

A close-up, low-angle shot of a guitar's control panel. Several black knobs and switches are visible, with some labels like 'EFFECTS', 'FLAY/F', and 'OFF' partially legible. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

MUSIC EDUCATION PILOT

Final Report

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tri-borough
music hub

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The Tri-borough Music Hub (TBMH), with funding from AEG/The O2, implemented a Spring 2025 music education pilot programme across four Alternative Provision (AP) settings in West London. The project delivered seven weeks of sessions in each setting, engaging with young people through personalised, flexible, and responsive music-making experiences.

This report documents the outcomes, challenges, and achievements of the pilot project, demonstrating the significant impact that tailored music education can have on young people in AP settings. Through direct engagement with students across multiple sessions, this pilot has revealed valuable insights into effective approaches for music education in AP contexts, while highlighting the transformative potential of creative music-making for students who have faced challenges in mainstream education.

Key findings indicate that music sessions in AP settings:

1. Provide valuable opportunities for self-expression and emotional regulation
2. Foster improved self-esteem and confidence among participants
3. Create spaces for positive relationship-building and social skills development
4. Offer meaningful engagement for students who struggle with conventional classroom structures
5. Support the development of creative skills and musical abilities in accessible formats

Quantitative data from session feedback forms reinforces these findings, with high rates of observed engagement in creative musical activities (92% of sessions), improved self-expression (94% of sessions), and enhanced social interaction between participants (84% of sessions).

This report concludes with evidence-based recommendations for future programming and funding priorities to sustain and expand this work.

(1) Project Overview

Background and Context

Alternative Provision (AP) settings work with pupils who are either temporarily or permanently excluded from school, support children at risk of exclusion, help pupils return to mainstream education, and provide individualised programs for students with special educational needs. These settings serve some of the most vulnerable and marginalised young people in the education system, many of whom have experienced significant challenges in accessing conventional learning environments.

The pilot programme was designed as a proof-of-concept initiative to explore how tailored music education could benefit students in AP settings, with a view to developing longer-term funded programming. The project ran from January to March 2025, delivering weekly music sessions in four AP schools across the Tri-borough area (Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, and Hammersmith & Fulham).

Project Aims

The project aimed to:

1. Deliver participatory music sessions that create meaningful musical experiences in the moment
2. Support communication, wellbeing, achievement, and self-worth among participants
3. Explore what music means to young people in AP settings
4. Investigate the barriers to engagement with music education
5. Identify factors that constitute "success" in these contexts
6. Evaluate the potential for music to influence wider educational experiences
7. Develop an evidence base for future funding applications

Delivery Model

The programme delivered a total of 61 sessions, offering provision over seven weeks in the Spring term at each of the four settings, with each session lasting approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Two or three sessions were led on each day, with sessions led by Gawain Hewitt and Patrick Cassidy.

The delivery approach was intentionally flexible and responsive, adapting to the needs, interests, and engagement levels of participants. As described by Hewitt:

"What we're doing is unconditional music making so there are no preconceptions, no expectations, no previous experiences required and honestly anything is possible and pretty much anything's allowed. My job is to make sense of it all and what comes out is just endlessly surprising."

Session activities included:

- Individual and group music-making activities
- Exploration of various instruments and music technology
- Beat-making and production

- Freestyle performance and improvisation
- Instrumental instruction (particularly guitar and piano)
- Collaborative composition
- Recording and playback
- Musical games and physical activities
- Singing and rapping
- Rhythm work and drumming

This approach created what Hewitt describes as "a playground for sound and music" where young people lead, and facilitators support them. The diverse range of activities reflects the breadth of musical experiences observed during the project:

"We have classical piano, drill beats, emceeing, free jazz, weird sound art, games that involve noises, people making ASMR sounds... really the point is that they lead, and I facilitate."

Throughout the project, 61 separate sessions were documented across all settings, engaging 58 young people in total (with varying levels of consistency in attendance).

(2) Key Findings:

I. What Music Means to Young People in AP Settings

Through direct observation, student feedback, and staff reflections, the project revealed several insights into what music means to young people in AP settings:

A Tool for Emotional Expression and Regulation

Multiple students expressed how music provided them with emotional release and regulation. Students described feeling emotionally connected, calmer, and more able to express complex feelings through music than through words. One student (K) captured this emotional impact poetically, describing feeling "uplifted" after music sessions and stating that "music's so beautiful, I want to inject music in my veins."

