

Section 2: General views on curriculum, assessment, and qualifications pathways

11. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways should be targeted for improvements to better support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

We believe that the arts, and in particular music curriculum, assessment systems and qualifications pathways should be targeted for improvements. This is because the de-valuing of these subjects in recent years has led to a fall in the take up of music at GCSE and A Level, and this now needs a correction to ensure that take up recovers and we can move young people through to amateur lifelong music making as well as professional music careers. But also because evidence from research shows that high quality music learning impacts on the whole learning experience of a child, and so targeting music for improvement would impact on all learning outcomes and ensure a positive school experience for more children.

A) Curriculum: there is research to show that general music education as part of the curriculum at all key stages improves literacy and numeracy and learning habits as well as social skills and wellbeing. However, this is not reflected in teaching time of music within the curriculum in year 10 and 11, for example, where it sits at 1% of teaching time

- Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides (2010). The power of music, An Exploration of the Evidence, especially chapters 2-8, 10-15
<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>
- Corrigan, K. A., & Trainor, L. J. (2011). Associations between length of music training and reading skills in children. *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2011-27426-003>
- Dittinger, E., Chobert, J., Ziegler, J. C., & Besson, M. (2017). Fast brain plasticity during word learning in musically-trained children. *Frontiers in human neuroscience* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28553213/>
- Holly Korbey: How Music Primes the Brain for Learning
<https://www.nfhs.org/articles/how-music-primers-the-brain-for-learning/>
- E. Glenn Schellenberg: Music Lessons Enhance IQ
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0956-7976.2004.00711.x>

B) and C) Assessment and Qualification pathways. As the 19% decline in GCSE Music uptake and the 43% decline in A-level Music uptake indicate, the pathway from music in the general curriculum to studying for a qualification has clearly been damaged in recent years and should be targeted for improvement. This would provide a route not only to further study of music and professional music careers, but to life-long music making as an amateur, which brings tangible health and well-being benefits. The benefits of active music-making for adults are well documented in research, including on physical and mental health and wellbeing, ageing etc. – see the 18 benefits listed in UK Music's report *The Power of Music* <https://www.ukmusic.org/news/18-benefits-of-the-power-of-music/>

Section 3: Social justice and inclusion

The questions in this section invite responses on aspects of the curriculum and assessment system which we could build on, or improve, to support opportunity and success for all pupils and learners and particularly for socioeconomically disadvantaged young people. The

Review will also consider ways in which changes to curriculum and assessment might support pupils with SEND, pupils who are otherwise vulnerable, and where there are specific gaps based on other characteristics.

12. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation (class ceilings) for learners experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage?

Yes, there are barriers to music education for learners experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage. The provision by schools is not adequate for learners to achieve a good standard without additional investment. Those additional resources they need – one to one teaching time to learn an instrument, the purchase of an instrument, the cost of travel to extra-curricular regional orchestra rehearsals etc - are prohibitively priced for some families which leaves those who can't afford to pay for it at a disadvantage.

- Child Poverty Action Group's 'Cost of the School Day' report (2022): 'Music is another subject that creates additional costs for families when their children want to participate fully. Children in both primary and secondary schools have told us that instrument tuition usually comes with an additional cost for families: not only the cost of the tuition itself, but also the purchase or hire of an instrument so children can practise outside of their dedicated lesson time. Learning an instrument is not only valuable as an optional extracurricular activity: it is also an integral part of the music curriculum. Research from the Education Policy Institute has shown that disadvantaged pupils are much less likely to take music as a GCSE option than their peers. Moreover, when they do opt for this subject, their attainment is significantly more than a grade lower than pupils from more affluent households.' <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/The%20Cost%20of%20the%20School%20Day%20in%20England-%20Pupils%27%20Perspectives.pdf>
- As lack of provision forces families to seek instrumental/vocal lessons out of school, the cost of lessons is a barrier to entry: 71% of music teachers reported that the cost of lessons is a barrier for learners and 25% of children who have never played an instrument said this was because of the cost. (ABRSM 'Learning, playing and teaching in the UK in 2021') https://www.abrsm.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/web_abrsm-making-music-uk-21.pdf)
- Children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds need music provision to be in school therefore, and research shows that only by providing arts activities in school can universal access be ensured. Hei Wan Mak, Daisy Fancourt: Comparisons of in-school and out-of-school participation in the Taking Part Survey <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0246936#sec009>
- If children and young people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are excluded from music learning, they miss out on the developmental, wellbeing and academic benefits that active participation in music would bring them.
 - Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides , The power of music, chapters 2-8, chapter 11, chapters 13-16 <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>
- In addition, these children and young people will also suffer significant repercussions for the rest of their lives: without an introduction to music whilst attending school, they will be unable to reap the benefits of making music as hobby musicians on their own or in leisure-time music groups (e.g. choirs, brass bands, amateur orchestras, etc.) throughout adulthood.

