

# Music Mark Annual Review 2023/24

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“2023/24 has been another incredibly challenging year for the music education sector. Supporting colleagues through this to, help them continue to provide high quality opportunities for children and young people, has been at the heart of Music Mark’s work, whilst ensuring the key issues of the day are highlighted and addressed. We saw the launch of the This is Not a Rehearsal campaign focusing on the climate crisis at our Annual Conference in Southampton, continued our advocacy to the government across the UK, including presenting evidence to the Education Select Committee, as well as broadening and deepening our training offer for the membership. Please enjoy looking through these highlights of the year for our organisation and read on to find out what is to come in 2024/25...”

**Peter Smalley, Music Mark Chair**

- **September 2023:** We started the year with our popular **High Impact Senior Leadership** course, led by Andy Hind. 19 delegates followed six two-part modules from September to March and received six hours of mentoring.

- **October 2023:** In October, we welcomed our **new Chair Peter Smalley**. Peter had previously been a member of the Music Mark Board for six years, including as Vice Chair to James Dickinson.

- **November 2023:** Our 2023 **Annual Conference** took place in November at Southampton’s Ageas Bowl, where we celebrated dynamism in music education with 383 delegates.

- **December 2023:** On the 5th December, we began ongoing **advocacy work** in partnership with the ISM and MU to challenge the funding decision made by the Department for Education for the **Teachers Pension Scheme** contributions.

- **January 2024:** Sam Stimpson kicked off with a second cohort of **TiA Emerge to Thrive** in January 2024. 20 EDI leaders joined her for a 6-part part online course, learning how to effectively lead the commitment to EDI in their organisations.

- **February 2024:** In February, we relaunched **#CanDoMusic** alongside the ISM and the MTA, creating a space for school and instrumental music teachers to find resources that can help them deliver music in schools, and to be inspired by blogs.

- **March 2024:** In March, we published our six calls to action ‘**Ensuring the Future of Music Education**’, making the case to all political parties ahead of the UK General Election for a new government to prioritise music education.

- **April 2024:** April marked the launch of **This Is Not A Rehearsal**, our campaign to encourage action around the climate crisis within the music education sector. Through different monthly themes, we’re sharing news, resources & training to support your journey.

- **May 2024:** Music Mark’s Development Manager, Jamie Munn, ran the first-ever **Fundraising Fundamentals** series. He worked with 15 colleagues responsible for fundraising in their organisation in group settings and 1:1 meetings to support their development.

- **June 2024:** The inaugural Digital Innovation in Music Education conference took place online, was attended by 49 delegates and there were 7 sessions, with 14 speakers, talking about the fantastic technology work taking place in music education across the UK.

- **July 2024:** We teamed up with Sound Connections and Music for Youth to deliver the **Citizen’s Assembly** at the MfY National Festival in Birmingham. Young people from Lancashire and Wolverhampton helped plan the day’s programme focusing on mental health and music.

- **August 2024:** In August, the Department for Education confirmed that non-local authority HLOs and Deliver Partners with staff in TPS will get **support for employer contribution rises**. We continue to advocate for increased government funding for music education.

The 2023/24 academic year has been one of immense change and uncertainty in the sector. The Music Hub Investment Programme in England has been a challenge for an already stretched sector but one the network of music services and other music education organisations across England have risen to. Our members across the UK have also faced challenges including funding and recruitment in Wales, capacity in Scotland and the ongoing reorganisation of music education provision in Northern Ireland. Music Mark has played its role in supporting, connecting and influencing in this difficult time, challenging policymakers to ensure the sector can work through the changes. We have supported more colleagues than ever through our expanded Training & Events programme and worked hard as an Arts Council England Investment Principles Support Organisation to ensure this offer is as inclusive and accessible as possible.

We have forged new partnerships with national organisations across the nations to ensure a united voice for music education, which can successfully advocate to our new government. We work hard to support and champion the work of our members, as well as thinking strategically to support wider sector growth with policymakers across the UK. But we are nothing without our members, so thank you for continuing to be part of our network of music educators, leaders and music education organisations. As you go through this annual review, we hope you will get a sense of our achievements and successes this year, as well as a flavour of some of the exciting plans we have for 24/25.



**Across the year, more than 120 individual training sessions and events were delivered online and in-person! The programme captured a range of topics including marketing, fundraising, leadership and much more.**

- Facilitated by our Schools Manager, the introduction of **T-Time** provided teachers with a space for discussion.
- Peer Groups** continued to provide support to colleagues, with a **safeguarding group** added to the offer.
- Our **mentoring and coaching** schemes had a refresh to provide greater clarity on everyone's areas of expertise.
- "Outstanding quality of presentations and personnel - and the way it was run."** Attendee Feedback
- Sam Stimpson delivered two cohorts of **Emerge to Thrive**, due to demand.
- Nate Holder curated a second **Why Music X series** exploring diversity in music.
- Ben Sellers produced **New Directions in Inclusive Music**, which explored enhancing accessibility in music education.

