



SKY Music Hub concert 2018. Photographer: Alan Edwards

# Multi-Area Music Hubs in England

Andrea Spain, August 2022



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# INTRODUCTION

Music Education Hubs (Hubs) are groups of organisations working together to create joined-up music education provision in a geographic area. Of the current 118 Hubs in England, 24 (22%) serve or are organised across more than one local authority area. Some of these multi-area Hubs were formed in 2012 in response to *The importance of music: A national plan for music education*<sup>1</sup>. Others have formed since, with the aim of avoiding duplication of management roles and improving access to a wider range of musical opportunities for young people.

In 2020, Arts Council England commissioned research into multi-area Hubs to understand more about the range of models established to date, how they work, and the challenges and opportunities involved. This report shares key findings to ensure learning is made more widely available. It draws upon interviews with seven existing multi-area Hubs as well as surveys of Hub partners and young people and data held by Arts Council England<sup>2</sup>.

**The aim of this research is to share sector intelligence and stimulate debate about models of partnership both within and beyond the world of music education. It does not aim to steer organisations towards any specific model of multi-area working and the examples provided are by no means exhaustive, but a snapshot to inspire ideas.**

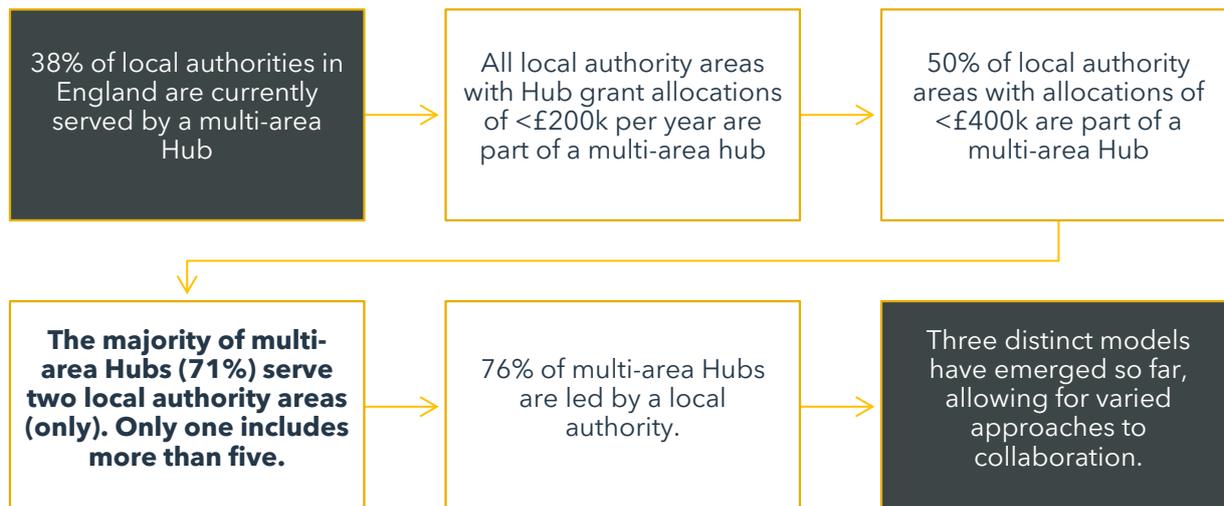
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<sup>1</sup> [The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education, Department for Education 2011](#)

<sup>2</sup> Original research took place December 2020; selected data has been updated to be correct at July 2022

# ABOUT MULTI-AREA HUBS

## Multi-area Hub Facts & Figures



## What is a Music Education Hub?

1.1 Hubs were first formed in 2012 in response to *The importance of music: A national plan for music education (NPME 2011)*<sup>3</sup>.

- Each Hub has a Hub lead organisation (HLO) responsible for managing a partnership approach to music education provision and delivering core and extension roles set out in the NPME 2011. HLOs include local authorities, limited companies, charities and community interest companies.
- Each Hub must have appropriate governance and oversight responsible for strategic vision, values, objectives and policy direction.
- The HLO receives a grant allocation for the partnership from Arts Council England<sup>4</sup>, based on the pupil population and levels of deprivation

of the local authority area(s) it serves. Grants to Hubs range from £53k to £3.8m a year with an average allocation by local authority of £500k.

- Hubs draw upon a range of income sources in addition to their grant allocation, including fundraising and earned income.

1.2 Hubs vary in how they deliver music education opportunities. In some cases, the HLO delivers a large proportion of Hub activity themselves, in addition to facilitating and leading the wider partnership. In others, the Hub uses their grant allocation to commission services from other partners and organisations.

## What is a multi-area Hub?

1.3 Multi-area Hubs operate across more than one local authority area. For the purposes of this report, they include:

<sup>3</sup> *The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education, Department for Education 2011*

<sup>4</sup> Arts Council England operates as fund holder for Music Education Hubs on behalf of the Department for Education.

- Single Hubs that serve more than one local authority area
- Groups of separate Hubs that have the same lead organisation<sup>5</sup>

In many cases, multi-area Hubs do not reduce the number of organisations involved in delivering musical opportunities to young people, only the number that lead Hubs.

- 1.4 Small, medium and large local authority areas<sup>6</sup> have become part of multi-area Hubs. However, to date, smaller areas have been the most likely to do so.
- 1.5 Three different models of multi-area Hub have emerged since 2012 (see fig 1). Each model allows for different approaches to collaboration. These models are not fixed and include

significant variation, with new models of partnership continuing to emerge.

- 1.6 Some of the benefits of multi-area Hubs can be achieved through other forms of cross-boundary collaboration but multi-area Hubs differ from other regional groups, forums and alliances, such as Music Education Hubs East Midlands and the Merseyside Music Education Hub Alliance, by being formalised through shared leadership, governance, policies and structures. This leads to consistent collaboration on a day-to-day and operational level. The risk of this being disrupted by changes in staff or policy is reduced by this long-term formal commitment and systems evolve over time to overcome practical and cultural barriers.

Figure 1 Three models of multi-area Hub that have emerged since 2012



### Umbrella Hubs

Separate local lead partners in each area work together under the umbrella of a shared Hub with a single Hub Lead Organisation



### Hub Families

Separate Hubs for each local authority area share the same Hub Lead Organisation.



