



SUPPORTING
CONNECTING
INFLUENCING

Music Mark Annual Review 2024 - 2025

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The year at a glance

[Hear from the Music Mark Senior Leadership as they reflect on the year.](#)

In September:

We supported regional conferences in the North West and South Yorkshire

In October:

We were delighted to integrate MusicHE into Music Mark and welcome universities, conservatoires and FE colleges into the membership

In November:

We ran our 2024 Annual Conference exploring sustainability in music education

In December:

We launched our 'Follow Friday' feature on Instagram to help share your news

In January:

The first episode of our podcast 'Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education' went live

In February:

The report we commissioned from Demos to cost the English National Plan was published

In March:

We ran the Spring Summit for music services at Friends House, in London

In April:

We launched our Annual Survey to get your feedback about our work

In May:

We attended the Music Teachers' Association conference in Bristol

In June:

Our report on environmental sustainability from UCL was published

In July:

We attended the Westminster Hall debate on music education at the House of Commons

In August:

We published our Advocacy Timeline to demonstrate the advocacy work that goes on behind the scenes

Peter Smalley, Music Mark Chair:

"Supporting music education right across the UK remains Music Mark's central purpose, and throughout 2024/25 members have continued to provide a stunning, diverse range of high quality opportunities for children and young people across the whole Country. 2025 saw the publication of two reports, commissioned by Music Mark: from Demos identifying five recommendations to government, which would help deliver an excellent music education for all children and young people, in England, and from UCL: Environmental Sustainability Practices in Music Hubs and Services. We saw the announcement of the creation of a new National Centre for Arts and Music Education, in England. We welcome this news and look forward to being part of the conversation which shapes this new initiative. We were delighted to provide support for colleagues at Cardiff University and welcome the news that the planned closure of the Music Department has been reversed. Please enjoy looking through these highlights of the year for our organisation and read on to find out what is to come in 2025/26..."

Reflecting on the year

95 Industry partners

3264 Music Mark Schools

130 events and training sessions

325 Jobs advertised

172,000 visitors to our website

2873 event attendees

Training & Events

This year, we introduced some brilliant new programmes, including Mental Health First Aid Training, Carbon Literacy Training, the TLC Leadership Development Programme, as well as partnering with SLS360 to subsidise places in the IDEAL Network.

High Impact Senior Leadership returned for another year, providing space for senior leaders to enhance their leadership skills and meet with peers.

We introduced new Peer Groups and continue to support individuals across the membership with our fully subsidised mentoring and coaching programme.

We partnered with Soundcastle, Diverse Educators, Aim High Accounts, the Creative Educator, and others, to provide new opportunities for colleagues working in a range of roles and support their development. We joined up with some of our Industry Partners to run webinars outlining the benefits and support you can expect from their services.

"Just thank you - I really appreciate all the training you are putting on. It is definitely supporting my own learning, reflection and development." Session Attendee October 2024

Supporting the Sector

We continue to administer the ABRSM Exam Discount Scheme for music services, designed to ease some of the financial barriers that families can face in accessing exams. 795 students benefitted from discounts this academic year totalling nearly £33k, averaging 64% discount but ranging from 10% to 95%. 696 exams were Grade 5 or below and 40 were above Grade 5, including two ARSM diplomas on clarinet and bass trombone. 80 candidates were from Young Sounds programmes, including 43 Open Up assessments. Discounted exams were taken in all four nations, presented by 76 partners from the Orkney Isles to Brighton and from Northern Ireland and Pembrokeshire to Suffolk.

We continued to provide resources, training and events, and articles about environmental sustainability as part of This Is Not A Rehearsal, embedding sustainability into Music Mark's work.

Music Mark worked pro-actively in response to the new government's announcements around music education. A new government means changes in priorities or a shift in policy. Music Mark took the lead in bringing the music education sector together to discuss Labour's promise of a National Music Education Network. A shift by government to instead create a National Centre for Arts and Music Education built on the network discussions. We brought our membership together to discuss this new idea, as well as starting conversations with colleagues across the arts education sector in the summer term of 2025.

We continued turning talk into action by embedding EDI into our work, highlighting EDI through news articles, podcast episodes, our Music Mark Awards, and the expansion of our resource collection.

In January we launched our podcast, 'Make Your Mark: Notes on Music Education', to showcase diverse experiences and perspectives from across the music education sector.

We have developed stronger relationships with Industry Partners to connect them with music educators. Industry Partners have been keener than ever to engage with members, and bookings for exhibition stands and sponsorship opportunities at both annual and regional conferences have increased. The new strand of webinars delivered by Industry Partners has been popular and allows them to engage with members in a new way. We have attracted new Industry Partners in areas such as insurance that help support the sector in ways we have not covered before.

Our work as an Investment Principles Support Organisation has enabled us to expand our support for the sector. Our IPSO status funding enabled us to offer over 130 events to the sector, which supported and influenced across all four of ACE's Investment Principles. As well as musical and pedagogical training, we are now working with partners to offer support around carbon awareness and tracking, and mental health, issues that are hugely important to the sector. The Environmental Responsibility IP became the focus of our major campaign, This Is Not A Rehearsal, of this year's conference and of a major piece of research, commissioned from University College London. It also enables us to connect the sector with the latest research. We continue to offer opportunities for music education organisations to connect and learn from each other at all levels from Chief Exec to administrative teams and practitioners. This year we evolved our support to class teachers teaching Music, which is starting to connect an otherwise isolated workforce.