The non-verbal nature of music making proved particularly valuable for students who struggle to articulate their emotions verbally. As one student expressed after a piano improvisation session: "I feel calmer, yeah. And I feel like I want to play just more."

Non-verbal expression is a core aspect of the approach, as Hewitt explains:

"Through doing this non-verbally, through affirming it non-verbally, I'm able to bypass those strongly learned techniques that the young people have sadly had to develop of excluding themselves of 'no I can't do that, I'm not allowed to' and instead they're just in it and they are part of something which is uplifting."

In 94% of sessions, facilitators observed young people expressing themselves musically, suggesting the consistent emotional outlet that music provided.

A Source of Joy and Freedom

Students consistently reported positive emotional responses to music-making activities. When asked how he felt about music, one student (J) simply said: "It just makes me feel happy," while another student (K) described wanting to "feel free" through music. The sense of freedom and choice inherent in creative music-making appeared particularly valuable for students who may experience limited autonomy in other aspects of their lives.

In 92% of sessions, all or most young people were observed to be "noticeably enjoying the activity - smiling, expressing enjoyment."

This high rate of positive emotional engagement was consistent across all four settings. A teacher observed that students "loved the freedom they experienced when using instruments and the microphone" and "would definitely do it again," highlighting how this sense of freedom was recognized and valued by staff as well as students.

An Alternative Mode of Achievement

For many students, music provided a rare opportunity to experience success and recognition. Multiple students expressed surprise and pride in discovering their own capabilities. The immediate feedback loop in music-making -- where effort translates directly into audible results -- created accessible pathways to achievement for students who may struggle with conventional academic assessments.

Through this approach, young people access what Hewitt describes as "the joys and benefits of collaborative music making" and "get to dial straight into that sense of belonging, that sense of connection and the way that can build up our self-esteem."

In 68% of sessions, students demonstrated "a sense of pride in what they produced," indicating the achievement value of musical activities.

A teacher expressed feeling "proud and happy, to see the young people genuinely just taking part and being happy about it," reflecting how the students' achievements in music resonated with staff as well.

A Space for Connection and Belonging

Music sessions facilitated positive social interactions and relationship-building. The collaborative nature of group music-making created opportunities for students to connect with each other and with staff in constructive ways. Teachers observed that even students who typically struggled with social interactions were able to engage positively during music activities.

Hewitt emphasizes that this sense of connection is felt by all participants, including facilitators: "I leave those sessions feeling like I've made incredible music, and I have connected with incredible musicians and that's because it's true, that is what's happened."

In 84% of sessions, facilitators observed young people "engaging in some form of conversation/communication with each other" during musical activities, and in 80% of sessions, young people demonstrated "positive body language (arms unfolded, leaning in)."

One teacher noted that "all learners seemed confident enough to experiment; one learner sang a couple of songs accompanied by the musician, others experimented with the software and percussion instruments," highlighting how the music sessions created a space where students felt comfortable taking creative risks together.

II. What Does Success Look Like?

Engagement as Success

Simply maintaining engagement in the session was identified as a significant achievement. As one teacher noted: "For some young people, successes [meant] they didn't leave the room... or they didn't destroy someone else's life. Just for one time." A teacher observed that an activity using the musical ball represented "the most engagement they'd seen all day" from certain students.

This perspective was reinforced by another teacher who stated: "The kids often do find the core subject stuff and lessons, lesson subjects like science and maths a bit more difficult. So it's nice to have sessions like this where they can get a break from the norm."

Small Wins and Incremental Progress

Success was often measured in terms of small but meaningful steps: a student trying an instrument for the first time, maintaining focus for a few minutes longer than usual, or returning voluntarily to subsequent sessions. As one teacher reflected: "Even the little things make the difference. You think to yourself it's the big things that are pre-planned, but it's not, it's really little sessions once a week or twice a week."

Feedback forms frequently mentioned improved focus or concentration over the course of sessions. For example, a facilitator noted: "The student remained focused and engaged until the end of the lesson. The student indicated he found the lesson interesting at the end."

