

Tri-borough Music Hub, Stakeholder Consultation 2021: Progress and Impact Update

Children and young people love music: it enriches their daily lives, sparks social connections, and provides pathways towards fulfilling, creative careers. Throughout the pandemic, music has been a source of respite and enjoyment for children and young people when they have needed it most.

[Tri-borough Music Hub](#) (TBMH) is the award-winning lead organisation that oversees the delivery of music education in the three West London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and the City of Westminster. We work with schools, pupils, music educators and the community to provide engaging music activities for children and young people across the three boroughs. Over the last decade, we have directly supported over 70 thousand young musicians to develop and flourish in and out of school, and many more indirectly. During the last year, we have continued to offer the same high-quality opportunities as ever, embracing digital methods as the situation unfolded. As we enter a new chapter and look ahead to a new school year, we are setting out a bold new vision for the future of music in our three boroughs.

Our **vision** is for every child or young person to be able to access enriching and relatable musical experiences, whatever their age, ability, or life circumstances.

Our **mission** is to provide a broad range of progressive musical pathways and opportunities for all to develop a life-long love of music and realise their musical potential whilst developing their personal / social identity. We will do this by working closely in partnership with outstanding music and education organisations that are committed to our ethos. Together we will embed best-practice and implement visionary and effective models of partnership work to ensure comprehensive routes of engagement, opportunity, and progression.

How we operate

We are a centralised Local Authority service which receives core funding from the Department for Education via Arts Council England. We operate a shared-services model across three Local Authorities to deliver an expansive programme of musical learning, in and out of school.

About this review

As part of our ongoing development and evolution as a Music Education Hub, we commissioned Sound Connections in October 2020 to undertake a review of our offer for children and young people across the three boroughs. The review was delivered in three phases:

Phase 1. Scoping and team consultation

Sound Connections held a series of planning meetings with Stuart Whatmore, Head of Tri-borough Music Hub, and the senior team. The wider team were brought together to review the offer and gather feedback and ideas, enabling the senior team to establish the most useful way forward for the review process.

Phase 2. Stakeholder consultation

In the second phase, Sound Connections undertook a stakeholder consultation incorporating focus groups, online surveys, and one-to-one telephone interviews. The five cohorts consulted were:

1. Tri-borough Music Hub Tutors
2. Partner organisations
3. School teachers
4. Parents and carers
5. Young people themselves.

Phase 3. Findings and Recommendations

The final phase saw Sound Connections support the TBMH senior team to reflect on the findings and recommendations of the review, and to formulate responses to the most pressing questions and ideas.

It should be noted that this review was undertaken during the pandemic and across lockdown periods resulting in all activity taking place via Zoom or telephone calls. Given the pressures that resulted from the pandemic, responses and focus group attendance were less than anticipated. Despite these limitations, the consultation provided an extremely important insight into the perspectives and needs of stakeholders and offers clear themes for future exploration and development.

Key themes

It is clear that given the breadth and scale of the people who the Tri-borough Music Hub serves, each stakeholder group has their own specific needs and desired outcomes. Nonetheless, four common themes have emerged from the research which reinforce the necessary direction of travel for the hub, and which highlight the challenges that need to be overcome in order to deliver the best possible service. The themes are:

- **Access, diversity, and inclusion:**
Ensuring all children and young people who wish to access our services, can do so
- **Children's enjoyment and wellbeing:**
Providing enjoyable activities for children and young people and supporting their health and wellbeing as we emerge from the challenges of the pandemic
- **Youth voice:**
Ensuring that young voices are at the heart of our offers and the decisions we make as a service
- **Relationships and communication:**
The importance of listening to and communicating clearly with our audiences, partners, service users and workforce.

Our commitment

These following commitments build upon an already high-quality service which is highly respected by schools, teachers, families, partnership organisations, and pupils.

- We fully commit to continue increasing representation, improving access, ensuring equity, promoting greater diversity, and fostering inclusion across all our activities. We will set out a five-year plan with short, medium, and long-term targets across all aspects of service development.
- We will continue to focus on providing enjoyable, and high-quality, activities for children and young people which foster their wellbeing. This will be of paramount importance as we emerge from the pandemic and moving forward.
- We will continue to build on our successful work to date in developing and listening to young people and we will strive to embed this meaningfully across all our work.
- We recognise that our success relies on building and maintaining meaningful relationships with all our stakeholders and service users. We will ensure that clarity of communication and messaging is a central factor across all our operations.

Our longer-term strategic plans are laid out within the wider context of potential changes to national music education funding and policy from April 2022 (e.g. a refreshed National Plan for Music Education); and subject to changes in how Music Education Hubs evolve through centralised Department for Education and Arts Council England funding arrangements.

Responding to your feedback

We have listened to your feedback, questions and recommendations raised during the stakeholder consultations. Together, as a team, we have considered what we can do and what we will be able to change as a result. The following areas will become key priorities for us going forward:

Theme One: Access, diversity, and inclusion

How could the hub engage with a more diverse range of partners, communities, and families?

[We will review our existing partnerships in order to ensure we engage with an even wider range of arts organisations and education agencies, to ensure that we bring about the best outcomes for our local communities. We will re-focus all partnership work towards directly meeting our strategic aims, diversifying partnerships as needed to ensure greater representation across all protected characteristics.](#)

What needs to happen to build a staff team and workforce that are more diverse and representative of the three boroughs?

