

# Inclusion Strategy – Strategic Priorities for Berkshire Music Trust and Slough Music Service

2025-2027

## Introduction

This document outlines the updated inclusion policy and strategic priorities for the Berkshire Music Trust (BMT) and its Hub Lead Organisation (HLO) partnership with Slough Music Service. Our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment that supports and engages every participant is central to our mission of providing equitable music opportunities for all. As we look to the future, we aim to leverage data-driven decision-making, amplify youth voices in shaping our programs, and tailor music offerings to meet diverse needs. These strategic priorities reflect our ongoing journey towards creating a more inclusive and responsive music hub that serves the evolving needs of our community.

First, we will develop our abilities to leverage data that informs our decision-making and provision, ensuring that our resources and programs are optimised to meet the needs of our diverse community.

Second, we aim to develop the integration of Youth Voice, acknowledging the valuable insights and perspectives of young participants in shaping our offerings.

Finally, we are dedicated to meeting people where their needs are, by providing tailored and accessible music opportunities that address individual challenges. These priorities will guide our efforts to create a more inclusive and responsive music hub for all.

The Berkshire Young Musicians Trust has served the county of Berkshire for many years and was formally established as a charity in 1982. From starting life as a traditional, fully funded Music Service, Berkshire Music Trust has transformed its approach to inclusion over the past five years. Now, as the Music Hub for Berkshire, it continues its work in formal education spaces with a clear mandate from the DfE to deliver the National Plan for Music Education. However, with clear leadership from the CEO and senior leadership team, it aims as a charity to truly ensure that there are no barriers facing any stakeholders when it comes to music whether that be children, young people or adults. Through this strategy, and the following strategic priorities, BMT aims to fulfil its vision of "Everyone A Musician" by providing opportunities that inspire, engage, and support meaningful participation in music.

## Executive Summary

The Berkshire Music Trust (BMT) and Slough Music Service (Lead delivery partner in the Berkshire Music Hub) are dedicated to advancing inclusion and equity in music education through a cohesive strategy that aligns with evolving community needs. Three key priorities have been identified to guide this effort:

### 1. Harnessing Data for Informed Decision-Making

We are committed to using data as a cornerstone for identifying gaps in service, refining policies, and ensuring resources are allocated to meet the diverse needs of our communities. Enhanced data collection and analysis will enable us to address systemic inequities, foster diverse representation within our teams and offerings, and ensure music programmes are relevant to the contemporary interests and cultural backgrounds of our community.

### 2. Empowering Young Voices

Recognising the transformative impact of youth engagement and leadership, we aim to include young people at all levels of decision-making. Initiatives such as Young Trustees, a Youth Engagement Lead, and a re-formed Youth Council will provide platforms for young voices, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds, to actively influence programme development and resource allocation.

### 3. Providing Tailored and Accessible Music Opportunities

By addressing individual needs, particularly for those from underrepresented groups, we aim to create inclusive and flexible music experiences. This includes personalised learning plans, specialised resources, and targeted outreach efforts. Examples include collaborating with South Asian cultural groups on community performances, supporting SEND learners with our Soundabout Choir and Open Orchestras, and developing initiatives for children with SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) challenges by partnering with organisations like Brighter Futures for Children.

BMT – the Hub Lead Organisation for the region – has made significant strides in transitioning from a traditional music service to a hub that prioritises inclusion, leveraging partnerships, and innovative approaches to reach all children, regardless of background or ability. Through these strategic priorities, we aim to reach and engage with more children and young people especially those that we currently aren't serving but for whom engaging with music will undoubtedly transform their lives.



## Strategic Priorities – 3 Key Themes

### One - Using Data to Inform Decision Making and Provision

One of the key strategic priorities for the HLO is to harness data as a fundamental tool for decision-making and programme development, especially considering inequities in access to music education. As an organisation, we have identified that we have historically had a lack of data on which to make informed decisions and in order to continue on the trajectory of better serving our communities, we need to have better information. Data collection and analysis will allow us to spot areas for development more quickly, act on them more confidently, and reflect on our work with deeper insight.