### Fully Merged Hubs

A single Hub Lead Organisation, partnership and educational offer serves multiple local authority areas

<sup>5</sup> Although these Hubs hold separate funding agreements and are known as individual Hubs, they were included in this research as valuable examples of how Hub roles can be organised across local authority boundaries.

<sup>6</sup> Measured according to pupil population and Hub grant allocation.

## Benefits of multi-area Hubs

- 1.7 **Reducing duplication** and **enhancing musical opportunity** for young people have been key motivations for the formation of existing multi-area Hubs. These core principles enable a wide range of benefits (see fig 2).
- 1.8 Shared Hub leadership allows for a rethink of **management structures**. In many cases, this includes leaders or managers in each local authority area, freed up from the responsibility of leading a Hub. Shared roles for singing, marketing or inclusion specialists, may become possible. As a result, Hub leaders are able to draw on a wider team or partnership of more diversely skilled colleagues, reducing the need for them to be ‘all things to all people’.
- 1.9 Multi-area Hubs create significant value as **communities of practice** with opportunities for shared professional learning activity, practice sharing and collaboration between practitioners. They also report feeling more **resilient and sustainable** due to being less easily impacted by local changes e.g. in school leadership or local authority priorities. Increased profile and local **political buy-in** is also a common experience, as a result of being larger and more influential entities.
- 1.10 **Cultural partners** in multi-area Hubs report being able to engage more efficiently and strategically with multiple local authority areas where they wish to. There is some evidence that this results in greater investment of time and resources in Hub activity<sup>7</sup>.

Figure 2 Summary of reported benefits of multi-area Hubs

Musical & educational	Operational & strategic	Workforce
<p>Connecting young musicians across a wider area</p> <p>Driving innovation through joint problem solving and investment</p> <p>Sharing of effective models</p> <p>Making a wider range of ensemble and performance opportunities available, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More high profile, ambitious performances and projects</li> <li>• Inspiration for those at higher levels of learning</li> <li>• Collaborative online provision</li> </ul>	<p>Shared budgets with increased purchasing power e.g. capacity to invest in fundraising and marketing collaboratively</p> <p>Reduced duplication of business planning, strategy, and reporting workloads</p> <p>Improved resilience and sustainability</p> <p>Enhanced reputation and influence as a larger entity</p> <p>Collaborative approaches to evaluation, research and development.</p> <p>Shared representation within wider partnerships &amp; collaborations</p>	<p>Shared professional development (training, skills sharing, action research)</p> <p>Peer to peer support, particularly amongst senior leaders</p> <p>Strengthening of middle management structures, reducing pressures on Hub Leaders, benefiting career progression and succession</p> <p>Larger staff pool overall, with more diverse skillset and networks</p> <p>Ability to work with or co-commission a wider range of cultural partners, consultants and specialist practitioners</p>

<sup>7</sup>In a survey of 49 partners in 5 multi-area Hubs (December 2020), 46% said they ‘definitely’ ‘made a greater investment of time or resources’ because theirs was a multi-area Hub and 26% said they did so ‘to some extent’.

## Challenges of multi-area Hubs

- 1.11 The co-ordination and collaboration involved in multi-area Hubs require **time and effort**. While this is described as 'worthwhile work' – the reallocation of time to achieve clear benefits – multi-area Hubs face workload and resource pressures, just as other Hubs do.

Multi-area Hubs are not necessarily easier or cheaper to run than single-area Hubs and require skilled facilitation and leadership.

- 1.12 p.26). In some more complex cases, it can place significant additional **workload pressure** on leaders. After formal transition, multi-area Hubs describe a gradual process of increasing cross-boundary collaboration over time, with long-term work often needed to overcome **systemic barriers**.

All multi-area Hubs require upfront work to establish and subsequent benefits may take time to emerge.

- 1.13 Multi-area Hubs emphasise the importance of local **political support**. This requires ongoing relationship management between multiple stakeholders and the need to consistently demonstrate value to maintain 'buy-in'.
- 1.14 Other challenges experienced by established multi-area Hubs include:
- The need for effective **delegation and communication** to remain responsive to local need and opportunity
  - Logistical constraints associated with **travel and transport** across larger geographic areas.
  - Complexities of **branding and identity**

- Aligning or operating with **differing local policies and systems**.
- **Data collection** to ensure progress is understood at local and Hub levels.

## Wider impacts

- 1.15 The research identified a number of potential impacts of multi-area Hubs on the wider sector that should be considered in their planning, including
- Potential for multi-area Hubs to drive sector innovation by generating new ideas collaboratively
  - A reduction in the number and diversity of HLOs and entry points for new HLOs
  - 'Mopping up' of resources (grants, staff, partners) which could become less available to other Hubs.

## Young people's perspectives

- 1.16 A survey in 2020 of young people musically active in multi-area Hubs suggests they value the opportunities they make possible. These include:
- Meeting and playing with young musicians from different backgrounds, areas or social groups
  - Exploring new places
  - Access to a wider range of musical activities and more advanced ensembles.

*"A larger ensemble is more exciting to anyone and I have made lots of friends"*  
Young people's survey response

- 1.17 Some feel anxious about engaging with less familiar people and environments and about the cost and logistics of travel. It is important, therefore, that multi-area Hubs – like others – maintain accessible, local provision and consider transport and travel in their planning of progression opportunities.

# HUB MODELS: THE UMBRELLA HUB



## KEY FEATURES

- A single, shared Hub across multiple local authority areas
- Local lead partners exist in each area and local delivery is retained but the Hub is unified by shared plans, strategies, and collaborations
- The Hub has its own governance with local representatives
- Hub grant is 'top sliced' to cover central and collaborative costs before being devolved locally

2.1 The Umbrella model has proved the most popular to date, valued for

- Allowing closer collaboration between local authority areas while retaining local ownership and identity
- Being easy to establish and easy to change (opt in and out of) if necessary
- Avoiding significant up-front disruption and allowing collaboration to emerge gradually over time.

2.2 The majority of Umbrella Hubs consist of two or three local authority areas but the model is flexible to accommodate larger groupings, including Greater Manchester Music Hub which is made up of ten.

2.3 In Umbrella Hubs, there is a clear separation between the delivery of musical opportunity and the strategic leadership of a Hub partnership. Local lead partners - often music services - play an important role in shaping and delivering the musical offer in their own area, while also being a partner in the overarching shared Hub.