- The benefits of active music-making for adults are well documented in research, including on physical and mental health and wellbeing, ageing etc. – see the 18 benefits listed in UK Music’s report [The Power of Music](https://www.ukmusic.org/news/18-benefits-of-the-power-of-music/) <https://www.ukmusic.org/news/18-benefits-of-the-power-of-music/>
- Music therefore needs to be in the classroom, but also offered through additional opportunities in school, particularly vital for pupils experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage as their families will often be unable to support or pay for extracurricular activities outside school.

13. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation which may disproportionately impact pupils based on other characteristics (e.g. disability, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion or belief etc.)

Yes, there are barriers to music education and music learning for children and young people with disabilities, particularly physical impairments. This report from Youth Music [Reshape Music: A report](https://youthmusic.org.uk/reshape-music) sets out the significant barriers faced by Disabled musicians to access music education and music-making. <https://youthmusic.org.uk/reshape-music>

Issues they highlight are:

- Only one quarter of Music Education Hub respondents reported that their Hub held specialist equipment or adapted instruments for Disabled children.
- Progression is further compounded by many accessible instruments not being included in traditional graded exams
- One quarter of music makers stated that their music lessons were not generally accessible. Just under half had found a teacher who met their learning needs.

The heavy emphasis of the music education curriculum on Western European Art Music creates barriers for young people from places, cultures and religions whose music and music learning practices are not represented in the curriculum. Dr Diljeet Kaur Bhachu (2019) her paper [Facilitating musical learning in Scottish Primary Schools: an interview-based study of generalist primary teachers’, primary music specialists’ and community music practitioners’ views and experiences](#) suggests that

“Placing WEAM within a more accurate context i.e. that it is one form of music, not the only or dominant music form across the world, can break down barriers for pupils from cultures from across the world, and show that the music making from all cultures is respected and valued.” <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/36622>

There is a need for respect and sensitivity in this approach – for instance, understanding that in Islam there are **continuing debates** about the role of music.

<https://asiasociety.org/arts/music-and-islam-deeper-look#:~:text=Qira'at%2C%20the%20call%20to,the%20commandments%20of%20the%20faith.>

BUT: Music has clear academic, cognitive development and wellbeing benefits for children and young people, and therefore should be available to all, regardless of their background, culture or disabilities.

- Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides (2010), The power of music, an exploration of the evidence <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

14. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers in continuing to improve attainment, progress, access or participation for learners with SEND?

For learners with disabilities, the barriers to music education are as previously stated: This report from Youth Music [Reshape Music: A report](#) sets out the significant barriers faced by Disabled musicians to access music education and music-making.

<https://youthmusic.org.uk/reshape-music>

Issues they highlight are:

- Only one quarter of Music Education Hub respondents reported that their Hub held specialist equipment or adapted instruments for Disabled children.
- Progression is further compounded by many accessible instruments not being included in traditional graded exams
- One quarter of music makers stated that their music lessons were not generally accessible. Just under half had found a teacher who met their learning needs.

As music has clear academic, cognitive development and wellbeing benefits for children and young people, this means children with SEN are missing out on these benefits.

- Sue Hallam Evangelos Himonides, 2010, The power of music, an exploration of the evidence <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

The Government's own Music Opportunities Pilot launched this year acknowledges that additional resources are needed so those with SEND can progress their musical talent and interests. We are supportive of this pilot, but this additional resource should be permanently made available within all schools to ensure equitable access to music learning.

15. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any enablers that support attainment, progress, access or participation for the groups listed above? [e.g. socioeconomically disadvantaged young people, pupils with SEND, pupils who are otherwise vulnerable, and young people with protected characteristics]

Research shows that music learning in schools is an enabler – it supports and enhances the whole learner.

- Music is a powerful enabler of academic achievement generally, supporting literacy and numeracy, social skills, cognitive development and more. Evidenced in [Guhn, Emerson, Gouzouasis: A Population-Level Analysis of Associations Between School Music Participation and Academic Achievement](#) " Music participation was related to higher scores (in English, mathematics, and science) and these relationships were stronger for instrumental music than vocal music" <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-34936-001.html>
- And evidence also in Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music](#), in particular chapters 3, 4, 5 and 11 <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

Music learning has particularly powerful impacts for pupils with SEND. It can be particularly helpful for children and young people with some neurodiversities including dyslexia, autism and ADHD.

Studies on the impact of music learning for children with Autism:

- [Jones Bartoli and Heaton: Learning a musical instrument can benefit a child with special educational needs.](https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-31525-001) <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-31525-001>
- [Finnigan & Starr: Increasing social responsiveness in a child with autism: A comparison of music and non-music interventions.](https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-13845-005) <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-13845-005>
- [Jones: Music tunes the brain in autism](https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/scitranslmed.aav6056) shows that “Music intervention alters brain activation and improves social communication skills in children with autism.” <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/scitranslmed.aav6056>

Music-based interventions have been shown to improve spelling in children with Dyslexia

- Habib, Lardy, Desiles, Commeiras, Chobert, Besson [Music and Dyslexia: A New Musical Training Method to Improve Reading and Related Disorders - PMC](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4722115/) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4722115/>

It therefore follows that all music interventions in the curriculum are enablers for learners with SEND, particularly those in general education up to KS2, before music becomes a subject for qualification.

There is some evidence from the US that there is a relationship between the amount of arts that schools provide and pupils' school-day attendance

- [Music and the Arts May Reduce Chronic Absenteeism: A Four-Year Study in New York City Public Schools](https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1702635688/newyorkmillsorg/numbk7auwafwapqqogyp/filedownloadashx_58.pdf) https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1702635688/newyorkmillsorg/numbk7auwafwapqqogyp/filedownloadashx_58.pdf

Providing an incentive to attend school, such as participating in music, for vulnerable young people and other young people who are more likely to absent themselves presents opportunities to support their general educational attainment.

Section 4: Ensuring an excellent foundation in maths and English

20. How can we better support learners who do not achieve level 2 in English and maths by 16 to learn what they need to thrive as citizens in work and life? In particular, do we have the right qualifications at level 2 for these 16-19 learners (including the maths and English study requirement)?

Continuing to provide opportunities to play and learn music within the school day, even for those young people who do not select to work towards a qualification, would support young people to thrive as citizens in work and life.

Making music has evidenced positive impacts on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people, and ensuring young people who have not achieved Level 2 English/Maths have access to this opportunity in school improves their life chances.

- Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music](https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292)
<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

Music learning also supports their ability to achieve academically:

- [Canadian study: Guhn, Emerson, Gouzouasis: A Population-Level Analysis of Associations Between School Music Participation and Academic Achievement "](https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-34936-001.html)
<https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-34936-001.html>
- [Korbey: How Music Primes the Brain for Learning](https://www.nfhs.org/articles/how-music-primers-the-brain-for-learning/)
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There is some evidence from the US that there is a relationship between the amount of arts that schools provide and pupils' school-day attendance

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Providing an incentive to attend school, such as participating in music, for young people who are more likely to absent themselves presents opportunities to support their general educational attainment.

Section 5: Curriculum and qualification content

The content of the national curriculum is set out in subject-specific "programmes of study".

... Schools and teachers use the national curriculum, and specifications, to develop detailed school and class curricula that set out exactly what they will teach their pupils and learners and how they will do so.

... the Review seeks to ensure that the content of the curriculum and qualifications reflects the issues and diversities of our society and that all children and young people are represented and engaged.