The growing network of Higher & Further education music departments in our membership has allowed us to support their needs and provide bespoke training, including the creation of a new peer group.

This Is Not A Rehearsal

267 attendees at This Is Not A Rehearsal events

2137 Sign ups for our sustainability Newsletter

1100 Views of the This Is Not A Rehearsal Landing Page

Music Mark launched This Is Not A Rehearsal in 2024 to raise awareness and encourage action around the climate crisis within the music education sector by providing tools and knowledge to support our members to make climate-conscious changes that help protect our planet.

You can visit the This Is Not A Rehearsal website to access articles, resources and upcoming training about the climate crisis.

We worked with Positive Planet to track our carbon emissions and create a Carbon Reduction Plan, which we are now implementing.

We commissioned a research project to assess environmental sustainability within UK music services, education hubs and partner organisations. The report, conducted by UCL's Department of Culture, Communications and Media, was published in June 2025.

We ran 13 events and training sessions about the climate crisis, including at our annual conference, and posted 25 articles about sustainability on our website.

The 'This Is Not A Rehearsal' steering group continues to meet bi-monthly to guide Music Mark's work on sustainability, and to discuss the most important topics facing the music education sector in relation to the climate crisis.

"Climate change is an issue central to all our futures. Music Mark deserves considerable praise for putting sustainability at the centre of its campaigning in 2024-25 and making it a central theme of the 2024 national conference. On top of this, subsidised climate literacy training for members, a growing bank of resources and toolkits, new partnerships with expert organisations and continued research by the Music Mark team have all greatly raised awareness of the issue in the music education sector. This important work will continue through the This Is Not A Rehearsal steering group." Dan Somogyi, Chair of the This Is Not A Rehearsal Steering Group

Annual Conference 2024: Sustainability In Music Education

377 Attendees

59 Speakers

29 Exhibitors

21 Sessions

3 Performances from young people

13,000 visits to the conference website

With a focus on what we can do to be more environmentally responsible, our 2024 Annual Conference provided insight, inspiration and tangible actions for all those working across the music education ecology.

"A brilliantly well organised conference with interesting speakers, and climate change waits for no-one, this is an emergency." Conference Attendee 2024

Taking place at the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham, the 2024 Annual Conference brought together colleagues from across the UK music education sector to learn, network, and be inspired as we explored all aspects of sustainability. With 21 sessions across the two days, we heard keynote speeches from Dominique Palmer, Konnie Huq, and Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason, a roundtable discussion where multiple organisations shared how they're responding to the climate crisis, and 15 breakout sessions. We also held the 2024 Music Mark Awards and celebrated the fantastic work of our members who have been championing innovation, inclusivity, sustainability and more.

You can view the highlight from the 2024 conference [here](#).

Advocating for Music Education

Much of our advocacy work in 2024/25 was linked to reviews and plans being implemented by the new UK government. We saw it as vital that the voice of the music hub network was heard. We also led on a piece of work for Welsh Government linked to their National Plan for Music Education and continued to support the Music Education Policy Group in Scotland.

Music Mark led two roundtable discussions in early 2025 and presented a summary to the DfE outlining the music education sector's ambition for the National Music Education Network. Following the announcement of the National Centre for Arts and Music Education, we brought the same group together again to refine thinking in light of the new announcement. Music Mark attended the DfE's 'market warming' sessions and continues to monitor new information.

From January, we supported colleagues at Cardiff University in response to announced course and job cuts. Our support was part of many statements in support of Music at Cardiff, and we were delighted at May's announcement that Music would not be cut.

Music Mark ran a task and finish group on instrumental and vocal teacher terms and conditions for Welsh Government as part of the Welsh National Plan for Music Education. We worked alongside a group of Heads of Service and union representatives to prepare the report.

Bridget Whyte, CEO, spoke at several All-Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education meetings, as well as a symposium of the international Music Education Policy Group in Helsinki.

In February, our commissioned report from Demos 'Facing The Music: Meeting the ambitions of the National Plan for Music Education' was published and revealed a £161.4m "black hole" in the DfE's budget for music education.

We ran four Big Meets for our membership to discuss important topics affecting the music education sector - two on the National Centre for Arts and Music Education, one on Higher Education, and one on devolution.

You said we did

We programmed several new events and created new peer groups in response to direct requests, including the new Event & Ensemble Coordinators Peer Group, and training sessions around PR and Communications.

You wanted to hear more about our work behind the scenes to advocate for your priorities, so we added a new Advocacy Timeline to our website.

Following feedback from the 2023 annual conference, this year we included more performances and opportunities for youth voice in our conference programme.

You said you wanted our website to be easier to use, so we updated the navigation with new drop-down menus to help you find what you're looking for!

To help share the work of our Industry Partners in more detail, we launched our 'Music Mark Presents' video series on Instagram.

Thank you!

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