



# Response to the interim evaluation report on Music Hubs by NatCen

Music Mark welcomes the [interim evaluation report on Music Hubs](#) published on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2026, and its finding that Music Hubs are viewed overwhelmingly positively by schools, pupils and parents. It is a major achievement for all those leading Hubs that the change to the new model did not affect delivery, and that perceptions of the new Hubs have consistently improved over the first academic year. We commend Hub Lead Organisations, consortia and delivery partners, most of whom are our members, for their hard work to achieve this outcome.

The report identifies the salient challenges of funding (which has fallen in real terms every year since 2015/16) and what the report calls “reactive funding allocations”, which is eventually clarified as meaning single-year funding. These are both matters which Music Mark has raised with the Department for Education (DfE) consistently for many years and we will continue to do so. Indeed, we have calculated that because the DfE’s revenue grant funding for Music Hubs (formally Music Education Hubs) between 2010/11 to 2024/25 has not kept pace with inflation, there has been a reduction of £47M in purchasing power, severely impacting the capacity of Hubs and their partners to address these challenges.

Music Mark recently [wrote to the DfE](#), jointly with the Music Industries Association, and we are pleased that they have responded by extending the window for Hubs to spend the capital grant. This does not change the report’s findings on the process, but it will enable Hubs to make future purchases more strategically over a longer period, as reflected in the report.

It would be helpful if the report presented the relationship between the school statistics to the evaluation’s findings more clearly, as their relevance to the evaluation was not always apparent<sup>1</sup>. Overall, some findings of the evaluation do not clearly link to the new model for Hubs, as indeed the report acknowledges in places. The external challenges of workforce, rurality and schools’ engagement depending on the value that school leaders place on music in the curriculum have existed for decades.

The report perpetuates the confusion about what a Hub is. Overall, the evaluators do not seem to have understood the distinction between consortium-led Hubs and wider delivery partnerships. They talk about schools being situated a long way from their Hub and children struggling to travel to their Hub. A Music Hub, and a Music Education Hub between 2012 to 2024, is/was a concept of partnership working, of a network, not an organisation or a place. To talk about “some Hubs being more proactive than other Hubs, meaning workload is not evenly distributed” does not make sense in the context of

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<sup>1</sup> We are surprised that the reasons given for not studying GCSE Music do not include schools’ structuring options such that pupils’ choices are limited, as this is frequently cited to and by our members. As a research question, this seems particularly remote from the aim of evaluating the performance of partnerships which had, at the time, only been operational for under a year.

this partnership network approach. Since the 43 Music Hubs do not generally collaborate with each other in this way, should it be assumed the evaluators mean their findings questioned the level of proactivity of individual consortium and/or delivery partners within a single Hub?

We note the finding that low parental awareness of Music Hubs limits take up of opportunities, however the report's own data shows that parents get information from many sources, much of which likely originates from partners within the Music Hub network. The report asserts an ambition to further raise awareness of Hubs. It is a shame that the report does not articulate the disconnect between a requirement for each Music Hub to maintain a website and to promote opportunities and the fact that they are not permitted to spend the revenue grant on this website.

We were concerned, but not necessarily surprised that a Hub lead was quoted as saying that the Hub's added value mainly comes from them working longer hours. We know that this is an experience shared by many of our members, particularly where geographies have expanded over multiple local authority areas. We would welcome the opportunity to work with Arts Council England, the DfE and in due course the new National Centre for Arts and Music Education to find ways to address this challenge.

We are delighted, and would agree, however that our members and their partners continue to provide valuable support to schools and a wide range of co-curricular opportunities for young musicians. We are pleased for them that this report independently confirms that the quality of their work is recognised and highly valued. We congratulate Hub leaders, consortium and delivery partners that they are making Music Hubs successful in many diverse ways despite the challenges identified, in particular insufficient funding.

As their membership organisation we will continue to support them with the external challenges and to advocate on their behalf to the Department for Education.

The UK Association for Music Education – Music Mark  
4<sup>th</sup> March 2026