This year, Music Mark has continued to support the music education sector by providing useful **resources, training, and guidance** to our whole membership.

In April, we launched **This Is Not A Rehearsal**, our campaign focusing on environmental sustainability.

As part of our response to the climate crisis, This Is Not A Rehearsal aims to encourage action throughout the sector by providing resources, training, news and research relevant to educators. Topics so far have included an introduction to the climate crisis, carbon literacy, climate action plans, and the sustainability of musical instruments.

Working alongside the ISM and MTA, we relaunched **#CanDoMusic** in February to create a dedicated space for classroom teachers to be inspired and find useful resources. Blog topics have covered the Model Music Curriculum, how to lead music in a primary school, and 5 top resources for classroom teaching!

We expanded **A Common Approach**, adding programmes of study for iPad, Digital Audio Workstations, and Tabla. A Common Approach is our curriculum for vocal and instrumental teaching designed to help educators develop a holistic approach to music education. This year, we added new Programmes of Study for the iPad, Digital Audio Workstations, and Tabla, to improve its range of instruments.

By working with **Industry Partners**, we help connect industry and members throughout the music education sector. Music Mark's Industry Partners represent many of the companies and organisations that help make things happen in music education, connecting industry with thousands of music education leaders and organisations in the sector. Our partnership with ABRSM continued to flourish in 2023/24, and we have helped bring together industry and members through our mailouts, training, and events - not least the regional conferences and annual conference, where our Industry Partners are an integral part of helping deliver events that are important to the whole sector.

We continued **Talk into Action's** legacy and worked on embedding its values into our work.

As part of our continued commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, we continued Talk into Action's legacy and worked on embedding its values into our work. This has included a strong focus on programming training sessions and events to help you commit to EDI in your organisation, as well as undertaking cultural awareness training as a whole team.

Our work as an **Arts Council England IPSO** allowed us to widen our support for the sector. 23/24 saw our work as an Arts Council England (ACE) Investment Principle Support Organisation really get going, providing Music Mark with the opportunity to widen our support for the sector and focus specifically on areas for development. Year 1 of our funding allowed us to expand our team with colleagues specialising in fundraising, data and schools joining the team. These new specialisms have enabled us to broaden our support for the sector, with several 'fundamentals' style training courses being developed and diversifying our peer networks. More in-depth examination of data being collected in England and Wales has informed our work with ACE and the Welsh Local Government Association to improve data collection going forward, as well as providing Music Mark and the sector with more knowledge and ability to celebrate successes through data. In addition to expanding the team, the support from ACE has allowed us to heavily subsidise much of our offer, to provide wider access to high-quality CPD, something we will look to further enhance into 24/25.

**“EDI is my world! It is my life, it is my job! One day it will be at the forefront of all education, business and life. This is what we strive for.”** Talk into Action Wall of Reflection

Music Mark continued its partnership with **ABRSM** to deliver the **Exam Discount Scheme** for UK music services. The ABRSM Discount Scheme was launched in November 2022 to ease some of the financial barriers that families can face in accessing exams. The scheme enables music services to set a discount of up to 95% that enables students to access exams and receive a recognised qualification.

Following feedback from users, a change was made from the spring term in 2024 to issue discount codes for candidates who were not already registered with ABRSM. The number of codes issued jumped from 56 in Autumn 2023, to 184 in Spring 2024, and 243 in Summer 2024. 70% of these were candidates who had not previously sat an ABRSM exam. Work to promote the scheme continued in this period, but lifting the requirement for a Contact ID has had a clear impact on take-up of the scheme, with 297 candidates paying discounted fees who might otherwise not have been able to take an exam at all.

Music Mark's support around the **Music Hub Investment Programme** in England has developed and responded to the needs of our members involved.

The Music Hub Investment Programme in England has loomed large in the minds of many music education professionals over the last year. As the programme timeline has developed, our support has developed and responded to the needs of our members involved. With the support of our external experts and legal advice partners, we have produced many resources to guide colleagues in meeting the requirements from the Department for Education (DfE) and Arts Council England (ACE).

The Marketing & Communications team has been busy ensuring everyone involved in this has been up to date with the most recent developments, and we have provided bespoke support to members as they navigate the process through conversations with our senior leadership team and external experts. There have been countless ACE and DfE meetings, but at every stage, we have relayed the thoughts and reflections of our membership to the relevant people and organisations. We have brought the sector together through 'Big Meets' and have introduced changes to our Jobs page to make the recruitment of voluntary roles (including Board roles) free to members.