[The TBMH will actively look at employment pathways to widen our pool of tutors and entire workforce to improve representation. This is a long-term change. We are also committed to working towards a more family-oriented approach for our whole workforce, with all voices being heard, valued and able to contribute to meaningful change.](#)

What does *excellence in access and inclusion* look like for the hub?

We would like to support a cultural shift that all pupils can access music without having to limit their expectations or choices. It is essential that all TBMH activity is equitable and inclusive across all protected characteristics, to allow our participants (children, young people, workforce) to genuinely feel like they belong. We will promote the idea of 'see it, be it' by having role models in place, and we will ensure the voices of young people are heard.

How can significant barriers to access be reduced (e.g. financial barriers, practical barriers)?

- This is a challenging area. We remain committed to providing financial support to those with the most need through our remissions funding (50%), sibling discounts (50%), and our numerous scholarship places which are supported through external funders. We need to investigate how those that can afford to pay more are charged more, and how this may balance how we then support those in the most need. We also need to maximise fundraising potential via our sister charitable arm, the [Musical Boroughs Trust](#), and attract high-profile advocates for our work who will help bring new money into the TBMH.
- With 49,823 children ([source](#)) in our 3 boroughs living below the poverty line (41.4% of the total of 120,292 children living in our boroughs – among the worst figures in London), this is a real problem which MBT and TBMH are committed to addressing.
- Practical barriers around access are mainly to do with the geography/location of where we deliver activity and with reducing funds, it is hard to run multi-site activity. By the nature of serving three boroughs, wherever we choose to run an activity this will automatically not be on the doorstep of two of the boroughs.

Theme Two: Children's enjoyment and wellbeing

What do children and young people need *most* post-COVID to be able to learn, enjoy themselves and flourish?

Children and Young people need secure, safe, and consistent music education opportunities that will allow them to rebuild their confidence - personally, musically, and socially. We will support this through our programmed activity, ensuring that all partners understand and subscribe to the importance of wellbeing through music education. We will also ensure that our workforce of musical practitioners and educators respects and understands their commitment to providing consistency for learners when accepting regular teaching and learning work.

How could the TBMH create time and space for young people to be creative and re-socialise as we emerge from the pandemic?

Through our existing Youth Voice Council, we will continue to identify and clarify the needs of young people. Within our planned weekly activities, we already ensure that each class or ensemble has built in 'social' time. This is something for us to further develop with all ensemble and activity leaders. We must balance musical learning and progression, with the importance of children and young people engaging in social mixing and meeting new people.

How can music help reduce the challenges that young people face, such as pressure on attainment, mental health issues and so on?

We know that music can play a major part in positively contributing to the lives of children and young people. We are committed to ensuring our music practitioner workforce attend ongoing Mental Health First Aid training to reinforce staff awareness of the pressures facing young people. No pupils will be forced to take on anything that they do not wish to do, for example graded exams or public performances, and we will focus on nurturing a secure and safe holistic learning environment.

Theme Three: Youth voice

Youth voice is greatly appreciated by the young council members. How could you make sure that more young people can benefit from this opportunity?

At present, every Tri-borough school can nominate a young person to represent their school on our Youth Voice Council. There is scope for more schools to engage with this opportunity and we will aim to

secure this by building on our school relationships and refining our messaging. We would like to rekindle pre-pandemic discussions with non-formal settings such as youth centres in order to further diversify the range of voices that come forward.

How can you capture more voices across your activities and communities?

We will be instigating a new Youth Board for 14–25-year-olds in the coming academic year which will complement the existing youth voice work and provide progression opportunities for young people in getting their voices heard.

Who are you not currently reaching and what might they say?

Our Youth Voice Council engagement is primarily with students in our own out-of-school activity and those from schools where we have strong relationships. We would benefit from hearing from students engaging with music in informal ways; those via partner organisations; and those from non-formal organisations, such as youth clubs. We want to hear what young people have to say, and we are not afraid of being challenged.

Theme Four: Relationships and communication

How can already strong partnerships be further developed?

We will refocus on, and be explicit about, the purpose of all existing partnerships and what outcomes are being achieved by working together. This will lead to better understanding of each other's goals through an equal and reciprocal relationship, centred on honesty and openness. Some existing partnerships may need to come to an end if clarity of mutual purpose is not there, or if there is a lack of tangible benefit to our local young people from their current work.

How can new partnerships, especially with organisations representing diverse communities, be established?

We are open to new opportunities and actively seeking gaps in our network of partner organisations, not just those based in the arts, but also those from wider education agencies, for example the Virtual School for Looked After Children, or Youth Offending Services. We will continue our current work with the Local Authority SEND and Inclusion teams to ensure we make our work as accessible as possible to young people who receive sensory support, for example young people with a vision impairment, multi-sensory impairment, or young people who are deaf or hard of hearing. We will take a more joined up, holistic approach to partnership working to ensure that pupils from all backgrounds are included and actively encouraged to get involved.

How can dialogue with parents/carers be developed and expanded?

We will review our overall approach to communications and whether having a dedicated communication channel for parents, carers and families is useful or feasible. This might include a regular newsletter, blog, or meeting forum. Our priority is establishing what information is needed, who we should be targeting and how they might engage. Our ultimate ambition is to have more direct interactions with parents and carers.

How should the hub best communicate its reach and impact?

We will build upon our existing channels of communication and will enhance these through infographics, and more targeted use of social media channels. We are committed to improving our overall promotion and celebration of our achievements. Tri-borough Music Hub delivers a great amount of high-quality music education activity that positively impacts thousands of children and young people, but we need to get better at letting people know what we do and how they can get involved.

If you would like to share your views and feedback with us, please get in touch:

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