



Creating a musically inclusive England: a call to action for all music educators

The music education landscape is facing challenges on an unprecedented scale. There's less money, an uncertain political climate for the arts as a whole, and more young people are experiencing challenging circumstances.

Yet music education is in a strong position... if it can rise to the challenge of creating a musically inclusive England.

National Foundation for Youth Music

Youth Music is a national charity supporting life-changing music-making. Every year, it provides children and young people with the opportunity to make music, helping them to overcome the challenges they face in their lives. The projects it funds support young people to develop their creative and social skills, make positive contributions to their community and improve their wellbeing. Its ongoing research and growing online community for music education professionals helps develop high quality practice and drive fresh thinking in music education. Youth Music is supported by Arts Council England, People's Postcode Lottery and charitable donations.

youthmusic.org.uk
network.youthmusic.org.uk



National Foundation for
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Sound Sense

Sound Sense is the professional association promoting community music and supporting community musicians. Community musicians are specialists in breaking down barriers to participation in music. They work with participants of all ages and abilities to support their active and creative participation in music and respond to their needs and interests. Many of them are specialists in working with young people in challenging circumstances.

www.soundsense.org



MEC

MEC (Music Education Council) is the umbrella body for organisations involved in music education in the UK and is the UK's representative body on the International Society for Music Education (ISME).

www.mec.org.uk



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Young people and music: the state of play

We know that young people can improve their lives and futures by being involved in music: there's a wealth of research and case studies to prove it¹. And according to Youth Music's research, 90% of young people love music, but only 44% believe they are musical² and only 37% report engaging in regular music-making.

But despite their passion for music, young people's engagement in school music-making appears to be decreasing.

Worse still, those facing the biggest barriers – who we know could benefit the most³ – are often missing out, not enjoying statutory music provision in school, and not being reached beyond the classroom. Those young people from challenging backgrounds or with learning or behavioural difficulties are far less likely to participate, with out-of-school engagement in music-making dropping to 14% within those from socio-economic groups D and E⁴.

Partnership-working is critical, and Music Education Hubs were created just in time for us to face these challenges together: schools and music organisations, teachers and music educators of all backgrounds, funders and policy-makers.

Why we need to act now, together

- **Schools:** Young people's musical interests, skills and aspirations are often not sufficiently taken into account in the planning and delivery of classroom-based learning.
- **Out of school:** The proportion of 5-10 year olds taking part in out-of-school music-making activities has dropped from 55% in 2009 to 36% in 2013⁵.
- **Music services:** 12.8% of music service participants are in receipt of free school meals, compared with 18% of the total pupil population⁶.
- **Hubs:** Hub data returns

continue to show below-average participation for children from poorer backgrounds⁷. Although improving, there is a limited range of music-making taking place in most hubs, 'mainly classical and chamber music, tiered progression ensembles, grade exams and qualifications', and there are 'few examples of hip-hop, digital, folk or ethnic/world ensembles'.

• **The music education community:**

There is often a lack of effective connection and co-ordination between formal and non-formal music learning⁸. This means that young people's engagement, progression and passion for music are often neither fully recognised nor well-supported.

We need to take the opportunity that hubs present – including the additional funding from Arts Council England through the Department for Education in 2015-16 – to transform young people's inclusion and engagement in music.



What is musically inclusive practice?

Musically inclusive practice ensures that all children and young people who want to can make music.

True inclusivity can only happen in music education if there are opportunities for all children and young people to be supported as musicians across all genres and styles, by practitioners who understand their needs and worldviews and who are equipped to help them on their individual learning journeys.

A musically inclusive hub or school therefore:

- identifies and works to **break down any barriers** to music-making that young people face
- puts the voices of children and young people at the heart of work which is **relevant to their needs and interests**
- places emphasis on young people's self-expression and musical creativity

- supports a diversity of high-quality music-making across **a wide range of genres and musical activities**

- actively works to **create understanding** among all those involved in music education of the different approaches to teaching and learning

- does all this **through all areas of its work:** making inclusion a central factor in funding and resource allocation; strategy and planning; programming/curriculum; staffing and professional development

What are the barriers to learning and making music?

