**Peer Development Programme
for Music Education Hubs**

**Introduction**

Music Education Hubs are invited to take part in the Peer Development Programme during 2017/18. Arts Council England is contributing funds to support the overall development and support opportunities available to Hubs, with a view that it will support the Department for Education’s investment in Hubs and expand the current support offer from the Arts Council.

This funding will be used to cover expenses for Hubs participating in the Peer Development Programme (detailed in this briefing) and mentoring programmes ([see here](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/music-education/music-education-hubs%22%20%5Cl%20%22section-4) for information on mentoring), and in some cases to support the use of consultants. As outlined in Ensuring Quality, consultancy can be used to support those Hubs that are higher risk, that face particular challenges and in those cases your Relationship Manager will discuss the options with you.

The Arts Council actively encourages Hubs to take part in this programme as part of its overall approach to quality – [Ensuring Quality](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Music-education-hubs_Ensuring-quality_November-2014.pdf).

The power of peer development engagement is that it is voluntary and responsive to the Music Education Hub’s current priorities for development in specific aspects of its work.

The Arts Council encourages Hubs to consider taking part in this programme as a way of addressing key areas for development following discussions with your Relationship Manager. Peer development provides an opportunity for Hub leaders to highlight what is going well, as well as what it is not, and is an opportunity to celebrate and share good practice, explore innovative approaches and drive further improvement in your area and across the Music Education Hub sector.

Hub leaders can discuss the benefits of involvement or any potential barriers to engagement with their Arts Council Relationship Manager.

 **What is peer development?**

Initial discussions with the Music Education Hub Quality Group in 2014 started with plans to develop a peer review programme for Music Education Hubs. However, following a series of meetings with Hubs, the focus and approach became peer *development*. It focused on openly sharing and exploring real and current development needs with trusted colleagues in a focused and structured dialogue designed to generate fresh ideas for solutions.

During two years of pilots and as part of the first full year of the programme in 2016/17, 30 Hubs have taken part. The programme has been well-received and provided an effective means of reflecting on and sharing good practice, identifying and sharing challenges and creating solutions by working co-operatively with other Hubs. The process of peer development can engage with a range of staff across the Hub partnership, however one representative, either the Hub leader, or a senior member of staff from a key Hub partner, leads and structures the process. It may be appropriate to consult with the Hub board or advisory group to ensure the outputs of peer development are best utilised and able to inform the Hub’s work.

The programme was established to support Music Education Hubs to concentrate on specific areas of development, identified through self-evaluation and needs analysis, rather than a broad review against a benchmark. It also reflects the fact that Music Education Hubs are individual, at different stages of development, serve different communities and varying size, budget, geographical spread, business model type (provider or commissioner), constitution and governance.

Peer development is predicated on three principles:

1. Music Education Hubs are responsible for their own performance and improvement but can play an important role in the collective responsibility for performance and improvement across the Music Education Hub sector
2. releasing colleagues to fulfil the peer role on the basis that they in turn will benefit from reciprocal benefit. It is a recognised strength of peer development models that the professional development gain for peers can be as great as for the organisations requesting peer input, which here are referred to as hosts
3. recycling development resource back into the sector (where the current expertise lies), rather than have it spent on external consultants

Evidence from other sectors suggests that peer development based on a business plan and self-evaluation/needs assessment is likely to be more developmental than a review based on a benchmark. Peer development is not about proving that benchmark criteria have been met or defending the quality of provision, as previously mentioned *– it is about openly sharing and exploring real and current development needs with trusted colleagues in a focused and structured dialogue designed to generate fresh ideas for solutions.* Trust, empathy, generosity and appropriate celebration is an essential underpinning for the critical friend role that is at the heart of peer development.