An example of this is our ability to assess and act upon systemic and cultural inequality, both within the communities we serve and within our own teams. By gathering and analysing data on engagement, retention, satisfaction, and progression, we can gain clearer insights and stronger evidence to inform our actions. For instance, understanding the musical preferences of young people and identifying what they are likely to engage with will help us extend our musical offerings in those areas, ensuring they resonate with and represent the local community. We will prioritise diverse representation within our team and, additionally, the HLO will emphasise collaborating with delivery partners who reflect the breadth of cultures and communities in the area. Furthermore, the HLO is committed to establishing procedures that continually review and refine policies supporting inclusion, aiming to identify, uphold, and enhance best practices. Equitable sharing of resources—including staff expertise and local knowledge—between the HLO and its hub partners will also be prioritised. This collaborative effort supports not only the continuous improvement of current programmes but also the development of innovative initiatives that align with the evolving needs of the community.

## Two - Youth Voice

Empowering and incorporating the voices of all young people, including those children in challenging circumstances, is a critical priority for the HLO. Currently, the voices of some young people are heard through existing internal feedback channels, but the HLO is dedicated to expanding this to ensure that a broader range of young people - especially from those who are often marginalised - are present at the table in decision-making and programme design. This will not be limited to simply asking for opinions but will include meaningful opportunities to effect change within the organisation. To achieve this, the HLO will take a multi-level approach, beginning with the appointment of Young Trustee(s) to the board of BMT and/or the Hub Board. The Young Trustee(s) will be supported and mentored by existing board members and by our Youth Engagement Lead, empowering and enabling them to take on meaningful, rewarding leadership work.

They will, in turn, be able to work with (and delegate to) a newly re-formed Youth Council comprising children and young people from across the age and demographic profile of our learners. These roles will specifically include representation from children and young people in challenging circumstances to ensure their experiences and needs are directly influencing the development of music activities and services. By actively engaging with young people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances and giving them the power to make decisions and effect change, the HLO aims to create an inclusive environment where all young voices are valued. A portion of the Inclusion Budget will be delegated to the Young Trustee(s) and Youth Council members (supported by our Youth Engagement Lead), to create the kind of musical opportunities that they deem to be relevant, engaging and impactful.

## Three - Meeting People Where Their Needs Are

The HLO is committed to meeting individuals where their needs are by providing tailored support and accessible music opportunities, especially for those currently underrepresented or facing significant barriers to participation. By initially striving to improve data collection and analysis from participants, the organisation will be able to implement specific targets such as increasing engagement among children with disabilities and enhancing participation by from communities with limited access to music education. This will enable the HLO will achieve its targets through initiatives such as personalised learning plans, specialised resources, and targeted outreach efforts. These strategies will be designed to address the unique needs of each participant, ensuring that everyone, including those with diverse abilities and circumstances, can fully engage with and benefit from the hub's offerings. This ambitious goal will require sustained investment, continuous adaptation, and strong partnerships with local organisations. Ongoing consultation with community members will also be crucial to refining and expanding these programs to serve everyone effectively. Examples of this include working with young people from South Asian communities to understand their needs in cultural spaces over a 10-week programme.

## Strategic Priorities

The following strategic priorities have been identified by the senior leadership teams and inclusion leads at both the HLO and Slough Music Service to aim to provide a cohesive approach moving forward.

- 1. The diverse communities and cultures within the area are represented not only within the team, but also in the delivery partners with whom we work and the musical offerings that we provide.*

Action points:

- **Recruitment:** Actively seek to hire staff and trustees from a variety of cultural backgrounds to better reflect the community. This will be driven by data showing the breakdown of cultural communities in Berkshire.
- **Partner with Culturally and/or Musically Diverse Organisations:** Continue to select and collaborate with delivery partners that represent and serve diverse communities. Where partners with appropriate skills or experience do not currently exist, we will seek to bring community groups and musicians together to encourage further development of such provision.
- **Activity:** Incorporating this into our activity/programmes by fostering new or smaller community organisations through support and community dialogue. Current work in this area to be further developed includes MIXMKR digital music making programmes, and Jump Start online instrumental courses which have strong potential to reach young people with SEMH and those suffering with social isolation.