Authentic Expression

Success was evident when students felt comfortable enough to express themselves authentically through music. This ranged from freestyle rap performances addressing personal experiences to instrumental improvisations that reflected emotional states. The quality of engagement -- its authenticity and personal significance -- often mattered more than technical proficiency.

Across the pilot, the most common form of engagement observed (in 96% of sessions) was "young people willingly using instruments/technology/voice," showing the preference for active, hands-on participation rather than more passive forms of musical engagement.

A teacher highlighted the "positive impacts on young people as they know there is no judgment on the instruments they play and how they play it," emphasizing how this non-judgmental approach was crucial for enabling authentic expression.

Relational Developments

Improvements in the quality of relationships -- between students and session leaders, among peer groups, and between students and setting staff -- constituted important success indicators. Music sessions created opportunities for positive relationship-building that sometimes transferred to other contexts.

This was particularly evident in a final session, where students proudly invited school leadership to witness their musical creations, demonstrating enhanced connections between students and staff.

III. The Power of Music in AP Settings

Accessibility and Immediacy

Music-making offered immediate access to creative expression without prerequisites or barriers. Even students with no prior musical experience could engage meaningfully from their first session. As one student (P) noted after a guitar session: "I've really enjoyed playing it today actually... I'm going to use it more."

The wide range of musical activities observed across the project, from drumming and beat-making to guitar instruction and freestyle rap, ensured that there were multiple entry points for participation accommodating different interests, abilities, and comfort levels.

In 96% of sessions, young people were observed "intentionally experimenting" with music, demonstrating the accessible nature of the activities.

This accessibility was reflected in the comment from a teacher who noted: "It's not giving them crazy complicated instruments to play, it's quite straightforward." This approach creates an environment that builds musical confidence by removing traditional barriers to participation, allowing students to engage on their own terms, at their own pace, and according to their own interests.

Flexibility and Adaptability

The inherent flexibility of music-making activities accommodated diverse learning styles and engagement levels. Sessions could be rapidly adapted to respond to students' moods, interests, and capacity for engagement on any given day. This adaptability proved crucial in maintaining student participation.

Across all sites, the ability to shift between different musical modalities -- from digital music creation to physical drumming, from solo instrumental work to group improvisation -- allowed facilitators to maintain engagement even when initial plans needed adjustment. The feedback forms frequently noted how sessions evolved in response to student interests, with 92% of sessions reporting that young people were "making choices about what the musicians should play and directing the musicians."

The evolution of the approach at one of the settings exemplifies this adaptability. After initial sessions faced behavioural challenges, the delivery method was reassessed. By introducing smaller group sizes, shorter session durations, and more structured activities, engagement levels improved markedly. The introduction of physical musical activities (such as the "Oddball" instrument in the form of a rubber ball that makes sound when moved and played with) proved particularly effective for certain students.

Non-verbal Communication

Music provided valuable opportunities for non-verbal communication and expression, particularly important for students who struggle with conventional verbal expression. As one student articulated: "This allowed you to express yourself without telling people what's worrying you."

Student H's piano improvisation experiences demonstrated the power of non-verbal expression. During reflective discussions after sessions, H explored how music allowed him to communicate aspects of himself without having to directly verbalize his concerns. This non-verbal aspect of music making was particularly valuable in contexts where students might be reluctant to verbalize their thoughts and feelings directly.

In 96% of sessions, young people were observed "expressing themselves musically," often in ways that complemented or substituted for verbal expression.

Cultural Relevance and Authenticity

Music's cultural relevance to young people created natural points of connection. As one teacher observed: "The kind of music that these kids often listen to, especially growing up in the West like this, it'll be drill, or some kind of rap... So, it's nice for them to listen to just normal instruments or classical music and get a different feel." The sessions bridged students' existing musical interests with new experiences and possibilities.

This cultural relevance was particularly evident in sessions involving beat-making, rap, and contemporary music production, which connected to students' existing musical identities while introducing new skills and possibilities. At the same time, introducing students to instruments and musical forms outside their usual experience (such as clarinet, which one student recognized only from "Squidward" in *SpongeBob SquarePants*) expanded their musical horizons.

In 56% of sessions, young people brought their own songs, musical content, or instruments to the session, demonstrating the connection between the project and their existing musical interests and identities.

IV. Impact on Wider Educational Experience

Increased Engagement and Attendance

Staff reported that students were more likely to attend school on days when music sessions were scheduled. As noted in session reflections, certain students who typically disengaged from other lessons maintained consistent attendance and participation in music sessions.

