



Supported by



**Wiltshire Music Connect**

**Nick Howdle - Leader**

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James Gray MP  
12 Brown Street,  
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Dear James,

We felt this was a useful time to update you on music education in Wiltshire. Your recognition of and support for our work has been valuable over the last 18 months and we would now appreciate your assistance in feeding our experiences and observations into the updating of the Government's National Plan for Music Education.

## Academic year 20-21

We are delighted and more than a little proud to be able to tell you that **during academic year 20-21 the number of Wiltshire's state funded schools<sup>1</sup> that engaged with one or more of our hub and partners' services rose to 233** (98% of those in the county).

This has been because:

- Our Pandemic related strategy was to **maintain links with, and between, schools and providers** - protecting the pathways for a return to activity and vital work for dozens of small businesses that function within the music education economy.
- Our particular music education hub model *and* mindset gave us flexibility and the ability to **move swiftly to reallocate resources according to need at different times** *e.g. our School Music Recovery Grants and Associate Support Fund.*
- Whilst recognising the crisis, we've looked for positives and **seized opportunities to advance certain agendas do new things**. One example of this was "Together" when, as you know, on 21 June. Nearly 8,000 children from 52 Wiltshire schools, plus the Wiltshire Youth Choir and the Soundabout choir all sang "Together" – the song we commissioned during Lockdown.

One of our ongoing strategies with schools is to use one form of engagement as an opportunity to introduce and explore other opportunities as appropriate to each school and we remain keen to create a culture in which schools and pupils have choices.

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<sup>1</sup> Including Academies

## The National Plan for Music Education

The plan (first published in 2011) effectively sets the agenda for our work is currently undergoing revision overseen by an [expert panel](#).

The timing is ideal. As I've mentioned above, **the pandemic has nurtured innovation and remodelling much of which will be valuable to a revised and refreshed *inclusive* 21<sup>st</sup> century music education** offer in a country which recognises diversity and the cultural *and* economic values of its music and creative industries.

**It's vital that the expert panel are allowed to reflect on this** and thoroughly consider and rebalance definitions of and resources for music education where needed. There have been an impressive array of examples implemented by music education hubs and their partners over recent years. Arts Council England have a range of case studies to reflect this including our own ["Together – a song for Wiltshire"](#).

The key points we urge the new plan to incorporate are:

- **Broader perceptions and understanding of what high quality music education in 21<sup>st</sup> century can look and feel like** including:
  - Exploration and expanded use of **digital / web-based technologies** to extend reach and opportunity including things that enable young people to do their own thing without direct support.
  - Recognising **creative music making / composition / songwriting** as a valid and important part of education, on a par with instrumental / vocal tuition
- **Increased value and recognition being given to localised outcomes and economy** – activities and opportunities that suit the nature, location and demographic of a particular school and its pupils rather than one-size-fits-all. We believe the right Music Hub interventions for Wiltshire pupils will also deliver what government ultimately wants and that with an effective track record, we can be trusted to do that.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Never has there been a more appropriate or pertinent time to step up on this issue.** In the coming months we are working with stakeholder groups including schools to develop a plan for addressing EDI in and through music. As I write, I am convening a meeting with other music education hubs across the country on how we can compile and share resources to support schools and tutors welcoming Afghan refugee children into their schools and music provision.

## Call to action

We'd be grateful if you could relay these points and indeed your observations of our work on to the Secretary of State for Education and Minister of State (Minister for School Standards). We'd hope those messages would in turn reach those advising on the revision of the National Plan for Music Education recognising the impact and benefit that these approaches are bringing to children and young people in your county.

Thank you again for your support.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Howdle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Leader for **Wiltshire Music Connect** Music Education Hub  
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**CC:** Tony Spath - Chair of Wiltshire Music Connect Board and Director of Music Connect CIC