2.4 The HLO (lead partner) is usually selected from amongst local lead partners and is responsible for governance, shared strategies, business plans and reports. They may also facilitate collaboration across local areas.

An Umbrella Hub allows for the centralisation of Hub management roles, reducing duplication and workload amongst local leaders, who contribute as a team but do not need to produce strategies, plans, and reports locally. A range of collaborative endeavours take place such as shared performances, ensembles, CPD, and fundraising, to benefit young people.

2.5 Management of the shared Hub creates opportunities for dialogue, skills sharing and joint problem solving amongst local leaders, and close, supportive relationships are frequently cited as a particular benefit of this model.

2.6 In Umbrella Hubs, most delivery (teaching and admin) staff remain employed locally. Some specialist staff or freelance consultants may be shared

and employed by the lead organisation on behalf of the Hub. The Hub draws upon the varied skills and knowledge of different local teaching teams and partners, with the potential to bring practitioners together, across local authority boundaries, to share skills and collaborate.

- 2.7 Umbrella Hubs are one of the easiest multi-area Hub models to set up, as local lead partners remain relatively unchanged with minimal disruption to the existing offer or workforce. Partners select a Hub lead organisation and sign a partnership agreement which underpins Hub governance. A 'top slice' of the Hub's total grant (e.g. 2 or 3%) is made to cover the costs of the lead organisation before devolving the remaining funds to each area. The Hub may set aside a shared budget for collaborative activity or establish a recharging system whereby each area contributes to shared projects.
- 2.8 Umbrella Hub partnerships are based on mutual trust. A process of 'evolution not revolution' is felt to be a strength of this model as partners explore how they wish to collaborate over time. This means, however, that Umbrella Hubs may be slower to affect change than other types of multi-area Hub.
- 2.9 Another challenge of Umbrella Hubs is that they maintain duplication of roles

across local authority areas. While efficiencies are created through combined purchasing and the centralising of management functions, these may be offset by time spent on communication between partners. Smaller local authority areas with more limited core staffing capacity can find it more difficult to participate while maintaining an independent local offer. Umbrella Hubs can also empower smaller local authority areas, however, through practical and interpersonal support, resource sharing and the opportunity to influence decision making within the wider shared Hub.

Figure 3 Example Umbrella Hub structure



# CASE STUDY: GREATER MANCHESTER MUSIC HUB

**Local authority areas:** Blackburn & Darwen, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan

**Lead organisation:** Bolton Music Service

**Start date:** 2012

England's largest Hub grew out of existing collaboration between boroughs within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Each had its own music service and experience of working together on initiatives like the North West Pathfinder programme led by the Hallé Orchestra. Music services saw the opportunity to better connect and reduce back-office costs, but some were concerned about being 'swallowed up'. It was important to keep their local identity, connections, and knowledge, particularly given the geographic challenges of a large area. Bolton was identified as lead partner as it was a larger and well-established service with experience and capacity.

Examples of multi-area working:

- Hub Learning Networks (singing, curriculum, first access) bring together staff across areas to develop strategies, priorities, and ideas and propose and deliver collaborative projects.
- Greater Manchester Ensembles draw on local expertise and skills to offer a range of groups open to more advanced young musicians from across local authority areas.

Financial model:

- 3% of the hub grant goes to Bolton Music Service as HLO. Local budgets underwrite the variable costs of joint projects at approximately £2-£3k per area per year, which leverages further income to achieve a combined budget of c. £120k. All local lead partners contribute irrespective of the number of young people in their area who take part in these projects.

Hub governance:

- Oversight of the Hub sits with an Advisory Board of education experts with an independent chair. Local lead partners have their own governance and include a public limited company, a company with charitable status and local authority music services. A partnership agreement acts as a governing document and is signed annually by Chief Executives.
- A Regional Collaborative Group of local lead partners & strategic partners (including cultural organisations and higher education institutions) meets to oversee activity. Local lead partners meet on their own once a term. Other advisory groups, including youth voice forums, operate locally with opportunities to connect across the Hub.

Other Hub collaborations:

- Bolton Music Service and Blackburn with Darwen Music Service merged in 2017 and Bolton Music Service serves both local authority areas
- Manchester City is not part of GMMH but young people from the city can join Greater Manchester ensembles through a partnership between the Hubs.

What does it take to make it work?

- Mutual trust and respect, allowing those with specialist skills to lead; Delegation without the need to supervise or agree every decision; Avoiding duplication to do "worthwhile work."

## CASE STUDY: THE MUSIC PARTNERSHIP

**Local authority areas:** Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford & Wrekin

**Lead organisation:** Staffordshire Music Service (part of Entrust Support Services Ltd)

**Start date:** 2012 (Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent). Telford & Wrekin joined in 2015

The Music Partnership is the second largest multi-area Hub in England by pupil population, combining the large local authority of Staffordshire with medium and small partners. Stoke is a unitary authority within the county of Staffordshire and, building on a history of collaboration, the two bid together for Hub status in 2012. Telford & Wrekin joined in 2015, on the departure of a Head of Service, to achieve cost efficiencies and connect to opportunities for young people. The three services already had some staff and approaches in common as well as shared funding bids, projects and an *In Harmony* programme.

Examples of multi-area working:

- Local authority music services in each area deliver traded services while the shared Hub offers strategic projects and investment. With a large geographic area covered by the Hub, local lead partners retain autonomy while working together to 'plug gaps' and share learning
- Collaborations include support for schools, new ensembles and a recorder festival. The Hub delivers a shared service to Multi Academy Trusts that extend across local authority areas and takes a shared approach to marketing, early years provision and digital learning.

Financial model:

- 2% of the grant allocation is 'top sliced' to contribute to shared costs. Shared consultancy positions are also funded this way. Projects are paid for at cost from local budgets.

Hub Governance:

- A shared strategy board has an independent chair and aims to have 4 to 6 independent members alongside local representatives and partner organisations
- Hub partners are shared. Advisory groups, including youth voice, are local with some join up.

Reported benefits of The Music Partnership approach:

- *'The range of opportunities made available to young people'*
- Sharing resources and avoiding duplication of Hub reports, plans and strategies
- *"Having the set up and capacity to bid for funding or respond to opportunities"*
- Peer to peer support, feeling less alone, learning from each other
- The chance for Hub partners to work more strategically
- Collective voice and feeling more secure, particularly when lacking visibility within a local authority. The Music Partnership is taken seriously, and its Chair is respected and listened to.