One teacher observed: "Each and every single one of them would have preferred to come to this session instead of going to whatever lesson was for that period." This preference for music sessions suggests their potential as a motivating factor for school attendance.

Transfer of Skills and Attitudes

Several instances were observed where skills developed in music sessions (such as turn-taking, listening, focus, and collaboration) transferred to other educational contexts. Teachers reported some students demonstrating improved concentration and reduced disruptive behaviour following music sessions.

One teacher noted: "It allows them to express a little bit of creativity, it gives us teachers a bit of a break and it allows them to express that sort of energy that they have from break and lunch time... To let it out on something where it's not destructive and dysregulated in a classroom setting but it's more fun and interactive in a session kind of setting."

Enhanced School Experience

Music sessions appeared to enhance students' overall experience of school by providing meaningful, enjoyable activities within the education setting.

In 96% of sessions, facilitators observed young people "actively listening to the music/musicians," demonstrating a level of focused attention that teachers noted was often difficult to achieve in other contexts.

The creative, expressive nature of the music sessions offered a different kind of educational experience from the more structured, assessment-focused core curriculum. This variety in the school day was valued by both students and staff, with one teacher noting that it provided a necessary "break

from the norm" for students who "find the core subject stuff and lessons, lesson subjects like science and maths a bit more difficult."

Self-Identity and Education

For some students, positive experiences in music began to influence how they viewed themselves in relation to education more broadly. As one student (H) reflected:

"I just want to make the most of my life, just want to make other people proud of me, like my teachers, my parents, my family... I want to be like, someone that everyone knows."

This shift in self-perception was particularly notable in cases where students discovered unexpected talents or interests through the music sessions. For example, student H's discovery of his natural aptitude for piano playing led to a notable shift in how he spoke about himself and his future possibilities: "I think I'm going to get a Piano at the Home."

V. Barriers to Engagement and Access

Environmental and Logistical Challenges

Physical space and equipment access significantly impacted session quality. Inconsistent access to teaching spaces severely limited programme effectiveness, with Cassidy noting that on multiple occasions, staff couldn't locate keys to the music studio. During one session, Patrick and a student had to use a Windows computer in another room instead of the Mac computers in the music studio, disrupting continuity and momentum in the program.

The acoustic properties of spaces (such as echoing sports halls) created challenges for effective music-making. The quality and appropriateness of physical environments proved crucial to programme success, with facilitator feedback consistently highlighting space and equipment access as significant factors affecting session outcomes.

Behavioural Dynamics

Group dynamics and behaviour management presented significant challenges in some sessions. The project found that smaller group sizes (2-3 students) often facilitated more focused engagement than larger groups. For example, dividing larger groups into smaller subgroups with shorter sessions proved more effective after initial challenges with whole-class formats.

Feedback forms from several sessions highlighted instances where challenging behaviour from one or two students significantly impacted the overall group dynamic. In one session a facilitator noted: "E was confrontational with A, which dominated the session. Despite interpersonal issues, productive music-making occurred."

Staffing and Support

The level of support from staff significantly influenced session outcomes. When staff were aligned with the music leader's approach and actively supported the sessions, engagement and outcomes improved. Conversely, conflicting approaches or lack of support undermined programme effectiveness.

Hewitt noted feeling "disenfranchised, undermined, upset, lost" after a session where a teacher shut down a musical activity, creating confusion and frustration. This incident highlighted the importance of clear communication and aligned expectations between music practitioners and staff.

Cassidy noted that in one session, he was told to leave as the key couldn't be found for the teaching room, which he found particularly frustrating. These access issues prevented continuity and momentum in the programme.

Consistency and Continuity

Irregular attendance, scheduling conflicts, and other interruptions disrupted the building of momentum across sessions. The most significant progress was observed where consistent attendance could be maintained across multiple sessions.

When attendance was more consistent, there was clear progression in student engagement and musical development over the seven-week period. In contrast, at sites with more irregular attendance, each session often felt like starting anew, limiting the potential for deeper musical and relational development.

Fire alarms, unexpected school events, and student absences all impacted programme continuity. Feedback forms often noted that sessions with returning students who had attended previous sessions demonstrated deeper engagement than those with entirely new participants.