- 2. There is a commitment to recognising and serving the geography and diversity of the hub region, with a focus on delivering musical opportunities for the South Asian community.*

Action Points:

- **Partner with South Asian Cultural Groups:** Identify and collaborate with local South Asian organisations to develop and promote music education programmes.
  - **Activity in this space:** Bring together our delivery partners and associate organisations to make key events such as Music Centre Concerts, MPower, and the Junior & Senior Music Festivals inclusive and celebratory of our entire community.
  - **Identify language needs/barriers South Asian Languages:** Distribute marketing and information about music programs in languages spoken by the South Asian community.
- 3. Procedures are in place to ensure that inclusion policies are regularly reviewed and refined to maintain and improve best practices. Resources—including physical resources (such as instruments and facilities), financial resources (such as the inclusion budget), and human*

*resources (such as staff expertise and time)—are shared equitably between the HLO and hub partners. This includes initiatives like the Inclusive Musical Instrument Library and benchmarking criteria, such as the use of Pupil Premium eligibility, to identify children in financially challenging circumstances.*

Action Points:

- **Regular Policy Reviews:** Schedule and conduct regular reviews of inclusion policies to ensure they remain up-to-date, effective, and aligned with best practices. Timelines for reviews will be discussed with the HLO board, and partnership agreements will include terms for collaborative sharing of data to support this process.
  - **Gather Feedback:** Collect ongoing feedback from staff, parents/carers, and hub partners to identify areas for improvement in inclusion policies. This feedback loop will be regularly reviewed and refined to address emerging needs.
  - **Share Resources Equitably:** Ensure that physical resources, such as instruments through the Inclusive Musical Instrument Library, financial resources, such as the inclusion budget, and human resources, such as the Inclusion Lead's staff time, are distributed fairly across the hub partners to support inclusion efforts.
  - **Implement Updates Promptly:** Communicate and implement any updates or refinements to inclusion policies swiftly across the hub and partners. Updates will be shared via direct contact from the Partnership & Inclusion Manager or during regular termly partnership meetings.
4. *The workforce has appropriate and sufficient skills, knowledge and understanding to deliver musically inclusive and nurturing practices and appropriate musical and creative development for all, and access to CPD to sustain this.*

Action Points:

- **Provide Regular Training:** Offer ongoing professional development (CPD) sessions focused on musically inclusive and nurturing practices – these will be offered throughout the year as part of BMT's CPD days each term, alongside other training opportunities that arise and are regularly shared on the Inclusion SharePoint.
- **Wider Reach - Assess Skill Levels:** Regularly assess the workforce's skills and knowledge to identify areas where additional training is needed. This will rely heavily on wider staff engagement and needs analysis and so we will complete a comprehensive skills audit of all staff and volunteers by the end of the 2025 academic year to identify current strengths and areas for development in musically inclusive practices.
- **Support System:** Ensuring staff know of the support system (Partnership and Inclusion Manager, Youth Music Engagement Lead and Young Sounds Connector) for this area of development.

- **CPD Schedule:** Create and publish a CPD calendar by September 2025, offering at least one monthly informal training session focused on inclusive music education, cultural competency, or creative pedagogies.
- **Encourage Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitate opportunities for staff to share their knowledge and experiences in inclusive practices with their peers, fostering a collaborative learning environment – this will be through the Young Sounds Connector programme.
- **Evaluate Training Impact:** Introduce a feedback and evaluation process for all CPD activities by the end of the 2024/25 academic year to measure effectiveness, aiming for at least an 80% satisfaction rate among participants, using the Youth Music Quality Framework ‘Working with Young Disabled Musicians’ document as a reference point for good practice and as a framework to scaffold decisions around future training.
- **Implement New Training:** Roll out ‘Resonating With All’ in-depth training in October 2024, for an initial cohort to evaluate and develop the offering each year. Monitor staff engagement with this training, aiming for 90% completion rate.