What does it take to make it work?

- Balancing time spent on Hub and local roles
- A deputy to the Head of Service in Staffordshire, so they can fulfil the role of Hub Leader.

## CASE STUDY: SKY MUSIC HUB

**Local authority areas:** Sefton, Knowsley

**Lead organisation:** Sefton Council

**Start date:** 2016

Knowsley and Sefton Music Hubs in Merseyside had a history of working together before forming a shared Hub. Although not a direct catalyst, Sefton had undergone a restructure to a reduced management team and Knowsley had a change of leadership. Sefton Council is lead organisation for the Hub but leadership is described as 'collegiate and equal'. An Umbrella Hub model was chosen following consultation with schools who emphasised the importance of a named, familiar and local music service contact. By retaining local music services, Sky capitalises on local authority support systems which have proved invaluable during Covid 19.

Examples of multi-area working:

- Relationships with schools are managed locally while shared Hub approaches are taken to out of school and online provision.
- A shared pilot to improve mental health and wellbeing in young people with SEND and/or social, emotional, or mental health difficulties has been a success. Work is underway to roll this approach out with other regional partners through the Merseyside MEH Alliance.
- The [MIDAS self-evaluation tool](#) for schools has proved a successful collaboration and a SKY Hub newsletter and showcase at Albert Dock have also raised the profile of music in schools.

Financial model:

- The Hub grant is divided between local authorities as per the grant allocation. Knowsley contributes an agreed amount to any costs incurred by Sefton as lead partner. Within shared projects, activity & costs are distributed on a ratio of 2:1 in line with pupil populations.

Hub Governance:

- All aspects of Hub governance are shared through a Hub strategy board. All Hub partners are shared; the Hallé Orchestra and Brighter Sound act in an advisory role, at a pre-board level.

Other Hub collaborations:

- SKY is part of the Merseyside Music Education Hub Alliance.

Reported benefits of the SKY Music Hub approach:

- 100% rate of schools data returns and improved perceptions of quality amongst head teachers.
- Being part of a bigger team, a reduced sense of isolation, enhanced capacity to address complex issues. Mutual commitment to a shared strategy drives effort and innovation.
- More ambitious opportunities for young people, including supporting and removing barriers to young people travelling out of borough. An overall increase in participation by young people. High quality music leaders and partners attracted to the area.

What does it take to make it work?

- Trust. Honest and open dialogue.

# HUB MODELS: THE HUB FAMILY



## KEY FEATURES

- A group of Hubs with the same lead organisation
- Each Hub has its own identity, partnership group, governance, and plans
- Hub leadership/management is shared but may include some area-specific roles.

3.1 Hub Families consist of groups of more than one Hub that share a leader or a lead organisation. Beyond this shared characteristic they vary in their structure, reflecting the different ways in which they have formed.

- An established HLO might, for example, take on the leadership of an additional Hub
- Two HLOs might merge, to become more sustainable
- In one case, a group of local authority led Hubs have subcontracted one of their number to provide a shared Hub leader

3.2 By maintaining separate Hub identities, Hub Families allow local stakeholders to be highly influential in decision making in their own area. The sharing of a lead organisation rationalises core costs. The sharing of a Hub leader frees up budget to be reinvested into a more diversely skilled management team.

3.3 Hub Families are flexible, allowing HLOs and governance groups to decide where to deliver roles separately in each area, and where to take a shared or integrated approach. This includes the potential to share teaching and admin staff and/or dedicate some roles to specific areas

which may be defined by local authority boundaries or by other parameters.

3.4 Many Hub Families prioritise administrative alignment, adopting new management structures and achieving operational efficiency in order to free up resources for innovation and delivery. Some choose to integrate teaching teams over time, to allow each area to draw upon a larger and more diversely skilled workforce. This is particularly effective where a Hub Family brings together teams with different, complementary skills.

Figure 4 Example of Hub Family structure



3.5 Shared leadership allows Hub Families to achieve a relatively rapid pace of change, once established, where desirable. The initial set up of Hub Families can require more re-organisation than an Umbrella Hub and,

in some cases, this may include the merger of lead organisations.

The up-front workload involved can have longer term benefits by reducing duplication and putting in place structures that support closer integration and more efficient ways of working.

- 3.6 The North Somerset and South Gloucestershire example (see Case Study) demonstrates an easier initial transition achieved by appointing a shared leader while maintaining organisational separation.
- 3.7 A challenge of Hub Families is that governance, reporting, strategy, and stakeholder management remain separate for each area, potentially

creating significant workload for a single leader. The potential benefits of Hub Families are dependent on each Hub partnership remaining committed to collaboration and alignment. Balancing the different perspectives of multiple governance groups requires skill and expertise from Hub leaders. Some have experimented with shared governance meetings and strategies in order to address these challenges.

- 3.8 Hub Families can be a stepping-stone towards becoming a Fully Merged Hub but this is not always the aspiration or intent. Some Hub Families have formed where political histories or local needs mean a combined approach across local authority areas would not be appropriate.



Tri-borough Music Hub Gala 2022. Photographer: Oliva Da Costa Photo

# CASE STUDY: MUSIC EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP NORTH SOMERSET & SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE MUSIC HUB

**Local authority areas:** North Somerset and South Gloucestershire

**Lead organisation:** North Somerset Council

**Start date:** 2019

At the time of this research, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire operate separate Music Hubs led by separate music services with a shared leader. This leader is employed by North Somerset Council and subcontracted to also act as Hub leader for South Gloucestershire. The Hub leader is line manager to senior managers in each local authority responsible for local service delivery and a singing strategy leader who is shared across the two Hubs.

The local authorities have a history of collaboration as part of the historic county of Avon and West of England Combined Authority. When the previous Hub leadership team left South Gloucestershire, the council approached several potential partners and chose North Somerset as a neighbour with similar priorities and complementary skills. The then Head of North Somerset Music Service was partially seconded on a part time basis to South Gloucestershire for a year. On their departure from that role, a permanent, shared Head of Service was jointly selected and appointed. Local authorities chose this model as they were committed to keeping their own music services while being supportive of increasing collaboration.

Examples of multi-area working:

- In the early stages of becoming a Hub Family, the Hub leader spent more than half of their time on shared strategies to benefit both areas and sees potential for increasing alignment over time. Plans for collaboration include shared out of school provision, holiday courses and projects with other Hubs.