... We also want to ensure that the curriculum and qualification pathways set up young people up with the best possible foundations to thrive in education and in wider life and work.

... Additionally, it will consider whether new knowledge should be built into curriculum subjects, or whether some should be developed outside the classroom through co-curricular or extra-curricular activities.

22. Are there particular curriculum or qualifications subjects* where: a) there is too much content; not enough content; or content is missing; b) the content is out-of-date; c) the content is unhelpfully sequenced (for example to support good curriculum design or pedagogy); d) there is a need for greater flexibility (for example to provide the space for teachers to develop and adapt content)? Please provide detail on specific key stages where appropriate. *This includes both qualifications where the government sets content nationally, and anywhere the content is currently set by awarding organisations.

Subject content

All levels of the music education curriculum - up to KS3, GCSE and A Level – would benefit from consideration of b) whether the content is out of date. The teaching of music depends on the pieces of music selected for teaching connecting with the interests and cultures of the learners. Greater attention needs to be given to diversify and update the content to ensure all children and young people recognise their cultural backgrounds and life experiences in the music they are learning. Young people's own musical references, from their homes and communities should be represented and valued in the teaching of music, so all young people are able to equitably benefit from music education whatever their race, religion, disability, and cultural backgrounds.

An effective music curriculum would benefit from d) a greater flexibility for teachers to develop and adapt content. This would enable teachers to match the forms and genres of music they teach to the abilities, existing skills, interests and cultural backgrounds of the young people they teach. Teachers should be able to adapt to the ethnicity, religions, cultural backgrounds and (dis)abilities of their pupils, which may depend on the community that they are teaching in (e.g. Scarborough versus Birmingham, rural Cumbria versus South London).

This topic discussed in depth in this webinar:

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/diversification-in-music-education-why-it-matters-what-to-avoid-to-do-it-right/>

23. Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification content) is more diverse and representative of society?

There are changes that could be made to all levels of the music education curriculum - up to KS3, GCSE and A Level – to ensure it is more diverse and representative of an increasingly multi-cultural society.

Dr Diljeet Kaur Bhachu (2019), in her study on *Facilitating musical learning in Scottish Primary Schools*, identifies the problematic emphasis of Western European Arts Music (Classical Music) within school music education
<https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/36622/Bhachu2019.pdf>

- “In the music education curriculum, greater emphasis should be placed on other forms and genres of music other than Western European Art Music. Placing WEAM within a more accurate context i.e. that it is one form of music, not the only or dominant music form across the world can break down barriers for pupils from cultures from across the world, and show that the music making from all cultures is respected and valued. This can be done in an informed and respectful way e.g. not referring to 'African drumming' but instead understanding the specificity of where that drumming originated and teaching that context.” Reference: *Facilitating musical learning in Scottish Primary Schools: an interview-based study of generalist primary teachers', primary music specialists' and community music practitioners' views and experiences* | Dr Diljeet Kaur Bhachu (2019)

An assessment of the current curriculum should consider ways of including the forms, genre and cultures of music making and learning from other cultures. Currently a lot of young people from non-White/non-British cultural, religious or ethnic backgrounds – around 15% UK wide, but around 35%, for example, in London - would not recognise or identify their musical background or interests in the current music curriculum. This means they are less likely to take up music opportunities in school, and this indeed may put them at a

disadvantage when working towards qualifications, if they have had less exposure to the primary content of those subjects (WEAM) throughout their lives.

Ensuring the music curriculum is representative of the young people who are studying it gives them access to careers in the hugely successful UK music sector and to the life-long benefits of making music with others once they leave school.

The exclusionary nature of the current music curriculum is powerfully illustrated in this poem by Professor Nate Holder: <https://www.nateholdermusic.com/post/if-i-were-a-racist>

24. To what extent does the current curriculum (including qualification content) support students to positively engage with, be knowledgeable about, and respect, others? Are there elements that could be improved?

Making music with others, in an ensemble, band or choir has great impacts on students abilities to positively engage with, be knowledgeable about and respect others.