- **Economic** – children and young people whose family income restricts or prevents their participation in music-making, because it is unaffordable or inaccessible.
- **Life condition** – children and young people with a condition which makes their participation in music-making more expensive or complex, such as a disability or sensory impairment.

• **Life circumstance** – children and young people who are living in situations which makes their participation in music-making more expensive or complex, such as looked-after children, young carers or those living in rural isolation.

• **Behavioural** – children and young people whose behaviour means they need additional support or specialist services in order to be able to participate in music-making, such as young offenders or young people at risk of exclusion⁹.

How does musical inclusion impact upon quality in music education?

At this time, we have a unique opportunity to join together in understanding what makes for quality¹⁰ in music education. The music leaders of today - and tomorrow - will need to be flexible enough to work comfortably in either 'formal' or 'non-formal' settings, to work with young people of all backgrounds, needs and interests, and to work together to signpost young people to suitable provision and progression routes.

We have a solid base on which to build. Communities of Music Education (Saunders & Welch, commissioned by Youth Music, 2012) compared the features of excellent out-of-school music provision with Ofsted guidelines for music in school. It reported that teaching styles focusing on personal and social outcomes as well as musical outcomes are more likely to lead to positive outcomes around inclusion and attainment, particularly for young people at risk of low attainment, disengagement or educational exclusion.

The National Foundation for Educational Research's report *Raising the standard of work by, with and for children and young people* (commissioned by Arts Council England, 2012) examined 31 quality frameworks from a number of settings around the world, and drew together the common themes into seven core principles.

Youth Music has distilled this research (together with its own evidence collected since 1999) into *Do, Review, Improve: a quality framework for music education*. The framework outlines essential criteria for quality and can be used

as a tool for self-reflection, peer-observation and planning. This framework can be used as a tool by all music educators.

Musically inclusive practice puts high quality music-making at the heart of its work, and places emphasis on creative and emotionally intelligent behaviours and skills such as:

- **responsiveness** of the music leader to young people's musicality and interests, and being able to draw that out to help a young person find their musical voice
- **coaching and feedback skills**, enabling young people to develop greater understanding of their learning, and lead their own learning outside of sessions/classes
- **building trust**, which is particularly important in work with the most vulnerable young people
- **focusing on social and personal outcomes as well as musical**, seeing these as central to young people's engagement and development
- **ability to reflect and adapt** in response to their own experiences

of teaching, and young people/other people's feedback

These are skills that are critical for working with vulnerable young people. But we also believe that they should be essential for working with all young people to ensure that music is a vital part of every young person's education, and critical their future.



A call to action: for the future of young people and the sector

Our young people, our education sector, and in fact our society need a music education workforce that is committed to inclusion in music.

The problems we face at this time and the opportunities presented are not issues for the 'inclusion' workforce to tackle: they need to be addressed by the music education workforce as a whole.

We need to work together to adopt musical inclusion as the force for sector-wide, positive and transformational change.

Find out more

Download documents and resources, read blogs about including all children and young people, and join discussions at: <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/musicalinclusion>.

Musical Inclusion: the programme

Musical Inclusion was a programme funded by Youth Music, running from April 2012-March 2015.

Youth Music invested in 26 Musical Inclusion projects, tasked with ensuring that all children and young people in their local areas were able to access music-making opportunities, by working in and through the (new at that point) Music



Education Hubs. Projects carried out music education work with children in challenging circumstances; workforce development to ensure the quality of the provision; and strategic working to ensure integration of musically inclusive practice in hubs across England. Sound Sense led a team to evaluate the programme and to encourage practice-sharing, online and off. You can find out more by reading the team's reports in the Musical Inclusion section of the Youth Music Network.

Case study: A turning point for Michael through music

Michael, 15, was referred to hospital education because he had stopped attending school as a result of an anxiety disorder. He was unable to leave the house, experienced extreme mood swings, and was unpredictable. Struggling with day-to-day life, he couldn't see a future for himself, and his parents didn't know what to do to help him.