(3) Case Studies and Highlights

H's Piano Discovery

In a particularly powerful session, a student (H) who had never played piano before demonstrated remarkable natural ability and engagement during an extended improvisation. The student reported feeling "calmer" afterward and expressed surprise at his own capabilities: "I never thought I can use a piano like this." The session leader observed that the student seemed "changed" by the experience, with the student himself describing it as his "best experience" in "at least a few years."

H reflected deeply on the emotional connection he found through music: "Some songs when you listen to it just like somehow just reminded you of your past... I just like I was not what I'm doing without just realising myself." This improvised piano session appeared to create a profound moment of self-discovery and emotional processing.

When discussing the difference between expressing himself through music versus talking, H articulated how music allowed him to communicate aspects of himself without the vulnerability of direct verbal disclosure. This case illustrates the therapeutic potential of music as a form of communication that can bypass verbal resistance.

The above illustrates how providing access to musical instruments and a supportive space for experimentation can unlock previously undiscovered abilities and provide meaningful emotional experiences for students in AP settings.

The Final Session

A final session in a setting represented a culmination of skills developed throughout the project. Students demonstrated remarkable independence and creative ownership, with minimal guidance needed from the session leader. The session was characterised by "sheer joy" with "spontaneous dancing and an atmosphere of genuine excitement and creativity." Students even invited school leadership into the room to showcase their work, demonstrating pride in their achievements.

Hewitt's self-reflection report stated:

"It was an incredibly joyful and exceptional session. The young people were able to use the skills that they had developed throughout the project to create their own music, and were almost entirely self-directed, with me contributing musically from a distance on my clarinet. The levels of sheer joy were just so lovely to see, with participants even pulling in the deputy head and another teacher to show off their work."

This case highlights how consistent, well-structured music provision can build toward moments of significant student autonomy and creative confidence, with positive impacts on student-staff relationships.

Finding the Right Approach

The evolution of the programme demonstrated the importance of adaptability in AP music education. Initial sessions faced significant behavioural challenges, leading to a reassessment of delivery methods. By introducing smaller group sizes, shorter session durations, and more structured activities, engagement levels improved markedly.

The introduction of physical musical activities (such as the "Oddball" musical ball game) proved particularly effective for certain students. This highlighted the importance of incorporating physical movement into music sessions for some students, particularly those who struggle with sedentary activities.

The pilot also revealed the significance of the physical environment, with early sessions noting that being in the "smelly room" negatively impacted student engagement. A room change was noted as an "improvement," demonstrating how seemingly small environmental factors can significantly influence session outcomes.

Navigating Structural Challenges

The pilot highlighted the critical importance of institutional support and infrastructure. Despite Cassidy's expertise and commitment, the programme faced significant challenges due to inconsistent access to appropriate facilities. Cassidy reported that "only three of the five sessions were considered productive," with the others "severely impacted by organizational issues, primarily related to accessing the music studio." These access issues prevented continuity and momentum in the program, limiting its potential impact.

Despite these challenges, Cassidy observed "genuine interest and engagement from some students," with one student in particular showing "consistent interest across multiple sessions, demonstrating progress." This resilience in the face of structural barriers demonstrates both the potential of music education in AP settings and the critical need for appropriate institutional support.

(4) Recommendations for Future Programming

Programme Design and Delivery

1. **Flexible, Responsive Structures:** Maintain flexibility in session planning to respond to student needs and engagement levels on any given day. Build in multiple possible activities and approaches that can be deployed as needed. Feedback from the pilot consistently highlighted the value of adaptability, with session reflections often noting how plans were adjusted in response to student energy, focus, and interest.
2. **Small Group Formats:** Prioritise small group work (2-3 students) where possible, with shorter, more focused sessions rather than extended whole-group formats. The pilot demonstrated how dividing larger groups into smaller subgroups with shorter sessions significantly improved engagement. Consider a rotation model where multiple small groups engage in different activities.
3. **Relationship-Centred Approach:** Prioritise relationship-building between music leaders and students as a foundation for engagement. Session feedback forms consistently highlighted the importance of rapport and trust, with 80% of sessions noting that young people engaged in "conversation/communication with the musicians." Allow sufficient time and continuity for these relationships to develop.
4. **Appropriate Physical Environments:** Ensure access to suitable, acoustically appropriate spaces with reliable equipment access. The challenges and the impact of room changes highlight the critical importance of environmental factors. Address logistical barriers proactively through clear communication with school leadership.
5. **Technology Integration:** Continue developing approaches that integrate music technology (beat-making, recording, production) with traditional instrumental work, responding to student interests while introducing new possibilities. The success of the YuStudio® platform, which Cassidy found had "beneficial features" including "video tutorials and step-by-step courses" and "targeted content for young people," suggests the value of student-friendly digital tools.
6. **Cross-Modal Activities:** Incorporate physical movement and multi-sensory experiences into music-making where appropriate, particularly for students who struggle with sedentary activities. The success of the "Oddball" musical device demonstrated the effectiveness of combining physical activity with musical engagement for some students.