Playing music together develops team work and social connectivity, and relies strongly on listening to and cooperating with others, starting from Early Years - Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music](#), especially chapters 7 and 13
<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

Studies of young people playing in an ensemble show that "ensemble-based musical instruction in an after school program positively affects the behavior and development of school-aged children." [Study finds ensemble music programs positively affect students' character, competence | FIU News - Florida International University](#)
<https://news.fiu.edu/2019/study-finds-ensemble-music-programs-positively-affect-students-character-competence>

Opportunities to play in ensembles must remain a key part of the whole music curriculum, so these benefits are realised. However, it is important that school students at KS3 and above and have opportunities to play in ensembles even when they are not studying music as a qualification. Limiting opportunities to play in the out of school orchestra, or use the music rehearsal room only to those working towards a qualification closes off all of these social benefits to young people who may choose not to formalise their music learning in this way.

25. In which ways does the current primary curriculum support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for life and further study, and what could we change to better support this?

We recognise that there are currently statutory programmes of study for music at key stages 1 and 2 in the National Curriculum. Music learning must remain embedded and integrated into the primary curriculum. The skills and knowledge music learning and making provide for children are not just a 'nice to have' but provide the essential support to a child's neurological, cognitive and social development needed for learning.

- Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music](#) – identifies the many impacts music learning has on child's development; on skills required for school learning, but also on essential life skills:

Language skills
Literacy skills
Spatial reasoning skills
Memory skills
Executive functioning and self-regulation
Engagement and motivation

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

As well as being taught as a discrete activity, music could be integrated into teaching core subjects and cross curricular learning, to harness the benefits for literacy, maths and other subjects.

It could also be an activity as part of targeted support for SEND children in the primary curriculum, as it helps improve many of the neurological blockers to children's learning which characterise e.g. autism, dyslexia, ADHD. This neuroscientific study shows that "Dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and attention deficit disorder (ADD) show distinct clinical profiles that may include auditory and language-related impairments... In children playing a musical instrument, after three and a half years of training the observed interhemispheric asynchronies were reduced by about 2/3, thus suggesting a strong beneficial influence of music experience on brain development."

[Neural Biomarkers for Dyslexia, ADHD, and ADD in the Auditory Cortex of Children](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience/articles/10.3389/fnins.2016.00324/full)
<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience/articles/10.3389/fnins.2016.00324/full>

26. In which ways do the current secondary curriculum and qualification pathways support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work, and what could we change to better support this?

Music learning at secondary level supports pupils towards further study and careers in the music industry. However, there has been a 19% decline in uptake of GCSE/Technical Awards in music since 2010. This has an impact on uptake of A-levels and further down the line on the talent pipeline for the hugely successful UK music sector and its financial significance for the UK.

It is crucial that music education and extra-curricular music activities provided by schools and music hubs are an integral part of education at 11-16 for everyone. Only a small percentage of them will become professionals or work in the music industry, but all young people could benefit from life-long music-making in adult leisure-time music groups.

In the 23/24 DCMS/Arts Council England [Participation Survey](#), 10% of respondents said that they had Written/ practised/ performed music in the last year. 5% said they had attended 'a choir or music group, orchestra or band, singing or music lesson'. It's a reasonable estimate then that almost 6 million adults in England make music regularly, and half of those (almost 3 million) do this in a group with other people (band, choir, orchestra etc).

The impacts on the health, wellbeing and life chances of lifelong music makers are proven. [The Social Biobehavioural Research Group: The Impact of Arts and Cultural Engagement on Population Health](https://sbbresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Arts-and-population-health-FINAL-March-2023.pdf) <https://sbbresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Arts-and-population-health-FINAL-March-2023.pdf>

BUT it is much harder for them to access such music-making and these benefits when starting from zero as an adult, as Making Music's [Adult Music Learning Manifesto 2020](#) outlines: there are significant barriers for new adult music makers.

<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/campaigns-and-advocacy/adult-music-learning-manifesto-2020>

Ensuring that young people have had sufficient music making and learning opportunities at secondary school stage, means they are much more likely to continue as lifelong music makers, with all the significant benefits this brings. This means continuing and improving the provision of instrumental learning and opportunities to play in ensembles in schools, both for those who choose to study music as a qualification and those who do not.

