

Our introduction to the Multi-area Music Hubs research

Since 2012, a network of Music Education Hubs, covering every Local Authority Area in England, has supported the musical lives of children and young people. Delivering against the core and extension roles in the 2011 [The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education](#), Hubs have supported young people to sing, learn an instrument, be part of groups and ensembles, create their own music, and develop their interests and potential through clear and affordable progression routes.

The Arts Council has been delighted to support this essential and impactful work, monitoring the progress and performance of Hubs as fund holder for the programme on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) over the past decade. Hubs have consistently worked with approximately 90% of primary schools and over 85% of secondary schools. During 2020/21, they raised £110 million of additional income against the DfE's investment of £78 million and supported 350,000 pupils to have online or blended lessons.

We commissioned Andrea Spain's research to provide a valuable perspective on the range of partnership models which have emerged within Hubs, and the journeys which multi-area Hubs (those that operate across more than one local authority area) have taken. It draws on the work of seven partnerships and the young people they support. We are incredibly grateful for their insight.

We recognise that there isn't a standard model, and that all Hubs work as part of a unique local context. We continue to celebrate the value of a Hub network which is place-based and active in conversations with community and cultural partners, schools, and young people – enabling an authentic response to local circumstances and need.

This research is being published during a very important time for the music education sector. The DfE and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport recently published a refreshed [National Plan for Music Education: The Power of Music to Change Lives](#), which reaffirms the government's commitment to Music Hubs and sets out an updated strategy, with a new vision, three aims and five strategic functions.

The plan confirms the DfE's intention to open the Music Hub programme to competition, with a stated ambition that a reduced number of Hub Lead Organisations will be funded. Reaching every community will remain central, and the refreshed Hub network will strategically co-ordinate partnerships and programmes across larger geographical areas.

The aim of this research is to share sector intelligence and provide examples of different models of partnership working, to offer a nuanced understanding of how multi-area Hubs function. It is not intended to provide further information or insight into the policy direction in the refreshed National Plan or to steer organisations towards a specific or 'preferred' model of multi-area working. The opportunities and challenges outlined will help to inform how we support the network to evolve through the [Music Hub Investment Programme](#).

We hope that this research is a useful reference and conversational tool for music education organisations and beyond, describing the impact and challenges of this way of working. We also hope it offers useful insight and areas of exploration, so that every child can access high quality musical experiences and opportunities to take their interests as far as they would like them to go.

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