Staffing and Development

1. **Specialised Training:** Develop specific training programmes for music educators working in AP settings, focusing on flexible delivery, behaviour management, trauma-informed approaches, and responsive facilitation. The pilot revealed the distinct skill set required for effective music education in AP contexts, combining musical expertise with behavioural understanding and adaptive teaching approaches.
2. **Consistent Staffing:** Maintain consistency in staffing to build meaningful relationships over time. The most significant progress was observed where consistent relationships could develop between practitioners and students. Short-term interventions should be viewed as starting points for longer-term engagement.
3. **Collaborative Planning:** Establish clear communication channels between music leaders and school staff to ensure alignment of approaches and mutual support. The challenges faced

in the pilot highlight the importance of shared expectations and collaborative approaches between music practitioners and staff.

4. **Supervision and Support for Practitioners' Mental Health:** Implement regular supervision and wellbeing support for music practitioners working in AP settings, acknowledging the emotional demands and potential vicarious trauma associated with this work. Session reflections frequently mentioned the emotional impact of challenging sessions, with one practitioner describing feeling "disenfranchised, undermined, upset, lost" after a particularly difficult experience.

Funding and Sustainability

1. **Longer-Term Programming:** Transition from short-term pilots to sustained, regular provision that allows for deeper relationship-building and progression. A minimum of 12-15 sessions is recommended for meaningful development. The pilot demonstrated how the most significant progress occurred in the latter sessions, once relationships and trust had been established.
2. **Equipment and Resources:** Invest in appropriate instruments, technology, and resources specifically designated for AP settings, ensuring reliable access for programme delivery. The challenges faced during the pilot highlight the critical importance of dedicated resources with reliable access protocols.
3. **Progression Pathways:** Develop clear progression routes for students who show particular interest or aptitude, including potential for continued engagement beyond the AP setting. Several students in the pilot, such as H, demonstrated interest in continuing their musical development, suggesting the need for sustainable pathways beyond initial engagement.
4. **Evidence Gathering:** Implement systematic, appropriate evaluation methods that capture meaningful outcomes without disrupting the organic flow of sessions or imposing inappropriate metrics. Building on effective approaches used in this pilot, consider:
 - Audio recording sessions for later analysis
 - Audio reflection notes captured by practitioners after each session
 - Use of a 12-sided "dice" with evaluation questions to encourage natural reflection by participants
 - Audio recordings of staff reflections to capture nuanced observations
 - Structured but accessible feedback forms for workshop staff and school staff

Policy and Advocacy

1. **Recognition of Alternative Success Metrics:** Advocate for recognition of appropriate success indicators in AP music education contexts, moving beyond conventional attainment measures to value engagement, expression, and personal development. The Sounds of Intent framework, with its established connection to Trinity College London's examination systems, offers a potential model for recognising and validating musical achievement in these settings while accommodating diverse engagement levels.
2. **Integration with Broader AP Strategies:** Position music education as an integral component of AP provision rather than an optional extra, highlighting its role in supporting core educational and developmental goals. As one teacher noted, music sessions allow students to "express that sort of energy that they have from break and lunch time... in a way that's not destructive and dysregulated in a classroom setting but... more fun and interactive."

3. **Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between music organisations, AP settings, mainstream schools, and other services to create more coherent support for young people moving between different educational environments. The pilot project's engagement with multiple AP settings across the Tri-borough area demonstrates the potential for collaborative approaches that share resources, expertise, and best practices.