(See appendix on final page for links to the YMQF, and the course curriculum for Resonating With All)

5. Versions for each hub partner:

a. **Berkshire Music Trust**

- i. *The work of the hub to engage in sustainable ways with new groups of young people who face barriers to engagement has expanded, including (but not limited to) the virtual schools’ network, looked after children, care leavers and those in financial disadvantage.*

b. **Slough Music Service**

- i. *The music service recognises cost as a significant barrier to music participation in Slough and will prioritise subsidies, bursaries and exploring new funding routes in partnership with the HLO to support to young people from low-income backgrounds.*

BMT Action Points:

- **Identify and Reach Out to New Groups:** Actively identify at least three new groups of young people facing barriers to music education each year and establish connections through targeted engagement programs. Utilise data analysis to pinpoint these groups and achieve a 20% increase in engagement from these demographics within the next three years. This work falls within the remit of our Young Sounds Connector, who will make an excellent resource for the HLO in identifying young people and linking them to opportunities.
- **Expand Virtual School Programs:** Strengthen and expand the virtual schools’ network to increase accessible music opportunities by adding two new virtual programs and reaching at

least 40 additional young people who cannot attend in person by the end of the 2025/26 school year.

- **Create Tailored Support Programs:** Develop and implement specific programmes and/or resources tailored to the needs of looked-after children, care leavers, young carers, and those facing financial disadvantage, aiming to increase their participation in music activities by 20% over the duration of this strategy.
- **Engage with UA's:** Collaborate with all of our Unitary Authorities (UAs) at least once in each year to ensure sustained support and engagement for young people in music activities, with a goal of maintaining at least an 75% retention rate of participants across these initiatives.

*6. The offer for children, young people and adults with SEND has been further developed, more truly representing the needs of individuals throughout the range of experiences that the hub provides.*

Action Points:

- **Conduct Regular Needs Analysis:** Regularly assess and gather feedback from children, young people, and adults with SEND and – critically, from their teachers, support staff and parents – to understand and address their specific needs. An annual cycle of data collection, review, delivery and analysis will be implemented by September 2025 to support this work, which will be shared across SLT and the Partnership & Inclusion team.
- **Develop and implement SEND Training:** Provide specialised training for staff to ensure they are equipped to support and engage effectively with individuals with SEND. This will be done primarily within BMT and will then be shared out with our hub partners as part of best practice. This work is a key part of Strategic Priority 4 above.
- **Continue to highlight Inclusive Practices:** Ensure that all activities and resources are accessible and inclusive, adjusting as needed to meet the diverse needs of participants with SEND, e.g. Sounds of Intent. The HLO is proud of the huge journey we have already embarked upon with regard to inclusion, and most especially on being only the second music hub in the UK to launch an Inclusive Musical Instrument Library which is already making an tangible impact on the scope of our work. Our Inclusion team now includes our Partnership & Inclusion Manager, Youth Engagement Lead and Young Sounds Connector, with the latter being jointly funded by Young Sounds and the Greenham Common Trust as a commitment to musical inclusion across the region.

