performers via the offering of paid performance slots, mentoring and training opportunities, marketing/branding support and free rehearsal space. The ambition will be to engage up to 16 musicians/bands in the first year.

Over the life of the project we will link to venues and partners further afield to increase the opportunities for participants beyond Creation Space; these will include small venues who have a reputation for hosting high profile musicians & bands at the start of their careers; Ventnor Exchange in the Isle of Wight, South Street Arts in Reading, The Lounge Bar in Alton, The Boiler Room in Guildford & The Wedgewood Rooms in Portsmouth amongst others. The ambition will be to build a regional circuit of grassroots venues that bands and musicians working with us can benefit from in the future.

We are looking for mentors from all genres of music and at all stages of their careers; but you must have been working at a professional level (i.e. paid for gigs) in the industry for a minimum of three years (this does not have to be full time - we understand fully that most Artists have 'day' jobs to supplement their incomes!). Mentors do not have to be based in Basingstoke as sessions can be conducted online, but at least one face to face session with your mentee is recommended.

What is Mentoring?

Successful mentoring partnerships can, have and will continue to change lives. They provide the structure and impetus needed for (both) participants to achieve continued growth and learning.

While roles and responsibilities will differ, mentoring is a two-way relationship involving help, support, role modelling, specialist advice and guidance - usually on the part of the

mentor, in order to facilitate the achievement of the mentees' goals and to help them grow professionally.

Participants in the Basingstoke Music Initiative mentoring scheme will be offered:

- A maximum of ten 1 hour paid Mentoring sessions with experienced individuals from the music industry. These sessions can be taken in tandem if appropriate; for example as five sessions lasting two hours each, or as full days. Mentors may be established Artists or bands to support the development of stagecraft and live work, industry experts on branding and digital distribution, or music business specialists. These sessions can be in person, delivered online or a combination of both.
- The opportunity to access free full days of weekend rehearsal space and evening rehearsal slots at Creation Space.
- Training opportunities (this may be in technical areas, vocal or instrument training, recording techniques etc)
- Access to equipment and instruments
- Automatic membership of a network of musicians and bands based in the region, with networking events and training opportunities.

In addition we will be programming 16 paid gigs per year, with up to five bands on each bill all at various stages of their careers. Roughly half of these gigs will be acoustic focussed, and will include music of diverse genres; including jazz and folk. Individuals or bands accessing the mentoring scheme as mentors or mentees will be automatically considered for these gig slots.

Role of the Mentor

Being a mentor is more than simply telling someone what to do. Successful mentors are able to play multiple roles in order to help the mentee achieve their objective. Many of these roles are encapsulated within the three C's - Consult, Counsel and Cheerlead.

- Role 1: Consultant

Just as consultants are hired to provide specialised advice based on a wealth of knowledge, mentors are responsible for sharing their own insights gained through years of real-world experience.

- Role 2: Counsellor

Listen and guide, but don't give away all of the answers all of the time. It can be easy for a mentor to help their mentee avoid mistakes, but there are often valuable lessons to be learned in making them. A good mentor will know when to take a step back and enable their mentee to figure out the right course of action, while still providing support and counsel.

- Role 3: Cheerleader

Provide support and enthusiasm as well as constructive feedback and advice. The music business is a rollercoaster ride with many ups and just as many downs - it can be hugely encouraging to know that your mentor is rooting for you.

With time and experience most mentors will know when it is appropriate to play each role, but that doesn't mean mentees should just let their mentor figure it out. A lot depends on the relationship dynamic and the mentees preferred learning style and as

such, mentees should be open and honest about what they need and expect from their mentor. Whether the mentor is being a consultant, a counsellor or a cheerleader, transparency and communication are key to success.

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction” - John Crosby

Benefits of being a Mentor

- Increase self-reflection and encourage professional growth
- Reinforce your own skillset and knowledge of your subject.
- Gain recognition for your skills and experience.
- Improve communication, leadership and management skills.
- Benefit from a sense of fulfilment and personal growth.
- Increase your confidence and motivation.
- Expand your network with new people and new ideas.

Traits of a Great Mentor

- Listen Actively

While it may seem obvious, listening is essential to a successful, fruitful mentoring relationship. Active listening not only establishes rapport but also creates a positive, accepting environment that permits open communication and honesty on both sides. Show interest in what your mentee is saying and reflect back important aspects to show that you’ve heard them, that you understand and that you’re on their team.

“Listening is about being present, not just about being quiet.” - Krista Tippett

- Share your Strategies

As a mentor, it’s likely that you will have experience with goal-setting and you should be willing to share this when appropriate. Using yourself as case study and referencing your own successes and failures will provide a valuable learning resource for your mentee, as well as building trust and rapport. It will also enable you to assist your mentee in identifying and refining their own goals before taking sensible steps towards them.

"If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else."

- Lawrence J. Peter

- Build Trust

Trust is also crucial to a successful mentoring relationship and tends to come naturally with clear, honest communication, dependability and consistency. There is a simple ‘trust equation’ that uses four objective variables to measure trust in a professional setting; Credibility, Reliability, Intimacy and Self-Orientedness. For more on this, see the Trust Equation resource on page 21.

“Trust is the glue of life. It’s the most essential ingredient in effective communication.”

- Stephen R Covey

- Encourage & Inspire

According to research, encouragement is the most valuable gift you can give your mentee. Communicate your belief in their capacity to grow and achieve their goals. Respond to frustrations and challenges with words of support, understanding and encouragement. Don’t feel like you, alone, must be the sole source of inspiration and encouragement - it can be just as helpful to point towards other people or resources that have helped and inspired you.

How to apply

Simply tell us about yourself and/or your band, what you feel your strengths are and how you could help an early career musician or group. Details of previous gig experience and what your ambitions are for the future. Please also send us a sample of your music, either as an mp3 file, link to streaming service or via YouTube. We're also happy to accept a voice note or filmed application if that's most comfortable for you!

We will then invite you for a chat and to see if we can match a suitable mentee to you.. There is no deadline for application, but all mentoring relationships must finish by September 2026.

Once we have matched you to a mentee, we will meet with you both to establish a framework of SMART goals that the mentee can chart progress with. We will also draw up an agreement between you and your mentee, so all parties know what to expect and the sessions will start. Sessions and any prior agreed expenses incurred (such as travel costs) will be reimbursed. Sessions will be paid at an hourly rate of £150.

We may ask you to participate in a short, filmed interview about your experience as a mentor, or to provide some written feedback that can be used in future promotion of the onward project. At the end of the mentoring agreement, we will meet with you to evaluate the project and measure the success of the partnership.

Contact us via email: mary@proteustheatre.com for more information, or to apply.