



**Hertfordshire  
Music Service**

# Hertfordshire Music Hub

## Commissioning Policy

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## Context

HMS was successfully appointed as the Hub Lead Organisation (HLO) for Hertfordshire from September 2024 and now continues the work to deliver the National Plan for Music Education (NPME) across the county.

Arts Council England has established clear partnership ambitions for all HLOs, and this document sets out an overarching policy for how Hertfordshire Music Service (HMS) as the HLO for Hertfordshire will commission Hub partners as part of its Local Plan for Music Education (LPME).

## Hub Lead Organisation role in Hertfordshire

HMS is both the HLO and the core provider of music education provision in the Hertfordshire Music Hub. The most recent Hub performance ratings demonstrate that the Hub is achieving the highest possible rating in the delivery of the Hub programme of activity, quality and inclusion whilst all other areas are rated good by Arts Council England.

A key part of this success has been the ability for HMS to work on a large scale, providing resources, training and provision efficiently, cost effectively and to a high standard of quality. HMS will follow this commissioning process where its role as a delivery partner expands into new provision in the Hertfordshire Music Hub.

### What is a Music Hub?

The 2022 NPME describes Music Hubs as the following:

*Music Hubs are partnerships co-ordinated by a lead organisation and made up of schools and academy trusts, local authorities, music and wider arts and education organisations and charities, community or youth organisations, and more.*

*They are tasked with supporting joined-up music education provision both within and beyond schools, which responds to local need and fulfils the vision for children and young people to create music, learn a musical instrument, make music with others learn to sing, and to have the opportunity to progress to the next level of excellence.*

*They seek to understand and respond to local context, and to the needs and interests of children and young people, supporting them, their schools and other deliverers.*

*Each member of the partnership plays a role in providing the broadest range of opportunities and expertise.*

*The range of partners within the Hub should be determined at local level and include state-funded schools in their area. The possibilities for entrepreneurial partnership should be broadly conceived – including music education organisations, music industry employers, private music teachers and schools, CPD and ITT providers, youth and community organisations, local cultural organisations, specialists in certain genres or instruments, and local colleges, independent or specialist music schools.*

*Partnerships could include national providers (such as national ensembles) or organisations which are not based in the area but have a presence or are regularly delivering in that area, for example, touring organisations.*

*The Music Hub lead organisation is responsible for the funding and the accountability of the partnership. They are accountable for the effective use of the DfE funding and the development of high-quality music education in their Hub area through the partnerships that they facilitate.*

NPME 2022, page 47

## Commissioning principles and criteria

HMS will adhere to the following principles and criteria in the process of commissioning or reviewing the status of Hub partners. A partnership will be commissioned or renewed when:

**Strategic Functions:** The partnership supports the Music Hub to meet one or more of the strategic functions of the NPME in ways appropriate to the partner.

**Need:** The partnership meets a priority need or development area as identified via the Hub needs analysis process or feedback mechanisms, including from Arts Council England.

**Musical Excellence:** The partner has a track record of delivering activities that meet the HMS Teaching & Learning Standards framework consistently.

**Inclusion:** The partner can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to inclusion, diversity, equality and accessibility in all its work and supports HMS to meet the aims of the Hub inclusion strategy.

**Promotion and collaboration:** The partner shares opportunities with young people to participate in Hub events or opportunities and collaborates with Hub partners to share good practice, insights and peer-to-peer development to strengthen the quality, reach, sustainability and accessibility of the LPME.

**Value for money:** The partnership leverages the Hub grant to diversify funding from other income sources that increase the impact of the original Hub revenue grant investment. Over time, this additional economic activity reduces the reliance on grant funding and the partnership activity becomes part of the functioning ecology of the Hub.

**Sustainability:** The partnership reduces environmental impact, creates sustainable employment opportunities and encourages longer term participation or progress in musical activities.

**Transparency and fairness:** Decisions and actions taken are done so in line with the wider Music Hub governance processes, ensuring an open, understandable and equitable process.

## HMS Teaching & Learning Standards framework

The aim of this policy is to give transparency to the process of commissioning Hub partners and confirm the standards Hub partners will be expected to achieve.

The music education standards Hub partners will be expected to achieve are to:

- Ensure all students have the opportunity to find their unique musical 'voice' and the diverse musical ambitions of all students are valued and nurtured.
- Create a safe, nurturing space for students to express themselves through their musical language with others.
- Make space and time to listen to students who take a leading role in developing and assessing their own learning.
- Enable great musical as well as personal, social and emotional progress.
- Plan and deliver inclusive tuition and learning that meets the diverse needs of each student consistently and fairly.
- Prepare exciting, inspiring, creative and diverse opportunities to make music that involves all students.
- Ensure delivery partners reflect on their own practice and monitor its impact on student progress.
- Use new resources, pedagogical research and technologies to create authentic and innovative musical experiences.
- Demonstrate professionalism and high-quality musicianship regularly and create opportunities for students to compose and perform regularly, connecting them to the wider musical community.