The one thing Michael did have an interest in was music, so he was encouraged to go along to sessions at Gloucestershire Music Makers (now The Music Works) with music mentor Malaki. The project paid for by Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service with additional funding from Youth Music as part of their Musical Inclusion module.

Exploring musical interests

Malaki found that Michael had taught himself to play guitar, and that he wrote songs and sang at home. He'd been too shy to tell anyone about his music in mainstream school and couldn't

play if he knew anyone else was in within hearing distance, even his parents.

He discovered that Michael had a deep knowledge and interest in music, and so encouraged him to talk about different music genres he liked, and the different aspects of each artist's music that influenced him. Michael told Malaki that he had tried to record his music but it didn't sound good – he was struggling with poor quality equipment and lack of skills and was frustrated by not getting a good result. Malaki talked to Michael about ways that he could improve his recording and add other instruments and effects to the sound, using software called Logic. By end of session, Michael was keen to continue, and he and Malaki agreed what they might do for next session.

What makes the difference?

Emma, Senior Support Worker at GHES, believes that the impact of this work is down to a combination of personal qualities as well as a particular approach which includes:

- Respect between learner and teacher: *“Straight away, there is a mutual respect between Malaki and the young people he works with. He draws things out of them - yet he manages to keep a distance and have authority.”*
- Letting young people lead their learning, putting their creative ideas at the heart of the work: *“We’ve used musicians who have seen their role as to exhibit their musical skills, and pass them on, but it doesn’t have the same effect. What Malaki is doing is different. It’s not therapy but it’s therapeutic, and they’re developing their own ideas, developing new skills, and learning new things, driven by Malaki’s enthusiasm and belief in what they can do.”*
- Personalised learning: *“He’s very interested in them as people, and spends time getting to know them, finding out about them and their interest in music. He’ll keep going until he finds something he can work on. He can draw something out of them even if they don’t feel they’re musical, he personalises everything. And he can do this with a group too which is incredible.”*

- Willingness to adapt to young people’s needs: *“It’s not just about objectives and outcomes. He puts the young people’s needs first and varies his way of working as the need arises... They always come away smiling and they’ve always learned things.”*

Looking towards the future

Emma says: *“The change in [Michael] was amazing. His parents reported back immediately, saying it was the first time for a very long time that they’d seen him so positive.”*

“He was enthusiastic and animated, actually talking about the session and looking forward to the next. Most importantly, there’s been a change in how he sees himself... [he’s] now planning his future, looking at a career in music production and what colleges he could go to. Before, he wasn’t thinking about tomorrow, let alone a future.”



References

Presented here in the order of their appearance in the text

¹ See for example www.youthmusic.org.uk; www.mec.org.uk/why-music, <https://musiceducation-works.wordpress.com/> and The Power of Music - a research synthesis of the impact of actively making music on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people by Dr Susan Hallam (2015). Institute of Education: Music Education Council

² *Our Music Omnibus Survey*, Youth Music (2009)

³ *The importance of music: a national plan for music education*, Department for Education, November 2011

⁴ *Our Music Omnibus Survey*, Youth Music (2009)

⁵ *Making Music: teaching, learning and playing in the UK*, ABRSM <http://gb.abrsm.org/de/making-music/>

⁶ *Key Data on Music Education Hubs* by Sharp, C. and Sims, D. (2014). National Foundation for Educational Research: Arts Council England

⁷ *Key Data on Music Education Hubs* by Sharp, C. and Sims, D. (2014). National Foundation for Educational Research: Arts Council England

⁸ *Music Education in the 21st Century in the United Kingdom: Achievements, analysis and aspirations* edited by Susan Hallam and Andrea Creech (Bedford Way Papers)

⁹ *Definitions developed by Sound Connections' Challenging Circumstances Network, a project supported by Youth Music*

¹⁰ More reading about quality:
Communities of Music Education research (Institute of Education) 2012
What does quality look like in non-formal music education, Douglas Lonie, Youth Music, blog for Youth Music Network website (November 2012) <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk>
Who's quality? Kathryn Deane, Sound Sense, blog for ArtWorks website (November 2014) <http://www.artworkspfh.org.uk>

