



SUPPORTING
CONNECTING
INFLUENCING

Securing the Future of Music Education in Wales

Music is a cornerstone of Wales's rich cultural identity. According to UK Music, 834,000 music tourists visited Wales in 2024, generating £384 million in spending and supporting more than 3,600 jobsⁱ. Beyond its economic contribution, music strengthens communities through widespread participation in choirs, brass bands, and other forms of leisure-time music making. These traditions are celebrated at local, national, and international Eisteddfodau, which increasingly reflect the diversity of contemporary Welsh society. Music is also integral to the preservation and development of the Welsh languageⁱⁱ. Wales benefits from strong national progression routes, including the National Youth Ensembles, the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, and university music departments across the country, all of which help nurture emerging talent and reinforce Wales's reputation for musical excellence.

The UNESCO Seoul Agreement of 2010 urged all nations to recognise and champion *the essential value of arts education in improving the quality of education*ⁱⁱⁱ. In Wales, successive governments have responded with ambition and clarity of purpose, placing music firmly at the heart of the 2022 Curriculum for Wales^{iv}. Music contributes meaningfully to all four purposes within the curriculum,^v and is valued not only as a discipline in its own right, but also for its proven impact on wider academic achievement, language acquisition, creativity, collaboration, communication, wellbeing^{vi} and long-term cognitive development^{vii}. Alongside nurturing the continued growth of Wales's vibrant music industry, musical learning equips young people with the creative and entrepreneurial skills required by the future workforce^{viii}. In this way, music education acts as a powerful driver of social mobility^{ix} and develops a strong sense of Cynefin.

With an impressive roster of performers and ensembles, music remains one of Wales's most influential cultural exports and a compelling global ambassador for the nation. Sustaining this valued musical ecosystem, however, requires continued investment in high-quality learning opportunities—encompassing classroom teaching, specialist music leaders and instrumental/vocal tutors, access to live performance, and the provision of instruments, rehearsal spaces, and performance platforms.

Welsh Government actively allocates funding to deliver a National Plan for Music Education managed by a National Music Service (WLGA), promoting a universal offer which includes instrumental and vocal learning, listening, creating and performing. **To maintain and expand equitable access to Music Education, it is vital that The Senedd continues to invest in this music education ecosystem.**

The UK Association for Music Education – Music Mark^x, its members and partners working across Wales are therefore advocating for all political parties to commit to supporting the following **five goals for music education**:

1. **Uphold the National Plan for Music Education as the strategic roadmap for delivering equitable, sustained and progressive musical learning in and beyond the classroom.**
2. **Ensure financial investment in music education is realistic, long-term and responsive to inflation and ambition.**
3. **Recognise instrumental and vocal teachers as an integral part of the education workforce, supported through a national framework for professional development that values, upskills and strengthens the quality of the music education workforce.**
4. **Provide continued support for a National Music Service for Wales to secure the partnerships, coordination and infrastructure essential for a thriving music education ecosystem.**
5. **Champion music as a core component of education and civic life, acknowledging its contribution to Welsh culture, the Welsh language, health, wellbeing and community cohesion.**

The detail behind these five goals

1. **Uphold the National Plan for Music Education as the strategic roadmap for delivering equitable, sustained and progressive musical learning in and beyond the classroom.**

There is much more strategic vision and partnership, it's leading to good collaboration at all levels. There is better coordination and more overlap between projects." NMS Partner

The National Plan for Music Education for Wales was developed collaboratively with the music education sector and is uniquely aligned with the Curriculum for Wales. This alignment ensures that the Plan strengthens and enriches the curriculum by supporting all four purposes—helping learners become ambitious and capable, enterprising and creative, ethical and informed, and healthy and confident—while guaranteeing both first access and sustained progression in musical learning. The Plan recognises music's contribution to wider educational outcomes, including health, wellbeing, social cohesion and future employability, and it reinforces national commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion. Through engagement with music, children and young people develop a strong sense of Cynefin, building connections with their communities, culture and heritage while celebrating the rich diversity of modern Wales.

The Plan ensures universal access, including provision for learners with additional learning needs (ALN), broadening participation so that every young person—regardless of background, ability or identity—can experience the benefits of musical learning. At present, Estyn does not routinely evaluate music education in schools; however, to realise the Plan's ambitions fully, there is a strong case for strengthening Estyn's role in evaluating music provision, for example through thematic reviews or better integration into inspection frameworks. Early evaluation, to be published in Spring 2026 by the National Music Service, will demonstrate the Plan's positive impact on musical and wider learner outcomes. Continued adoption and resourcing are essential to maintain coherence, equity and ambition across Wales.