Our Annual Conference took place in Southampton in November, exploring Dynamism in Music Education. The programme featured a range of exciting sessions including Dave Coplin's Keynote on AI and creativity, a panel session on making music teaching more dynamic, and a Table of Tech showcasing some of the latest innovations in music technology.

**383** Delegates

**100** Speakers & Exhibitors

**14K** Visits to the conference website

"This was the most progressive, thought-provoking conference I have ever attended."  
Music Mark Conference 2023 Attendee

"2023/24 saw the inaugural Music Mark Awards, helping to celebrate Music Mark's 10th birthday by highlighting the great work in the membership that often goes unnoticed."  
Jamie Munn – Development Manager

**2023/24 has seen a number of challenges for the sector that have required Music Mark to focus on its advocacy work with government and sector leaders. We have liaised directly with Department for Education officials and ministers and supported the Welsh Local Government Association, the Music Education Partnership Group and Heads of Instrumental Teaching Services in Scotland, all with an aim to provide greater clarity and long-term stability for our members.**

Music Mark is keen to lead by example in developing and sustaining **partnerships** which will support music education. In 2023/24 we worked with the **ISM** and **MTA** to review and relaunch #CanDoMusic, bringing together the three Music Subject Associations. We also worked with the **ISM** and **MU** on advocating to government for support for non-local authority music hub leaders and partners who provided the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS).

Other strong partnerships included with the **ABRSM** on various programmes including the Exam Discount Scheme; the **Welsh Local Government Association** who coordinate the National Music Service for Wales; **Sound Connections** and **Music for Youth** to create the second Youth Citizen's Assembly event; a joint roundtable with **MusicHE** to look at the future of post-18 Music; and an ongoing partnership with **Young Sounds** to support their work across England and beyond.

To help with our advocacy work, we have commissioned the think tank **Demos** to fully cost the **English National Plan for Music Education**. Whilst this will primarily help our advocacy work in England, it is likely to benefit our work across the whole UK. Our expectation is that the results will allow us to continue our push for greater government investment for music education to meet their ambitions for children and young people.

**Funding** is the main concern for most, if not all music education organisations, and we have led this conversation on your behalf.

As part of our ongoing advocacy work, we have attended 17 meetings and roundtables with Ministers, the Department for Education and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, were asked to give evidence to the Education Select Committee and sent 7 letters to Ministers – including three to the new Labour government. In Wales, officials from the Department for Education to the Senedd were involved in two meetings chaired by Bridget Whyte.

We have worked in partnership with the MU and ISM to challenge a specific funding decision linked to the Teachers' Pension Scheme for non-Local Authority Music Services/Hub Lead Organisations, which has, at the time of writing, met with some short-term success. We will continue the fight to push for greater funding for our members, whether an increase in the grants allocated by government in England and Wales, national and local authority funding in Scotland and Northern Ireland, more general funding for, and investment in music education, or around specific challenges such as the impact of increased employers' contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme or Teachers' pay awards.

Bridget Whyte, CEO, has been invited to speak and be on panels for a number of key sector events. Highlights included presenting at the International Music Education Policy Group Symposium in Edinburgh and at the International Society of Music Education World Conference in Helsinki.

We regularly bring our membership together online to discuss topics of national concern.

Our 'Big Meets' were originally set up to support colleagues during the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 and throughout 2021. In the 2023/24 academic year, we ran three of these events on the Hub Investment Programme, the Capital Fund, and advocacy in the lead up to the general election.

We launched six calls to action titled ‘**Ensuring the Future of Music Education in England**’ and presented them to political parties ahead of the UK election.

These were formed in consultation with the Music Mark membership and the wider Music Education sector, for all political parties to commit to during the next parliamentary term:

- 1 **Government investment must be sustained and keep pace with both its ambition and inflation.**
- 2 **Music Education must be understood, valued and financially supported by stakeholders in all schools.**
- 3 **There must be a universal understanding that music education does not start at 5 or finish at 18.**
- 4 **Priority must be placed on the recruitment and retention of classroom music teachers.**
- 5 **Instrumental & Vocal Teachers must be recognised, valued and be an integrated part of the education workforce.**
- 6 **Government must work with the Commercial Music Industry to co-invest in musical learning.**

## NEW

This year, we've worked to amplify **youth voice** and increase the involvement of young people in our work.

In July, we worked with Music for Youth and Sound Connections to organise the Citizen's Assembly. Young people from Lancashire and Wolverhampton came together to help plan and run the event, which gave young people a platform to share their experiences around music and mental health.