Financial model:

- Budgets are separate with quarterly recharging of any costs incurred between partners.

Hub Governance:

- Each Hub has its own strategy board

Other Hub collaborations:

- The partnership sees potential to work with other local authority areas where there are shared priorities. Strategic alignment is more important than geographic proximity in choosing partners.

What are the benefits of the North Somerset/South Gloucestershire approach?

- An organic process of closer operational and educational alignment over time, without the need for transfer of staff between employers
- 'Levelling up' across local authority areas by drawing on the historic strengths of each partner.

What does it take to make it work?

- Partnership that goes deeper than geography or individual personal relationships.

## CASE STUDY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE MUSIC EDUCATION HUB & RUTLAND MUSIC EDUCATION HUB

**Local authority areas:** Northamptonshire, Rutland

**Lead organisation:** Northamptonshire Music & Performing Arts Trust (NMPAT)

**Start date:** 2013

Northamptonshire is a large local authority area while Rutland is the smallest in England, with an annual Hub grant allocation of £53k. As lead organisation for Northamptonshire Music Education Hub, NMPAT was approached to lead a Hub for Rutland when the local schools consortium that had been initially awarded the role in 2012 was unable to do so. NMPAT are an established former local authority-led music service that had recently become an independent charity.

Rutland has a strong sense of local identity and is resistant to being 'swallowed up' by larger counties. Its 20 schools have no history of buying in music service provision and instrumental tuition is accessed through an established network of private instrumental and vocal tutors. This contrasts with Northamptonshire where 83% of income is earned from schools, families and fundraising. Simply extending the NMPAT approach into Rutland was therefore not an option. The decision was made to create Rutland Music, a subsidiary charity of NMPAT, to act as lead organisation of Rutland Music Hub, which has its own governance and partnership.

Examples of multi-area working:

- Activities in Northamptonshire are open to Rutland students where there is no comparable provision locally. NMPAT represents Rutland within regional partnerships and consortia, bringing new opportunities to the area. Projects with Northamptonshire partners often extend to include Rutland and the smaller area benefits from NMPAT's financial, IT and admin systems and office space.

Financial model:

- Rutland Music's grant contributes to a salaried post to support music in schools. NMPAT contribute in kind to the management of the smaller Hub as part of their charitable purposes.

Hub Governance:

- The Board of Trustees of NMPAT is responsible for both Hubs but oversight of Rutland Music Hub is fully delegated to Rutland Music, a subsidiary charity with its own Board.

Other Hub collaborations:

- Both Hubs are part of the East Midlands MEHEM consortium, who work together on a variety of projects including offering the Certificate for Music Educators (CME) qualification.

Benefits of the Northamptonshire/Rutland approach:

- The creation of a distinctive, locally owned Hub where this may not have been viable.
- Rutland benefits from the stability, resources and in-kind support provided by NMPAT.

What does it take to make it work?

- A continued commitment to social responsibility from a charitable organisation and the financial health and sustainability of NMPAT to maintain its support of Rutland Music.

# HUB MODELS: THE FULLY MERGED HUB



## KEY FEATURES

- Governance, organisation and delivery of Hub roles are all shared
- There is one lead organisation, staff team, partnership and oversight board

- 4.1 Fully Merged Hubs operate in much the same way as single-area Hubs, with one partnership, lead organisation and governance group. A single brand identity and programme exists and does not vary significantly by local authority.
- 4.2 This is a highly efficient model in terms of reducing duplication of management workload and roles. A single workforce allows investment in a shared educational approach with consistency through stages of young people's learning.

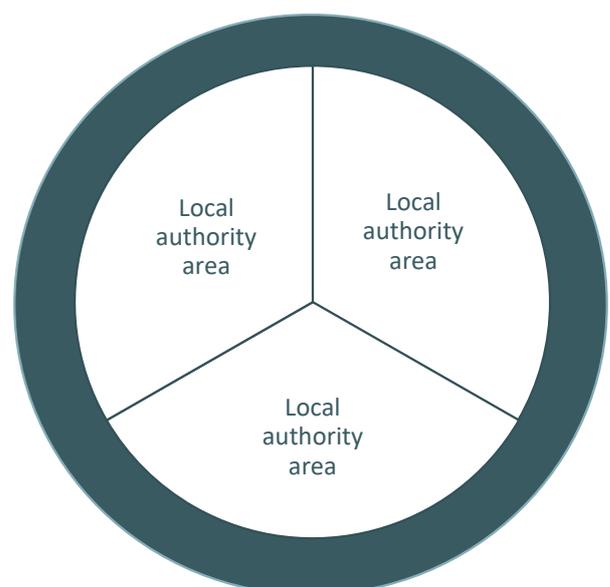
A Fully Merged Hub does not rule out local distinctiveness or variation. Like any Hub, special strands of work, music centres or ensembles may serve the needs of different communities.

- 4.3 Fully Merged Hubs allow for rapid change where desirable. Logistical barriers to the reorganisation of systems and services are removed and a single governance group balances shared and local needs. However, Fully Merged Hubs need to maintain relationships and connect to different systems in each local authority, and this

creates workload and complexity that does not exist for a single area Hub.

- 4.4 This type of multi-area Hub remains rare and is the most likely to require a merger between organisations, a complex process that can be difficult to reverse. In some instances, fully merged Hubs have become Hub Families in the first instance, with the aspiration to achieve a fully integrated offer, but with opportunities to test what works before committing to doing so.

Figure 5 Example of a Fully Merged Hub structure



## CASE STUDY: CREATE MUSIC

**Local authority areas:** Brighton & Hove, East Sussex

**Lead organisation:** Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival

**Start date:** 2021

Create Music is the Hub for Brighton & Hove and East Sussex, which has transitioned from existing as two separate services and Hubs in 2019, first to a Hub Family with Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival (BDBF) as shared lead organisation, and then to a Fully Merged Hub.

Brighton & Hove Music & Arts (BHMA), was established as part of BDBF after the former music service and HLO transferred out of the Council. BHMA became lead organisation for the Music Education Hub SoundCity: Brighton & Hove from 2017 to 2021. East Sussex Music, a neighbouring local authority-led music service and Hub lead organisation, faced an uncertain future when BDBF approached East Sussex Council. The Council signed a 25-year contract with BDBF in 2019 to run the service, transferring staff under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment). After a period as a Hub Family, the two separate services rebranded as Create Music, a joint music service which is the lead organisation for a shared Hub.

