



Music Education Hubs: Progression strategy guidance

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Contents

Introduction	3
Expectations of Hubs	3
Perspectives of progression	5
Next steps	7

Introduction

In 2011, the first National Plan for Music Education (NPME) set out a vision for children and young people from all backgrounds and every part of England to have the opportunity to progress and achieve excellence in their music-making. As part of the core roles, all Music Education Hubs (Hubs) have been proactively supporting children and young people to progress their musical journeys.

The refreshed NPME published in June 2022, places greater focus on the importance of progression and musical development as one of the five strategic functions of Hubs, expressed as follows:

"Music Hubs are expected to support children and young people to develop and progress with music, including into national or specialist opportunities, higher education and employment, so that the chance to be involved in high-quality music-making is shared more widely in our society. Music Hubs should support children and young people to access the wider world of music, including live performance and community music."

Building on the work of the sector to date there is an opportunity for us to evolve our understanding of supporting children and young people's musical progression. The Arts Council aims to support and encourage all Hub lead and partner organisations to draw on learning to date and consider a broad view of progression.

This document clarifies the expectations of Hubs, shares key learning from recent research, and sets out the Arts Council's next steps during 2023-24. This document refers to the 'Music Education Hub' or 'Hub', when referring to the whole partnership, and 'Hub Lead Organisation' ('HLO') or 'lead organisation' when referencing specific responsibility of the HLO.

This document is primarily aimed at Music Education Hubs delivering against the requirements for the 2023-24 funding period. However, it may also be helpful for anyone applying to lead a Music Hub as part of the Music Hub Investment Programme, to understand our reporting requirements and expectations for Hubs.

Expectations of Hubs

During 2023-24, as part of the **December 2023** quarterly payment condition submission, all Hubs will be expected to submit a document outlining their progression strategy. This should provide a summary of the Hub's existing approach, learning and experience of supporting children and young people to

progress their interests and potential. The document should also highlight, where applicable, the data and evidence being used, any actions being taken to develop the approach, and a summary of the research or feedback you use to inform this area of work.

From September 2024 onwards, HLOs will be asked to submit and publish progression strategies which take into account the results of the Music Hub Investment Programme. They should embed a strategic, forward-looking and Hub-wide approach to supporting progression which builds on past work by Hubs.

A progression strategy should:

- outline the strategic approach to enabling children and young people to progress their interests and potential as far as they would like, across a range of genres and traditions
- consider a broad range of progression routes towards building a life-long enjoyment and engagement in music as well as supporting access into creative careers and employment
- identify opportunities and potential provision or expertise gaps, drawing on the Hub's needs analysis and consultation with children and young people
- draw on the skills and capabilities of partners at a local, regional, and national level, including the partners of schools and multi-academy trust partners, National Youth Music Organisations and music industry partners
- identify the means by which children and young people can connect with the broad range of training, support (including the Music and Dance Scheme), resources, equipment, facilities, and opportunities which will support their development
- describe how the Hub will work with schools and other providers to establish mechanisms which can capture, track and understand progression into further study, employment, and/or engagement. This will include working with schools and other appropriate education settings to track and record the progress of their individual pupils, including their engagement with lessons, ensembles and other Hub activities, and how they have been supported to access further opportunities
- align with the inclusion strategy, considering how children and young people with a range of needs and lived experiences are supported to progress their interests and potential

- align with other elements of the Local Plan for Music Education (LPME), including programme of activity, communication and engagement plans, workforce plan and instrument stock and management policy
- describe how the strategy will be reviewed, monitored and developed

It is the responsibility of HLOs to ensure the progression strategy is appropriately resourced and monitored, however ultimate responsibility for the strategy lies with the Hub board or oversight group. HLOs will be expected to ensure that there is appropriate accountability built into their strategy, and that it is a dynamic document, at least annually reviewed for its effectiveness and relevance.

Perspectives of progression

Working towards an aspiration of accessible, diverse and successful progression can take many forms and may include consideration of accessibility, of the number and range of opportunities, signposting and communications, as well as tracking engagement and attainment. Research and academic discussion on this area would encourage us to go further and to challenge our thinking, giving more thought to the circumstances most likely to encourage musical growth and development.

Current research and literature on progression highlights the following:

- there is a need to consider the range of environments and psychosocial factors that can affect progression, thinking beyond technical ability milestones and traditional linear ‘talent pipelines’
- flexibility is needed, to respond to the way that young people experience progression
- progress and progression routes are different aspects; with progression routes being the journey that a child or young person takes in order to progress
- ideas of a talented elite are strongly contested, with research supporting the idea that advanced musical abilities can develop in all children and instead encouraging focus on hard work, quality teaching and supportive circumstances to enable great performance
- it is unhelpful to see childhood development, and musical progression, as solely linear concepts, instead they are complex and dynamic

- it may be better to explore factors that contribute to a person's developmental experience to ensure they are supported as needed. Factors identified include: family; schools; peers; psychosocial skills (such as creative risk-taking, emotional regulation, self-efficacy and organisation); motivation; passion; practice; role models; identity; self-expression; and creativities (as processes, not individual traits)
- Inclusive progression – how are the additional needs of those facing barriers to musical learning considered?

"The music education sector should treat under-represented learners differently in order to treat them equitably. The way that music education is organised and perceived creates roadblocks and deterrents for some young people. This leads to them becoming under-represented in musical learning and under-representation can be self-perpetuating. Pro-active steps and affirmative action are needed if this is to change."

Spain, A. and Hendry, H. 'Engagement and progression in instrumental and vocal learning by under-represented young people: What can a conservatoire learn from the wider sector?', Royal Academy of Music, (2020) p27.

Building from this understanding of the research, the following questions are intended to encourage discussion and development.

- What do you already know of progression across ages, genres and any other variables?
- What do you know of the environments or factors that successfully support progression?
- What does supporting progression mean to you and your Hub?
- What are the implicit assumptions being made about progression?
- How do children and young people in your area experience progression? How do local factors affect this and how is this changing?
- What other types of support do young people need to progress? (beyond the availability of opportunities across the Hub)
- How can we tailor our support to individual needs and a wide range of backgrounds?

- How are teachers supported to ensure there is bespoke progression support addressing children and young people's needs?
- How is youth voice shaping the Hub's approach to progression?
- Do all Hub partners have an understanding of the factors supporting progression?
- How can Hubs ensure that the role models, ambassadors and champions for the Hub come from a range of backgrounds and genres?
- How are young people from self-directed learning, informal and non-formal participation supported?
- What are success measures for progression?
- How does the Hub partnership discuss and agree definitions of progression?
- Which other partners might provide insight or support with progression, such as Awards for Young Musicians?
- How does thinking on progression interlink with inclusion, communications, and the workforce?

Next steps

Many HLOs, their partners, National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and other music education organisations have already done a great deal of work to support children and young people's progression. Once the outline strategies are received from Hubs, the Arts Council intends to review these to draw out key learning and case studies that can inform future guidance and support for Hubs and the wider sector, including potential mechanisms for understanding the effectiveness of progression strategies.

Later in the year the Arts Council will share findings from a recent literature review into children and young people's creative and artistic development, which it is hoped will support the sector's thinking around progression. The Arts Council's Fair and Inclusive Midlands Music research project (which was a recommendation from the [Fair and Inclusive Classical Music](#) report) is also underway.

In addition, the Department for Education's recently launched Progression Fund and the National Music Hub Centres of Excellence outlined in the NPME will work to support children and young people's progression.