The full framework documentation is available online, please see links on page 8.

## Commissioning process

### Stage 1: Needs Analysis

HMS will be responsible for delivering a comprehensive approach to identifying gaps in existing provision and opportunities across the county via a range of perspectives and mechanisms.

The needs identified will shape the Hub SMART targets, plans and priorities that will ultimately inform what partnerships are required to deliver the NPME in Hertfordshire. Hub partners will be commissioned where HMS as the core provider is unable to deliver against an identified need.

### Stage 2: Identify Hub partner/s

Once the need for a new partnership is identified, existing Hub partners will be approached to take on activity that uses their specialist knowledge or expertise. Where no partners exist with the required expertise, or multiple partners are able to deliver the provision, a call for proposals will be issued and the Hertfordshire County Council procurement process will be followed.

### Stage 3: Draft partnership agreement

A meeting will be held between HMS and the potential or existing Hub partner/s to discuss the details of how the identified need could be met most effectively.

Where a proposed approach is considered to have merit, in line with the commissioning principles and criteria, a draft partnership agreement will be written, detailing as a minimum:

- Scope of the work (purpose).
- Agreed activity to be delivered including timelines.
- Funding required from the Hub revenue grant.
- Monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Safeguarding, EDI and data protection expectations.
- Environmental and financial sustainability expectations.
- Payment processes.

For partnerships where HMS is the delivery partner, the relevant HMS colleague responsible for delivering the provision will be the signatory on the agreement on behalf of HMS as the delivery partner. The Director of Music will remain the signatory on behalf of the HLO.

A blank partnership agreement is available online, please see links on page 8.

## Stage 4: Partnership agreement approved and signed

ACE guidance stipulates that Hub boards are responsible for oversight and approval of the commissioning policy, but HMS as the HLO has delegated authority to approve partnerships. Once drafted, HMS will circulate the draft partnership agreement to the Hub board for comment, and then the HMS Executive Leadership Team for approval before being officially issued.

Once the agreement is signed by the Hub partner and returned to HMS, activity can begin, and payment will be organised.

## Stage 5: Monitoring and evaluation

Regular check-ins and requests for progress reports by HMS will ensure progress against the Hub SMART targets is tracked effectively and updates will be shared with Arts Council England as required.

Once the provision is completed, a full evaluation will be required. Partners will be expected to assess the impact and outcomes of their work as agreed, produce final reports with detail of the participant data and make any recommendations to inform future provision or alternative projects.

If a partnership fails to meet the targets, standards or expected outcomes then a review of the partnership will be completed by HMS. Any recommendations for de-commissioning a partnership will be shared with the Hub board for comment, and the HMS Executive Leadership Team for approval before a final decision is made. Where a partnership is de-commissioned, a new partnership will be developed in line with this policy as required.

ACE guidance stipulates that the range of Hub partnerships should be regularly reviewed by the Hub board whilst the HLO will take responsibility for identification, recruitment, monitoring and retention of Hub partners.

## Roles and responsibilities

### Hub Lead Organisation (HMS)

Overall responsibility for managing the commissioning process, including identification, recruitment, monitoring and retention of Hub partners. The HLO will meet with Hub partners to discuss initial approaches and delivery, supporting and developing applications when there is a call for proposals, managing the setup and payment of finances and overseeing the project delivery, ensuring that the expected quality is maintained, and all reporting is completed in a timely manner.

### Hertfordshire Music Hub board

Will review and comment on all drafted partnership agreements and any recommendations for de-commissioning partnerships, ensuring all matters are conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

The Hub board will regularly review the range of Hub partnerships and provide comment and feedback to the HLO.

### Hub partners

Will deliver the commissioned work according to the agreed terms and will inform HMS if there is any need to change the initial agreed delivery plan. Will also ensure full participation monitoring during delivery to inform a full impact evaluation and detailed report at the conclusion of delivery.

## Review and feedback

The commissioning policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually as part of the spring term Hub board meeting. This provides time to review the previous year's partnerships and advise on the proceeding year's plans informed by progress towards Hub SMART targets, needs analysis results and long-term planning.

Feedback from Hub partners and the wider Hub community will be sought to inform continuous improvement.

## Contact information and links

For any queries about this commissioning process, please contact:

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### Links

All documents including the HMS Teaching & Learning Standards framework, Hertfordshire Music Hub Partnership Agreement 2024-25 and HMS inclusion strategy will be uploaded on the Hub webpage here: [Hertfordshire Music Hub](#).