Examples of multi-area working:

- A Virtual Music Centre was developed collaboratively in the early days of the Hub Family, galvanising energy to join forces in other ways.
- All aspects of planning and delivery are now joint, except for small local differences.

Financial model:

- A single, shared grant allocation and mixed economic model (earned income, fundraising).

Hub Governance:

- The Board of Trustees for Brighton Dome & Festival has governance responsibility and holds the contract with Arts Council England. As a Hub Family, two Oversight Boards existed – one for each Hub – with shared working parties around strategic themes. A shared oversight board for Create Music has now been established and reports to BDBF Trustees.

Other Hub collaborations:

- Create Music is part of the Southern Music Hub Alliance and works with West Sussex, Kent Music and Surrey Arts as Youth Music Fund C recipients. The current Director of Create Music is also Chair of Future Creatives Local Cultural Education Partnership

What are the benefits of the Create Music approach?

- Wider demographic reach, geographic footprint, and links to LCEPs attracting more and different funding and partnership opportunities
- Overall reduction in management/admin staff. Streamlined systems

What does it take to make it work?

- Practical support for the Hub leader to take on the workload of establishing a new structure
- Advocacy to gain political buy in and commitment. Supportive senior officers within local authorities.

## CASE STUDY: TRI-BOROUGH MUSIC HUB

**Local authority areas:** Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham, Westminster

**Lead organisation:** Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

**Start date:** 2012

Tri-borough Music Hub serves three West London local authority areas that are all amongst the 10% smallest in England, by pupil population. In 2011 these boroughs launched a wider project to combine services and bid jointly to Arts Council England to create a shared Hub. Kensington & Chelsea was chosen as lead partner, as it had the most established music service.

In 2018 the original Tri-borough agreement, which had extended across a range of council services, ended following a change of political leadership. However, Tri-borough Music Hub continues to serve all three authorities with a model that remains fully integrated. The Hub is highly supported by local authorities who annually contribute cash funding and in-kind support.

Examples of multi-area working:

- A shared programme of activity ensuring equal distribution across local authority areas. Separate Christmas concerts take place in each borough and the Hub works differently with specific priority groups, including Grenfell United. Partners are asked to work across all three boroughs where possible. Instrument hire, charges and remission policies are shared.

Financial model:

- A combined budget as a fully aligned local authority shared service.
- Income derived from sources other than the Hub grant has risen to 66% in 2019/20 from 6% in 2012/13. An independent sister charity to the Hub, the Musical Boroughs Trust, fundraises to improve accessibility to music education in the Tri-borough area.

Governance:

- A shared oversight group, chaired by the Head of Hub, consists of strategic partners (Royal Albert Hall and Royal College of Music) and representatives of all three Children's Services.
- Partner and youth advisory groups are shared. A Youth Voice Council has 50 members from 40 schools, representatives from Tri-borough Ensembles and wider Hub partners.

Other Hub collaborations:

- The Head of Hub is also the current Chair of the Music Mark London Group.

What are the benefits of the Tri-borough approach?

- Viability and sustainability of new activity derived from scale, geographic scope and connections to multiple LA teams e.g. early years provision.
- Ability to field a staff team from a wider pool for projects and events and re-distribution of partner-led activity across LA areas. Greater innovation as 'there is more to draw on'.

What does it take to make it work?

- 'Triplication' of communication with schools networks and Council officers, continued political buy-in and great care to ensure that each authority feels that they receive a fair share.

# ORGANISATION OF HUB ROLES

## Separation, collaboration or integration?

5.1 Each multi-area Hub chooses how best to organise delivery of Hub roles across local authority areas. This may include:

- Activities that operate separately in each area
- Collaboration across local authority boundaries
- Shared or integrated 'pan-Hub' approaches.

Factors influencing the organisation of Hub roles in multi-area Hubs include:

- The extent to which each area wishes to maintain a distinctive local offer
- Travel distances and access to centrally located meeting points
- Opportunities for problem solving and skills sharing
- Cultural and organisational differences - avoiding disruption, meeting local needs
- Systemic barriers - local differences in safeguarding regulations, employment practices, IT and finance systems
- Funding - differences of financial model, local authority support or funding streams between areas; potential to attract funding for collaborative projects.

5.2 Most multi-area Hubs choose a limited number of aspects for collaboration or integration at first, taking time to identify where this is most beneficial. Some allow local authority areas to opt in or out of collaborative projects, particularly in larger partnerships where a need to achieve consensus could become a limitation.

## Popular areas for integration

5.3 **Shared leadership** is a feature of multi-area Hubs. This may be an individual shared leader, a lead organisation and/or a shared management or senior leadership team. It is common, however, for multi-area Hubs to employ area-based managers with a focus on maintaining local relationships and knowledge.

5.4 Sharing of **specialist staff** is also popular where this makes viable more attractive roles with a multi-area brief. Shared staff may include salaried and freelance or consultancy roles.

5.5 A shared approach to **continued professional development (CPD)** is another key characteristic of multi-area Hubs. Combined budgets serving a larger pool of practitioners allow for breadth and quality of CPD. Shared CPD connects staff across local authority boundaries and acts as a driver for relationship building, skills sharing and collaborative ideas. Some multi-area Hubs report an increase in CPD participation, particularly by schools and classroom teachers, as a result.

5.6 **Shared plans, strategies and reports** are an important way that multi-area Hubs express, refine, and review their approach and identity. To date, Arts Council England have required documents for each Hub that include relevant detail for each of the local authority areas covered.

### Popular areas for collaboration

- 5.7 Collaborative activities are those where decision making, staff and resources remain locally devolved, but local authority areas join forces on some aspects of delivery.

Collaboration is a mainstay of multi-area working for many Hubs and may pave the way for greater educational and operational alignment over time.

- 5.8 **Performances, special projects and more advanced ensembles** are very popular areas for collaboration. These bring together young people to offer a wider range of opportunities, building social networks between learners with similar interests. Combined budgets make venue hire and working with visiting artists more affordable. Ambitious projects with wider reach can be attractive to cultural partners and funders.
- 5.9 Newer strategic priorities, such as **youth voice, inclusion, wellbeing, and digital/online learning**, are also popular areas for collaboration. These allow for shared investment in consultancy, research or training and testing of new approaches in multiple

locations and contexts. A number of multi-area Hubs feel that multi-area working has driven innovation and raised their profile as a Hub. Some have shared new ideas and approaches with others through regional networks.