2. **Ensure financial investment in music education is realistic, long-term and responsive to inflation and ambition.**

The impact has been a slow burn – there are still gaps in terms of supporting and sustaining progression. There has been a necessary focus on First Experiences and equity, but further support is required for real talent to come through." NMS Partner

With the publication of a National Plan for Music Education in Wales, there was a clear and welcome commitment to ensuring that every child and young person can access meaningful musical learning. The funding currently attached to the National Plan is valued, used effectively, and already generating successful programmes and opportunities. However, if Wales is to deliver the full extent of the National Plan, including genuine equity of access to high-quality first experiences and maintaining coherent progression routes, funding must be both realistic and increase over time. This is essential not only to keep pace with inflation and rising delivery costs, but also to meet growing demand as more learners engage with music. Sustained, predictable investment enables long-term strategic planning, ensuring that appropriate pathways—from early engagement through to advanced opportunities—are available to all learners, regardless of background or geography. Without sufficient investment, the ambition of the National Plan cannot be fully realised, and the sector's ability to deliver consistent, inclusive, high-quality provision will be compromised.

3. **Recognise instrumental and vocal teachers as an integral part of the education workforce, supported through a national framework for professional development that values, upskills and strengthens the quality of the music education workforce.**

Teachers appreciate being able to continue their development, come up with more ideas and are more creative.” Music service lead

The success of any educational programme depends on a highly skilled and well-supported workforce. Across Wales, more than 500 talented and experienced music educators deliver provision in schools and music centres every week. Music Mark’s Terms and Conditions Review, commissioned by the WLGA for Welsh Government in 2024, highlighted the diversity of contracts and employment arrangements across this workforce but also made clear that—regardless of contract type—all practitioners must feel valued, respected, and recognised for the essential contribution they make. To maintain and enhance quality, educators must also be offered structured opportunities to update and deepen their skills, including training that enables them to teach every learner effectively, particularly those with additional learning needs. To achieve this, there is a strong case for developing a national framework for workforce development, potentially including the development of a recognised qualification, to support professionalisation, consistency, and progression. Government must acknowledge the significant resource it already has in this workforce and demonstrate its commitment to sustaining and strengthening it as a vital part of Wales’s education ecology.

4. Provide continued support for a National Music Service for Wales to secure the partnerships, coordination and infrastructure essential for a thriving music education ecosystem.

*“The National Music Service has pulled all the local authorities together to a cohesive group.”
Music service lead*

A key part of the success of the implementation of the National Plan for Music Education in Wales has been the creation of a National Music Service. This unique national oversight has been, and is, supporting regional and local provision, promoting a universal, inclusive offer and ensuring that national partners within the cultural industries and wider children and young people’s services are plugged into the regional and local music education networks. The Service is able to connect practitioners to share best practice and is building links which can support each young musician to thrive and progress, including into the music industry. In addition, the Service provides the opportunity for the work going on in Wales to be highlighted on the international stage at music education conferences and through partnerships within the global music education ecology. This local, regional, national and international peer support and connection should not be underestimated.

5. Champion music as a core component of education and civic life, acknowledging its contribution to Welsh culture, the Welsh language, health, wellbeing and community cohesion.

“[Music is] another way to discover what a child is capable of. It’s actually mind-blowing, the things that have developed.” Music Tutor working in a special school

There is a historic culture of music being part of every community in Wales. Whilst in the past this may not have been understood as having value in supporting health and wellbeing, research is clear that music can and does have an impact on the lives of everyone^{xi}. By ensuring ongoing support and recognition of the value of music education, the government can demonstrate their understanding of music’s intrinsic contribution to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act^{xii}, Cymraeg 2050^{xiii}, and to the Welsh National Curriculum. Government must continue to empower the National Music Service for Wales, and the partnership of organisations and individuals who deliver music education provision across the country, to reinforce this through telling the stories of how music is having an impact on society locally, regionally and nationally, strengthening an individual and societal sense of Cynefin.

By committing to these five goals, the next Welsh Government can protect and secure a thriving, equitable and future-proof music education system for Wales

— one that reflects the nation’s cultural identity, supports its young people and strengthens its creative economy.



Music Mark is The UK Association for Music Education, representing organisations, teachers and leaders committed to high-quality music education for all children and young people across the UK. -quality music education for all children and young people

All quotes are taken from evaluation carried out by Arad Research on behalf of the National Music Service (WLGA).

ⁱ <https://bit.ly/ukmusic-hometownglory-2025>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000189611>

^{iv} <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/>

^v <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/#curriculum-design-and-the-four-purposes>

^{vi} <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/the-power-of-music-an-exploration-of-the-evidence-2/>

^{vii} <https://www.jneurosci.org/content/33/45/17667>

^{viii} https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/creativity_and_the_future_of_work_1.1.pdf

^{ix} https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d307b8de5274a14e9f6bc20/An_Unequal_Playing_Field_report.pdf

^x <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/>

^{xi} <https://arts.wales/about-us/research/economic-impact-report>

^{xii} <https://www.gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales>

^{xiii} <https://www.gov.wales/cymraeg-2050-welsh-language-strategy>