In a survey of Making Music members (music groups and hobby musicians), 48% of those playing/singing as adults had first learned to do so at school. If children are not given this opportunity at school, then the likelihood of them taking it up as an adult leisure activity are greatly reduced. Our members express their concern that the pipeline of participants from school to adult leisure time groups is reducing, meaning these people are not experiencing all the benefits taking part in this activity confers.

There are additional educational benefits for young people of music making and learning. Music-making supports young people's neurological, cognitive and social skills development needed for learning and integrating into a classroom and into society, and helps improve many neurological blockers to their learning identified in, e.g. autism, dyslexia, ADHD. This neuroscientific study shows that "Dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and attention deficit disorder (ADD) show distinct clinical profiles that may include auditory and language-related impairments... In children playing a musical instrument, after three and a half years of training the observed interhemispheric asynchronies were reduced by about 2/3, thus suggesting a strong beneficial influence of music experience on brain development."

[Neural Biomarkers for Dyslexia, ADHD, and ADD in the Auditory Cortex of Children](#)

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience/articles/10.3389/fnins.2016.00324/full>

Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music – identifies the many impacts music learning has on child's development; on skills required for school learning, but also on essential life skills.](#) <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

27. In which ways do the current qualification pathways and content at 16-19 support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work, and what could we change to better support this?

16-19 - skills and knowledge for life and further study

There has been a 43% decline in uptake of A-levels in music since 2010. This has an impact on the talent pipeline for the hugely successful UK music sector and its financial significance for the UK, as many schools now no longer offer a music A-level at all.

But even more significantly, it is crucial that extra-curricular music activities remain on offer to all sixth-form students and are encouraged, as only a small percentage of them will become professionals or work in the music industry, but all young people could benefit from life-long music-making in adult leisure-time music groups.

A seamless transition is therefore needed between school setting and post-education life after age 19; but this will not happen if music education opportunities stop at age 16.

In the 23/24 DCMS/Arts Council England [Participation Survey](#), 10% of respondents said that they had Written/ practised/ performed music in the last year. 5% said they had attended 'a choir or music group, orchestra or band, singing or music lesson'. It's a reasonable estimate then that almost 6 million adults in England make music regularly, and half of those (almost 3 million) do this in a group with other people (band, choir, orchestra etc).

The impacts on the health, wellbeing and life chances of lifelong music makers are proven. The Social Biobehavioural Research Group: The Impact of Arts and Cultural Engagement on Population Health <https://sbbresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Arts-and-population-health-FINAL-March-2023.pdf>

BUT it is much harder for them to access such music-making and these benefits when starting from zero as an adult, as Making Music's Adult Music Learning Manifesto 2020 outlines: there are significant barriers for new adult music makers.

<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/campaigns-and-advocacy/adult-music-learning-manifesto-2020>

Music-making, especially singing in a group, has also been found to improve stress levels by reducing stress hormone cortisol and increasing hormones serotonin (present in many anti-depressant pharmaceuticals) and oxytocin which help lift mood. This would seem particularly relevant at age 16-19 when young people are wrestling with stressful exams, decisions about their post-school life, and when we know there is a mental health crisis for young people in particular at the moment.

Music should therefore continue for all aged 16-19, whether or not they choose to study the subject for A-level or a technical qualification, in order to support young people's other academic studies and their mental health and well-being.

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

The Review seeks to promote a broad and balanced curriculum, ensuring all young people can access a rich range of subjects in appropriate depth, including creative subjects.

... All state-funded schools in England are already required to teach a broad and balanced curriculum and the national curriculum currently seeks to support schools to achieve this by providing specific requirements at each key stage. The Progress 8 performance measure incentivises a diversity of subjects at key stage 4. The national curriculum includes compulsory study of core and foundation subjects from key stages 1 to 4. At key stage 4, pupils have a statutory entitlement to study a subject within each of the following areas: the arts; design and technology; the humanities and modern foreign languages. As this is an entitlement and not compulsory, we are interested in understanding whether continued study of these subjects happens in practice.