### Popular areas for separation

- 5.10 Some aspects of Hub operation are currently less frequently shared. Historic differences in local systems, policies or financial models can make transitioning to shared approaches more challenging and, arguably, unnecessary.

Many Hubs feel they can benefit from multi-area working without the need to be similar in all ways.

- 5.11 Amongst Case Study Hubs, **whole class ensemble tuition, instrumental teaching, music centres, instrumental loan schemes** and **charging/remissions policies** often remain separate although Fully Merged Hubs demonstrate that these aspects of Hub operation can be integrated. Even where organised separately, it is common for partners to share resources informally and share practice through CPD.

Figure 6 Popular areas of organisational integration, collaboration and separation amongst case study Hubs

Popular areas for integration	Popular areas for collaboration	Popular areas for separation
Hub leadership Plans, strategies & reports Specialist staff & consultants e.g. singing, marketing, fundraising Continued professional development	Performances & special projects Advanced ensembles Youth voice Inclusion & wellbeing Digital and online learning	Whole class ensemble tuition Instrumental teaching Music centres Instrumental loan schemes Charging/remissions policies

# HUB LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

## Leadership

- 6.1 Leading a multi-area Hub requires skills in facilitation, negotiation, partnership building and change management. In the early days, leaders must be effective advocates while consulting with staff, partners, schools, and parents to shape decision making.

Leadership of a multi-area Hub is a new challenge for those looking for a next step in their career. Meanwhile, local leadership or area manager roles create opportunities for senior leaders to prioritise in other ways.

- 6.2 Factors influencing the selection of multi-area Hub leaders and Hub lead organisations within partnerships include:
- Track record of high-quality delivery of Hub or music service roles
  - Experience of leading or facilitating partnerships
  - Organisational capacity to manage change and collaboration
  - Strategic alignment with partners.
- 6.3 One challenge created by the emergence of multi-area Hubs is that local leaders - Heads of Service or area managers who are not a Head of Hub - can lack recognition in the way the sector is organised and communicates. Some local leaders have established the case for remaining part of regional networks. This is something for industry bodies, funders, and policy makers to consider as multi-area working continues to evolve.

## Governance

- 6.4 Governance of multi-area Hubs may include:
- Hub governance as part of the governance of the lead organisation
  - Hub governance delegated to a separate Hub board or oversight group
- 6.5 Some multi-area Hubs have found it easier to attract Board members and experienced Chairs as a joined-up entity with greater political recognition and profile. This, in turn, helps to create a board with enhanced expertise and the capacity to play an important role in relationship management with local authority partners, for example.
- 6.6 The number and variety of stakeholders in a multi-area Hub can make representation within governance systems a challenge. Some therefore operate a range of advisory and operational groups to allow for ongoing, strategic engagement and consultation with stakeholders that is separate from, but can still contribute to, formal governance oversight.
- 6.7 Boards can play an important role in the process of transition to a multi-area model. Hub leaders emphasise the value of a supportive, experienced board, with legal, human resources and finance expertise. It can be helpful, in the case of organisational mergers, to appoint a 'shadow board' - a temporary transitional structure that supports the creation of a new entity and can negotiate on its behalf.

# MAKING A SUCCESS OF A MULTI-AREA HUB

## Being partnership ready

- 7.1 Multi-area Hubs emphasise the importance of being 'partnership ready' before moving to a joined-up model. It is important to test ideas before committing to longer-term partnership.
- 7.2 Partnership working is a skill and experience improves understanding of what works and which partners enjoy working together. Relevant experience may include
- Collaborating on projects or performances
  - Being actively involved in regional partnerships
  - Wider collaboration or shared services approaches between local authorities
- 7.3 Collaborative projects can be an opportunity to involve pupils, parents and teaching staff in a conversation about multi-area working.

## Choosing partners

- 7.4 Factors that have influenced the choice of partners in existing multi-area Hubs include
- Complementary strengths and weaknesses with potential for skills sharing
  - Trust in, and respect for, a lead organisation
- 7.5 There is a clear message that multi-area Hubs work best where there is **political affinity or positive relationships between local authorities**. Multi-area Hubs emphasise the importance of political support both in transitioning to a new model and in making it work long term. A wider policy of shared service

provision or collaboration, past or present, can be helpful, creating precedents for joined up approaches to organisation and communication. A Hub that combines local authorities with poor relationships may limit collaborative opportunities.

- 7.6 All current multi-area Hubs consist of neighbouring local authorities, suggesting the importance of **geographic proximity**. The ability to organise musical activity across local authority borders, and in doing so improve parity and access for young people, has been an important motivation for their formation. However, cross border participation can be negotiated in other ways and geographic neighbours may not always be the most compatible partners.
- 7.7 Some existing multi-area Hubs feel that **shared philosophies, priorities and values** may be just as important as geographic proximity, whether from the outset or as something to work towards.

As increased digitalisation makes collaboration between those in different parts of the country easier, new types of multi-area Hub, that are not based on geography, may emerge.

- 7.8 The **size of geographic area** covered by a Hub and access to effective **transport routes** are also important factors. Geographic proximity is particularly helpful where young people and staff can realistically regularly travel between areas. Urban centres with cultural facilities that provide a meeting point can be an asset.