Some of the key features and benefits include:

* the potential for engaging in development with Music Education Hubs across the country, offering a new perspective from outside their own regions, but also identifying Music Education Hubs nationally where they may be statistical neighbours or facing similar challenges
* peer development has a focus on each Hub’s development (as opposed to Music Services), with an emphasis on organisational and strategic challenges. It is intended to address high level issues of Hub development such as partnership working, funding models, governance, rather than the detail of service delivery

the outcomes of peer development are intended to support the ongoing work and innovation of the Music Education Hub. It should also support a Hub’s achievements against its business plan and in delivering the vision as set out in the National Plan for Music Education

**How does peer development work?**

Peer development is in essence quite simple. A Music Education Hub identifies a small number (no more than two or three) of development priorities through self-evaluation. Hubs should refer to the areas for development listed in their Progress Meeting feedback and their contextual statement. Peer development can support a number of areas, the following are commonly identified as development needs for MEHs: understanding needs, quality assurance; governance; leadership and management; pursuing excellence. You may wish to consider how peer development could support your Hub in these areas.

Groups of two or three peers then form, based on shared priorities or desired approach. During the programme to date, groupings of three have been seen to add a useful rigour to the discussions, though pairings can work well. The models for how these groups can work include:

* a single Music Education Hub identifies development priorities and acts as ‘host’ to two Music Education Hub peers
* a trio of Music Education Hubs identify common development priorities with each in turn hosting the other two Hub leaders as peers. This has proven most common
* two Music Education Hubs engage mutually and reciprocally as host and peer

We welcome suggestions from Music Education Hubs on alternative models for peer development.

The Music Education Hub then hosts visits by peers, who are briefed in advance on the Hub in general, on its development priorities and the structure for the visit. The peers work with the host Music Education Hub to create ideas and plans for the next steps on these development areas.

Time spent on visits can be varied. Typically peers have spent between 1–3 days, exploring their issues through observation, discussion, workshopping, data analysis and document reading. The process leads to feedback from the peers to the host Music Education Hub, the format of which is agreed between host and peers beforehand so that it can positively impact and feed into the host Hub’s organisation and operational approach. As such peer development requires peers able to relate to another Music Education Hub and its development challenges, able to gather and process evidence, able to write concisely and constructively.

Additional time for preparation and follow-up varies depending on the focus of the peer development. There should be no need for the creation of additional documentation in preparation for visits and discussions. Hubs should aim to utilise pre-existing documents, such as the business plan and the annual letter from the Arts Council.

In most cases to date, the documented output of the activity was reported back through the specific Music Education Hubs’ routine lines of accountability and governance (eg the board, line manager in a Local Authority etc). This was done by a short written reflection on the foci with recommendations for further development. Reports were deemed useful for Music Education Hub leaders in this, to provide a formal outcome and add integrity in the eyes of stakeholders where needed. In most cases the host Music Education Hub also shared reports with their Arts Council Relationship Manager but this is not compulsory. An example of a final report from one of the pilot projects is available.

It is for each host and peer grouping to establish the most useful way for feedback to take place, and whether there is a benefit in arranging return peer visits later down the line, perhaps as an optional extension of the peer development activity.

The Arts Council hopes, but does not insist, the Music Education Hubs will share this feedback with their Relationship Managers. The Arts Council will not use any of the information or outcomes for the basis of intervention as part of its funding agreement with Hubs.

Where peer development or mentoring is supporting you to address areas of concern that you and your Relationship Manager have discussed it is expected and natural that improvements or demonstration of progress made towards targets will be evidenced in your mandatory documents.

All participants will be invited to take part in a Reflection event in March 2018. Feedback from, and reflection by, the hosts and peers collectively has the potential to provide rich learning for all involved and inform Arts Council’s approach to future development and training opportunities for Hubs.

This year, to aid an overall review of the support opportunities Arts Council is facilitating, we ask that Hubs complete a separate feedback form on their experiences as part of the programme. This will be anonymised by an independent evaluator before being shared with the Hub Quality Sub Group to help inform the future of these development opportunities. The deadline for this feedback will be 26 February 2018.