At 16-19 there is no national curriculum, and courses are designed to support development and progression to either further study or employment. As part of their programmes, learners should also undertake employability, enrichment and pastoral activities e.g. work experience.

28. To what extent does the current primary curriculum support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

primary - broad and balanced

We recognise that there are currently statutory programmes of study for music at key stages 1 and 2 in the National Curriculum. Music learning must remain embedded and integrated into the primary curriculum.

As well as being taught as a discrete activity, music could be integrated into teaching core subjects and cross curricular learning, to harness the benefits for literacy, maths and other subjects.

It could also be an activity as part of targeted support for SEND children in the primary curriculum, as it helps improve many of the neurological blockers to children's learning which characterise e.g. autism, dyslexia, ADHD. This neuroscientific study shows that "Dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and attention deficit disorder (ADD) show distinct clinical profiles that may include auditory and language-related impairments... In children playing a musical instrument, after three and a half years of training the observed interhemispheric asynchronies were reduced by about 2/3, thus suggesting a strong beneficial influence of music experience on brain development."

[Neural Biomarkers for Dyslexia, ADHD, and ADD in the Auditory Cortex of Children](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience/articles/10.3389/fnins.2016.00324/full)

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience/articles/10.3389/fnins.2016.00324/full>

29. To what extent do the current secondary curriculum and, qualifications pathways support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

secondary - broad and balanced

We recognise that music learning is embedded into the secondary curriculum and there are qualifications pathways for learners to GCSE level.

However, there has been a 19% decline in uptake of GCSE/Technical Awards in music since 2010. There is clearly an issue with the current routes into GCSE level music, and this needs investigation and addressing. This has an impact on uptake of A-levels and further down the line on the talent pipeline for the hugely successful UK music sector and its financial significance for the UK.

But even more significantly, it is crucial that music education and extra-curricular music activities are an integral part of education at 11-16 for everyone, as only a small percentage of them will become professionals or work in the music industry, but all young people could benefit from life-long music-making in adult leisure-time music groups.

In the 23/24 DCMS/Arts Council England [Participation Survey](#), 10% of respondents said that they had Written/ practised/ performed music in the last year. 5% said they had attended 'a choir or music group, orchestra or band, singing or music lesson'. It's a reasonable estimate then that almost 6 million adults in England make music regularly, and half of those (almost 3 million) do this in a group with other people (band, choir, orchestra etc).

All those participants are benefitting for their physical and mental health and wellbeing , social connectivity, development and maintenance of their cognitive functions etc.. BUT it is much harder for them to access such music-making and these benefits when starting from zero as an adult, as Making Music's [Adult Music Learning Manifesto 2020](#) outlines: there are significant barriers for new adult music makers. <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/campaigns-and-advocacy/adult-music-learning-manifesto-2020>

In a survey of Making Music members (music groups and hobby musicians), 48% of those playing/singing as adults had first learned to do so at school. If children are not given this opportunity at school, then the likelihood of them taking it up as an adult leisure activity are greatly reduced. Our members express their concern that the pipeline of participants from school to adult leisure time groups is reducing, meaning these people are not experiencing all the benefits taking part in this activity confers.

Accepting that schools are the primary route to lifelong music participation could mean a shift in the purpose and provision of music in schools. Not only should schools provide qualifications at secondary level, but a breadth of opportunities to make music in ways that adults do in their leisure time: in ensembles such as orchestras and wind bands, in rock bands, as DJs and MCs, using music tech to create new music, in choirs etc

30. To what extent do the current qualifications pathways at 16-19 support learners to study a broad curriculum which gives them the right knowledge and skills to progress? Should anything change to better support this?

16-19 - broad and balanced

There has been a 43% decline in uptake of A-levels in music since 2010. This has an impact on the talent pipeline for the hugely successful UK music sector and its financial significance for the UK, as many schools now no longer offer a music A-level at all.

But even more significantly, it is crucial that extra-curricular music activities remain on offer to all sixth-form students and are encouraged, as only a small percentage of them will become professionals or work in the music industry, but all young people could benefit from life-long music-making in adult leisure-time music groups.