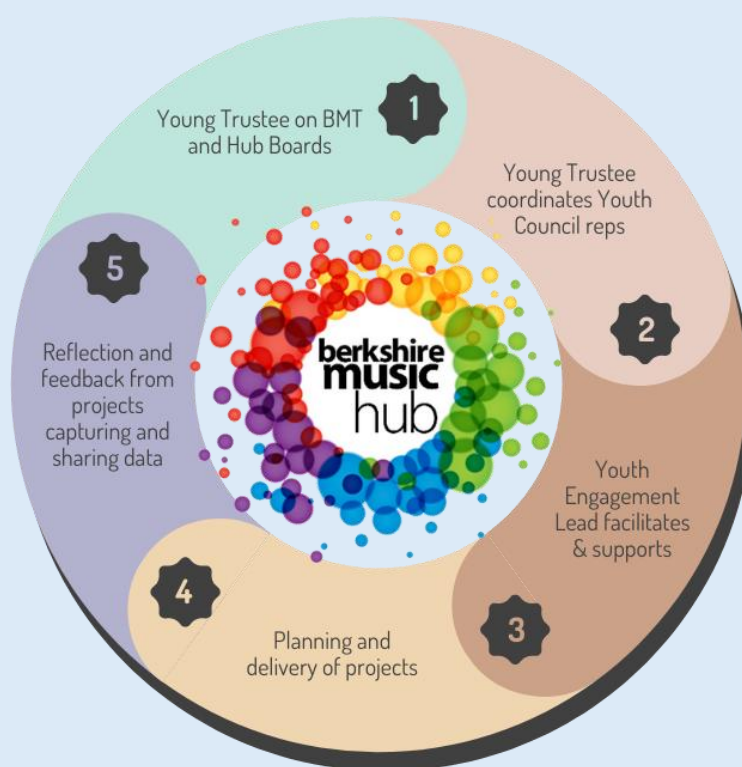
*7. The hub aims for all children to have positive experiences in music activity by encouraging and empowering the voice of young people across all levels of the organisation. This will not only strive to make sure input is sought, nurtured, and responded to within the HLO but also that young people are given a seat at the leadership table and are able to directly influence and impact our work.*



Action Points:

- **Establish Regular Feedback Channels for Young People:** Rather than the traditional Adult>Young Person>Adult feedback loop in which power stays with the organisational hierarchy, the HLO will have fully implemented a top-down youth voice channel by the end of the 2025/26 academic year. This work will require an organisation-wide engagement with youth voice via our Youth Engagement Lead and Young Trustee and will run alongside our existing Youth Survey which has been successfully run by our Youth Engagement Lead in previous years to garner feedback. Young people on our youth council will be organised into relatively small age brackets who are more likely to have similar interests to one another, allowing a mutual respect for different backgrounds to permeate.

An example of the suggested feedback/action cycle is illustrated below:



8. *The hub has sustainably increased engagement with children with SEMH and is working in sustainable ways with this cohort, recognising the sizeable increase of young people aged between 6-16 years who are now recognised to have SEMH since the pandemic, acknowledging that music is shown to reduce anxiety in children with SEMH and allows them to express themselves in a constructive and safe way.*

#### Action Points:

- **Collaborate with Specialists:** Partner with mental health professionals and organisations to enhance program support and resources for children with SEMHD.
- **Highlight Benefits:** Promote and communicate the specific benefits of musical activities for children with SEMHD, including how they can support emotional and social development.
- **Explore SEMHD programmes:** Over the next 2 years (2024-26), the HLO will collaborate with Readipop, CultureMix and other relevant partners to design and launch two specialised music programs tailored for children aged 6-16 with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMHD). These programmes will be aimed at developing musical and social skills, and improving emotional well-being, with a target of reaching 50 young participants annually. Regular feedback and evaluations will be conducted with partners and participants to refine the programs and ensure they meet the needs of this growing cohort, contributing to the hub's wider inclusion strategy. It is noted that both internal and external research shows that teenage girls are particularly vulnerable to challenges with SEMH and that music can create a safe space where girls can develop friendship groups, create support networks and socialise with one another.

#### 9. *Data is used as a driver for inclusion across the hub, with appropriate and compliant data sharing agreements in place between the HLO and hub partners to get the clearest view of the effectiveness of our work.*

#### Action Points:

- **Establish Data Sharing Agreements:** Continue to Implement and maintain compliant data sharing agreements between the HLO and hub partners to ensure effective and secure data exchange.
- **Analyse Data Regularly:** Use data on engagement, retention, satisfaction, and progression on to regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of inclusion practices and identify areas for improvement.
- **Share Insights with Partners:** Communicate findings and insights from data analysis with hub partners to collaboratively enhance and refine inclusion strategies.
- **Update Data Practices:** Continuously review and update data collection and analysis methods to ensure that data collected is helping us to drive inclusive, relevant music education.