Time as well as financial cost have been important considerations in the design of peer development. Arts Council has assigned budget to cover expenses for travel and overnight stays as per our non-staff expenses policy (please request this from your relationship manager) of up to £800 per participating Hub. This does not include reimbursement for a participant’s time. This allowance is an increase from last financial year, the Arts Council hopes this will remove barriers to participation and serve to encourage cross-region working and sharing as part of the programme. The Arts Council’s expenses policy for non-staff gives detailed information on what can be claimed for and the process for submitting your invoice and expense claim form. All expenses relating to this programme must have been booked and an expense claim submitted by 23 February 2018. Expenses submitted after this will not be eligible. All costs associated with this programme must be incurred in the 2017/18 financial year.

**Next steps**

To take part, please register your interest by completing the form at Appendix A and emailing to your Relationship Manager by 5pm, Thursday 7 September 2017.

After registering your interest:

* you will be invited to attend a launch meeting on 12 September 2017 in London (venue to be confirmed), involving all those interested in being a peer or host. This will be your opportunity to understand more about the process of peer development and discuss potential models and foci. We will send some preliminary information out to all participants, using the information collected in the application forms. This will aid us in matching groups during this launch meeting. Another part of the launch meeting will involve analysis and discussion of the skills used in peer development – both as peer and host. Finally, you will start planning the logistics for your programme. Some questions have been developed that can support Music Education Hubs in establishing their Peer Development Programme, and to help ensure an open, valuable and rewarding experience. These can be found in Appendix B
* late Autumn 2017 until early Spring 2018 – peer development visits take place and feedback will be collated
* you will be invited to attend a reflection session in March 2018 . It is important that you commit to taking part in this reflection day as it serves three important purposes:
	+ to provide you with insights and learnings from across the Music Education Hub sector
	+ your feedback on the peer development experience will help shape and improve future the peer development offer for the sector
	+ it will contribute to the Arts Council’s understanding of the support and development needs of the sector

If you would like to discuss the programme further, and if it might be right for you to engage with, please get in touch with your Relationship Manager.

**Appendix A – Expression of Interest form**

Name:

Job title:

Organisation:

Hub name:

Contact email address:

Contact phone number:

Are you interested in working as a host or peer, or both?:

What development areas are you interested in focusing on?

□ Understanding needs

□ Quality assurance

□ Governance

□ Leadership and management

□ Business planning

 □ Developing best practice (please indicate across which area of your work)

□ Fundraising, financial resilience

□ *(please enter any other)*

Have you taken part in the Peer Development Programme previously?

When being matched with peers are there any geographic areas you would not like to work across:

□ North

□ South West

□ East

□ South East

□ London

□ Midlands

*Please consider that this is an opportunity for Music Education Hubs to work with others outside their home region where possible.*

The following questions will enable us to carry out equal opportunities monitoring.

# Are you [ ]  Male [ ]  Female

# Is your age [ ]  Under 31 [ ]  31–45 [ ]  46–60 [ ]  61–70

**What would you describe as your cultural/racial origin?**

# Do you have any access requirements? [ ]  Yes [ ]  No

If yes, do you have any specific requirements?

**Appendix B**

The following questions have provided a valuable framework for planning between hosts and peers:

* who is commissioning the peer development/receiving/owning the feedback?
* what are the development foci/is this a feasible list for the number of peers and days available?
* what are the main questions to ask/evidence sources/documents to have in order to surface the key issues about these foci?
* who are the people to meet/activities to be observed to gather evidence about these foci?
* what will be the nature of the immediate end-of-day-two feedback/checking? When will it happen and with whom?
* what will be the nature/format of subsequent feedback? When will it happen (assumption being within four weeks) and to whom?
* what are the practical arrangements/their costs and who makes these arrangements (travel/accommodation/other expenses)?
* what is the total cost to the host of the peer development?
* on what dates will the peer development visit(s) take place?
* while the focus of the peer development is on the (probably three) agreed foci, it also needs to be agree how the peers would log and feedback, deal with other related issues, or address any more serious financial or safeguarding risks for the Music Education Hub should they arise