(5) Funding Priorities for Future Work

1. **Sustained Provision:** Long-term funding for regular, consistent music provision across AP settings in the Tri-borough area, building on the relationships and approaches developed during this pilot. Feedback suggested the importance of sustained engagement rather than one-off interventions.
2. **Workforce Development:** Investment in specialised training and professional development for music educators working in AP contexts, including opportunities for shadowing, mentoring, and reflective practice. The pilot revealed the distinct skill set required for effective music education in AP settings, combining musical expertise with behavioural understanding and adaptive teaching approaches.
3. **Resource Development:** Funding for appropriate instruments, technology, and resources specifically designed for AP music education, including mobile equipment that can be effectively deployed in various settings.
4. **Progression Opportunities:** Support for pathways that allow interested students to continue their musical development beyond initial engagement, including links to community music organisations, recording opportunities, and performance platforms.
5. **Research and Evaluation:** Funding for more extensive research into the impacts of music education in AP settings, using appropriate methodologies that capture meaningful outcomes while respecting the specific contexts and needs of AP students.

(6) Statistical Analysis of Feedback Forms

Engagement Indicators

Our feedback data shows high levels of musical engagement across different dimensions:

- 96% of sessions reported young people "willingly using instruments/technology/voice"
- 96% of sessions reported young people "intentionally experimenting" with music
- 96% of sessions reported young people "expressing themselves musically"
- 92% of sessions reported young people "making choices about what the musicians should play"
- 56% of sessions reported young people "bringing songs/musical content/instruments" to the session

This data suggests that active participation and creative agency were consistently present throughout the pilot, with particularly high rates of musical expression and experimentation.

Self-Esteem and Confidence Indicators

- 96% of sessions reported young people "noticeably enjoying the activity - smiling, expressing enjoyment"
- 84% of sessions reported young people "having the confidence to try something new or different"
- 80% of sessions reported young people "actively leading the music making"
- 84% of sessions reported young people "seeming relaxed"
- 80% of sessions reported young people "being able to accept praise"
- 68% of sessions reported young people showing "a sense of pride in what they produced"

These patterns indicate that music activities consistently created positive emotional experiences and opportunities for confidence building, with enjoyment being the most frequently observed indicator.

Social Skills Indicators

- 80% of sessions reported young people "engaging in conversation/communication with the musicians"
- 84% of sessions reported young people "engaging in conversation/communication with each other"
- 80% of sessions reported young people "making eye contact with the music leaders/each other"
- 68% of sessions reported young people "becoming more verbally confident as the session progressed"
- 72% of sessions reported young people "showing aspects of positive body language"

This data suggests that music sessions created valuable opportunities for social interaction and communication development, with peer interaction being the most frequently observed social indicator.

Conclusion

This pilot project has demonstrated the significant potential of well-designed music education to positively impact young people in Alternative Provision settings. Through creating spaces for authentic expression, building meaningful relationships, and offering accessible paths to achievement, music-making addresses many of the core needs of students who have faced challenges in mainstream education.

The project has shown that "success" in these contexts must be understood differently -- valuing engagement, expression, and incremental progress rather than conventional attainment measures. When approached with flexibility, responsiveness, and genuine respect for students' experiences and interests, music education can create transformative moments that influence how young people view themselves, their capabilities, and their future possibilities.

As Gawain Hewitt reflects on the overall experience: "I leave those sessions feeling like I've made incredible music and I have connected with incredible musicians and that's because that's true, that is what's happened."

While environmental, behavioural, and structural challenges exist, the pilot has identified effective strategies for addressing these barriers and maximising positive impacts. With appropriate funding, training, and strategic development, there is significant potential to build on these foundations to create sustained, impactful music education provision across AP settings in the Tri-borough area and beyond.

The statistical analysis of feedback forms reinforces the qualitative observations, with consistently high rates of engagement (96% of sessions reporting musical expression), positive emotional experiences (96% reporting enjoyment), and social development (84% reporting peer communication). These patterns were observed across all four settings despite their different contexts and challenges, suggesting the robustness of the approach.

The process of musical self-discovery was evident throughout the project, with students uncovering hidden talents and capabilities. This process of discovery captures the essence of what effective music education in AP settings can achieve -- opening doors to self-discovery, confidence, and new possibilities that extend far beyond the music room.

"Music's so beautiful, I want to inject music in my veins." - Student feedback

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