2023/24 saw the inclusion of the first youth representation on the Music Mark Advisory Committee, and the inclusion of two youth representatives on our This Is Not A Rehearsal steering

With the changes to the Music Hub structure in England and an increase in membership of music services across the wider UK, the Music Mark Board of Trustees and SLT are undertaking a **review of our current membership structure**. The work began in the late Spring internally, but we are now working collaboratively with our members to ensure that any changes will allow us to continue to support you as effectively as possible.

We began tracking our carbon emissions for travel and developed our **Sustainability Statement**.

We are now tracking the **carbon emissions** of our travel, working to understand the environmental impact of our work and considering our choices around in-person meetings and travel. This ongoing work will expand next year into **wider carbon tracking and assessment**.

We produced a **Sustainability Statement** which is now available on our website, to demonstrate our commitment to working more sustainably and to share the actions we will be taking to reduce our emissions.

## NEW

We have developed new connections and events to **broaden our support for schools.**

This academic year we have developed new and existing connections to share our work with a wider reach of schools, as well as sharing case studies demonstrating best practice and resources relevant to those working in schools.

We launched our new event series, **T-Time**, shortened from 'Teachers Termly Topic at Tea-Time'. This event replaced Teach Meet to provide a dedicated space for classroom teachers to discuss various topics relevant to their work. Topics so far have included finding the finances for music education in school, and making music lessons inclusive for students with dyslexia.

We've also joined multiple **consultation groups** to support in strategic thinking about future resources and qualifications for music, including the RSC, Oak National, the DfE consultation on the Advanced British Standard, and OCR performing arts qualifications.

In May, we were awarded the **Council for Subject Association Kitemark** for the exemplary work we are doing as a subject association.

In 2023 we introduced **Research Shorts**, an exciting new way of highlighting new research to aid our advocacy.

Our Research Shorts and Research Roundups bring emerging research directly to our members, reflecting key issues in scholarship and debate. They have had **3,000 active users this year**. This work has also enabled us to identify gaps in research and we actively looking at how we can commission and/or support new research where it is needed to further support our arguments around the value of musical learning.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

We'll continue to develop our campaign work with **#CanDoMusic, This Is Not A Rehearsal, and A Common Approach.**

A refresh of **10 Things Every School Should Know About Music and Get Playing**, to keep them up-to-date and relevant.

Continuing to **advocate** on behalf of our membership and the music education sector.

We will sense check all that we do, ensuring that we are embedding values of **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** in our work and continue moving from **Talk into Action.**

The launch of our **new podcast**, 'Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education', highlighting best practice in the sector.

An exciting and dynamic programme of **Training & Events** to support your work and professional development.



# THANK YOU!

**We'd like to say thank you to our members for their continued hard work this year.**

## **Board of Trustees**

- Peter Smalley – Chair
- Peter Bolton - Vice Chair and Treasurer
- Yogesh Dattani - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Lead and Champion for Inclusivity & Relevance
- Emma Calvert - Champion for Ambition & Quality
- Jan Ford - Champion for Inclusivity & Relevance
- Sarah Lee
- Clair McColl - Champion for Dynamism
- Jennifer McKie
- Ciaron O'Donnell
- Gemma Price - Champion for Environmental Responsibility

## **Advisory Committee**

- Angela Ball - North West
- Elen Derrett - National Youth Music Organisations
- Julie Dorr - North East
- Simon Gray – Wales
- Paul Guenault - South East
- Mary Mycroft – London
- Phil Needham - Yorkshire and the Humber
- Kath Page - South West
- Lucy Reid - East Midlands
- Mark Steele - West Midlands
- Ben Stevens - East of England
- Nick Thorne - National Youth Music Organisations

**With thanks to all consultants and organisations who have worked with us on our 2023/24 Training & Events programme.**

## **Consultants**

- Catherine Brentnall - A Common Approach
- Gary Griffiths - Music Hub and Service Advisor
- Mia Seymour & Aim High Accounts - Finance and Accounts

## **Staff**

- Bridget Whyte - Chief Executive Officer
- Rosie Lowe - Programmes & Engagement Director
- Chris Buglass - Membership & Operations Director
- Matthew Crisp - Membership & Operations Officer
- Jamie Munn - Development Manager
- Abi Marrison - Schools Manager
- Sarah K. Whitfield - Research Manager
- Laura Hailstone - Training & Events Manager
- Yusef Sacoor - Training & Events Officer
- Katie Chappell - Marketing & Communications Manager
- Emma Cragg - Marketing & Communications Officer
- Aimee Christodoulou – Social Media & Content Officer

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