#### 10. Versions for hub partners:

##### a. BMT

*There is a clear culture of progression for all children (including those with SEND/SEMH), including the launch of new inclusive ensemble initiatives and ensuring our current ensembles are accessible to those from challenging circumstances.*

## b. Slough

*There is a sustainable move to long-term engagement in music and a culture of progression for all children. The hub offers clear progression routes for all children, including those with SEND in partnership with the HLO*

### Action Points:

- **Launch New Inclusive Ensembles:** Develop and introduce new ensemble initiatives that are specifically designed to be inclusive and accessible for all children, including those with SEND and SEMHD. These will include, but not be limited to, Sound About Associate Choir network and Open Orchestras.
- **Ensure Accessibility of Current Ensembles:** Review and modify existing ensembles to ensure they are accessible to children from challenging circumstances, making necessary adjustments to accommodate diverse needs.
- **Create Progression Pathways:** Establish clear opportunities for progression within the hub to support ongoing development and advancement for all participants, including those with SEND and SEMHD.
- **Promote Inclusion in Ensembles:** Actively promote the benefits and opportunities of joining ensembles to families and caregivers of children with SEND and SEMHD, encouraging their participation and engagement.

### 11. *Monitoring and evaluating the quality of inclusion across the hub is embedded and influences future strategy.*

- **Implement Regular Monitoring:** Establish a consistent schedule for monitoring the quality of inclusion across all programs within the hub to ensure ongoing high quality and best practice.
- **Use Evaluation Tools:** Utilise evaluation tools and metrics to measure the effectiveness of inclusion practices and for quality assurance, gathering detailed feedback from participants and staff. The tools will include focus groups and feedback forums to capture youth voice; surveys and questionnaires to collect exit data from programmes; inclusion audits across our music centres and schools programmes, and; data tracking to monitor participation and engagement levels for children in challenging circumstances.
- **Incorporate Findings into Strategy:** Analyse the results of inclusion monitoring and use these insights to inform and shape future strategic planning and program development, including BMT Strategy update 2026
- **Engage Stakeholders in Review:** Involve key stakeholders, including staff, participants, and partners, in the review process to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered in evaluating inclusion practices. BMT Hub board will be a key stakeholder in this process

*12. All hub partners are working effectively together to ensure the sharing of best practice in musical inclusion, through collective reflective practice and ongoing, open communication.*

Action Points:

- **Facilitate Regular Meetings:** Include regular meetings and workshops for hub partners in the strategy hub board cycle to share best practices in musical inclusion and discuss collaborative strategies.
- **Encourage Reflective Practice:** Promote collective reflective practice by encouraging partners to review and discuss their experiences and challenges in fostering inclusion. This reflective practice already forms part of the Youth Music framework which is included in all partnership agreements. A clear and in-depth module on reflective practice has been written and developed in-house for launching the 'Resonating With All' training and this will be shared with all teaching staff, and forms part of the ongoing CPD scheduled overseen by SLT Member for Teaching & Learning. Additional external training opportunities in this area may be brought in if needed to deepen reflective practice.
- **Establish Open Communication Channels:** Set up clear and ongoing communication channels among hub partners to facilitate the continuous exchange of ideas, resources, and feedback, through the Hub Board and regular meetings with partners.
- **Document and Share Best Practices:** Create a shared repository where hub partners can document and access best practices, case studies, and successful approaches to musical inclusion.

## Appendix

- YOUTH MUSIC QUALITY FRAMEWORK (YMQF) WORKING WITH YOUNG DISABLED MUSICIANS – [CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)
- RESONATING WITH ALL: INCLUSIVE APPROACHES FOR MUSIC TEACHERS – [CLICK HERE TO ACCESS](#)