## Choosing a model

- 7.9 While some of the case studies explored in this research have taken

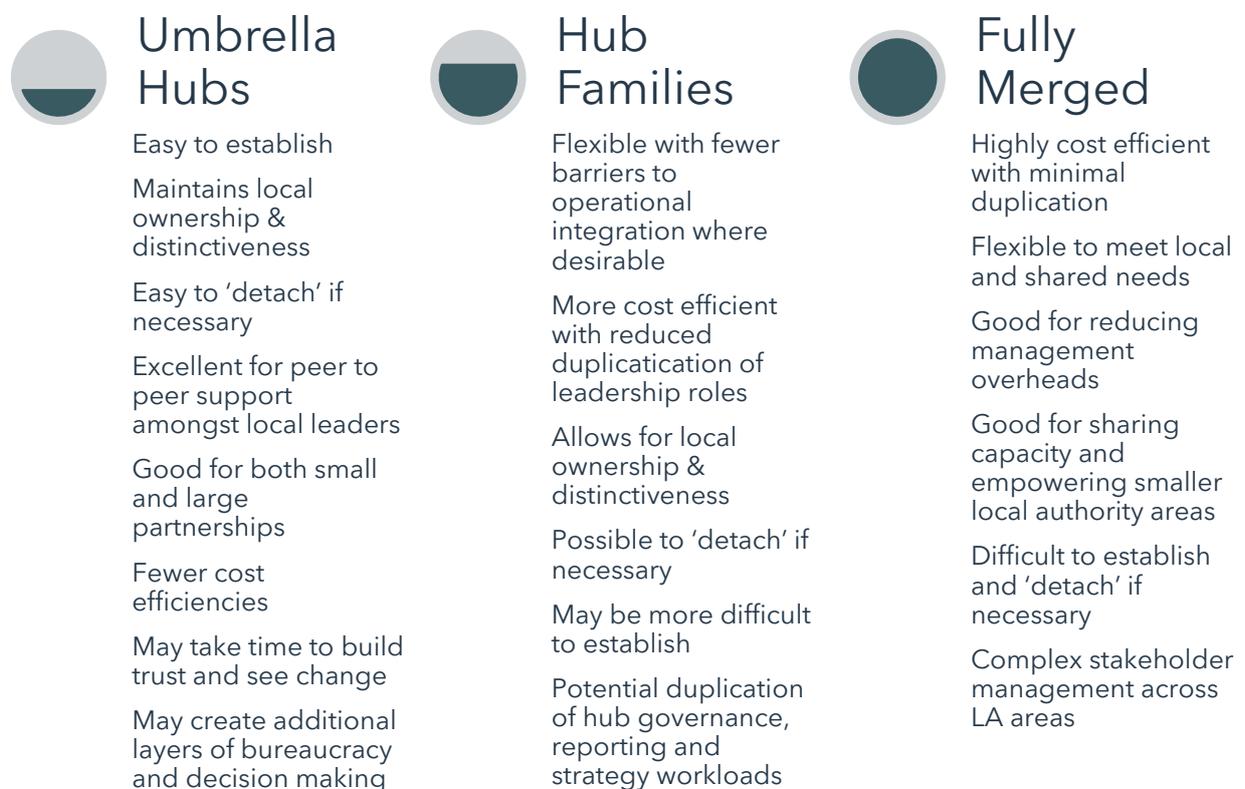
inspiration from other multi-area Hubs, all have developed their own approach as a partnership, based on local needs and priorities. The three models presented in this research should not be seen as a finite list but a starting point for thinking about approaches to multi-area working. Some partnerships combine elements from different models. Some see their model as fixed while others see it as a stepping-stone towards closer integration over time.

7.10 A number of key considerations have emerged through this research, when comparing the merits of different models for different contexts. These include:

- How important is a distinctive local offer and the presence of a local lead organisation in each area?

- How sustainable is the local financial model and how important are cost efficiencies?
- How quickly is change wanted or needed?
- What capacity exists for the upfront workload of structural change or new leadership?
- How confident are local authority areas in working together?
- What is the financial or organisational risk to the HLO of leading a larger Hub partnership?
- How important is the option to 'detach' or change to a different model?

Figure 7 Relative merits of existing multi-area Hub models



## Making the transition

7.11 Transition to a multi-area Hub is not a single step but a series of stages, from consultation to becoming fully operational (see fig 8). The length of time, and the amount of work this takes, varies significantly depending on the model adopted.

7.12 The majority of multi-area Hubs form through voluntary agreements between organisations or existing Hub partnerships.

Becoming a multi-area Hub does not necessarily involve the merger of existing lead organisations or a change in who delivers musical activities for children and young people.

7.13 In the case of Umbrella Hubs, the new partnership agrees an HLO (lead organisation) and signs a partnership agreement. Transition journeys for Hub Families and Fully Merged Hubs are more varied. Two case study Hubs

involved in this research have undertaken a merger of organisations and staffing (Triborough Music Hub and Create Music). North Somerset and South Gloucestershire is an example of a multi-area Hub that has taken a first step by appointing a shared leadership team while maintaining separate Hubs and staff teams.

7.14 Establishing a new structure is just the beginning of a longer-term process of evolution and exploration. It takes, on average, 3 years after a multi-area Hub is formed for operational models to establish and these may continue to develop - if more slowly - beyond this initial period. Umbrella Hubs tend to establish quickly then evolve more gradually while Hub Families and Fully Merged Hubs involve more upfront work followed by a quicker and easier journey towards collaboration or integration.

Figure 8 Stages involved in becoming a multi-area Hub

Stage 1 - Preparation	Stage 2 - Transition	Stage 3 - Establishing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with stakeholders, staff, young people &amp; families</li> <li>• Advocacy to secure support &amp; partners</li> <li>• Identifying a lead organisation &amp; allocating resources to transition</li> <li>• Strengthening governance groups with appropriate skills to manage transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varies significantly by model. May involve organisational merger in a minority of cases.</li> <li>• Hub application process or completion of the Arts Council England Novation process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phased approach to establishing new systems and strategies</li> <li>• Staff development to embed shared identity and generate collaborative ideas</li> <li>• Collaborative projects to test what works and identify logistical barriers</li> </ul>

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## About the author



Andrea Spain is a consultant working across the music, arts and heritage sectors. Andrea was Assistant Director of Music and Head of Learning and Participation at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance until 2016 and, for 15 years, led the Conservatoire's work to widen participation in music education, directing the faculty of music's learning, participation, professional development and associated higher education programmes. This included developing long-term partnerships with music education Hubs and cultural partners.

Andrea was Chair of the Strategy Board of Lewisham Music Hub when the music service left Lewisham Council to become an independent charity and was a trustee of Lewisham Music for 3 years. She was also a long-term member of the South Riverside Music Partnership between four south London Hubs, Trinity Laban and the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

As a consultant, recent projects include a review of County Groups for Kent Music, a national study for the Royal Academy of Music of models supporting engagement and progression in musical learning by under-represented young people and an impact assessment of the Cultural Strategy for Nine Elms & Battersea. She also works with Bridge organisations and currently provides evaluation support for 23 local cultural education partnerships in East Anglia and the West Midlands.