In the 23/24 DCMS/Arts Council England [Participation Survey](#), 10% of respondents said that they had Written/ practised/ performed music in the last year. 5% said they had attended 'a choir or music group, orchestra or band, singing or music lesson'. It's a reasonable estimate then that almost 6 million adults in England make music regularly, and half of those (almost 3 million) do this in a group with other people (band, choir, orchestra etc).

All those participants are benefitting for their physical and mental health and wellbeing , social connectivity, development and maintenance of their cognitive functions etc.. BUT it is much harder for them to access such music-making and these benefits when starting from zero as an adult, as Making Music's [Adult Music Learning Manifesto 2020](#) outlines: there are significant barriers for new adult music makers. <https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/campaigns-and-advocacy/adult-music-learning-manifesto-2020>

In a survey of Making Music members (music groups and hobby musicians), 48% of those playing/singing as adults had first learned to do so at school. If children are not given this opportunity at school, then the likelihood of them taking it up as an adult leisure activity are greatly reduced. Our members express their concern that the pipeline of participants from school to adult leisure time groups is reducing, meaning these people are not experiencing all the benefits taking part in this activity confers.

Accepting that schools are the primary route to lifelong music participation could mean a shift in the purpose and provision of music in schools. Not only should schools provide qualifications at 16 - 19 level, but a breadth of opportunities to make music in ways that adults do in their leisure time: in ensembles such as orchestras and wind bands, in rock bands, as DJs and MCs, using music tech to create new music, in choirs etc

31. To what extent do the [current curriculum \(at primary and secondary\)](#) and [qualifications pathways \(at secondary and 16-19\)](#) ensure that pupils and learners are able to develop creative skills and have access to creative subjects?

support for creative skills and access to creative subjects

We recognise that there are currently statutory programmes of study for music at key stages 1 and 2 in the National Curriculum. We also recognise that music learning is embedded into the secondary curriculum and there are qualifications pathways for learners to GCSE and then on to A level.

However, current assessment and accountability measures have forced schools to focus increasingly on Progress 8 and Ebacc subjects; these do not include creative subjects (including music) which have therefore struggled for attention and time and space.

This has resulted in a 19% decline in uptake of GCSE/Technical Awards in music and a 43% decline in uptake of A-levels in music since 2010. This is significant not only for the talent pipeline of the hugely successful UK music industry but even more for the neurological and cognitive development of young people, their physical and mental well-being, their social skills and their other academic achievements.

Music-making has many benefits for young people, as Sue Hallam's ground-breaking research [The Power of Music](#) demonstrates.

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

Furthermore, we know that whilst only a small percentage of young people will become professional musicians, all of them could benefit from continuing to make music as a hobby in adulthood, benefitting their own wellbeing and that of their communities.

We know from the [DCMS Participation survey](#) that there are 6 million adult hobby musicians in England and at Making Music we know from our research for the [Adult Music Learning Manifesto](#) that it is harder for adults to engage with and benefit from active music making if they did not have the opportunity to do so whilst in an educational setting as under-18s.

<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/campaigns-and-advocacy/adult-music-learning-manifesto-2020>

The impacts on the health, wellbeing and life chances of lifelong music makers are proven. [The Social Biobehavioural Research Group: The Impact of Arts and Cultural Engagement on Population Health](#) BUT it is much harder for them to access such music-making and these benefits when starting from zero as an adult, as Making Music's [Adult Music Learning Manifesto 2020](#) outlines: there are significant barriers for new adult music makers.

In a survey of Making Music members (music groups and hobby musicians), 48% of those playing/singing as adults had first learned to do so at school. If children are not given this opportunity at school, then the likelihood of them taking it up as an adult leisure activity are greatly reduced. Our members express their concern that the pipeline of participants from school to adult leisure time groups is reducing, meaning these people are not experiencing all the benefits taking part in this activity confers.

Embedding music education in the classroom and outside it, but still within school, for all children and young people aged 5-19 will not just develop their creative skills but also give them an access route in to lifelong music making, ensuring their continued contribution to the

music ecology and cultural life of the country, as well as supporting their health and well-being.

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

Our [analysis](#) has shown that while many subject areas are thriving and take-up is growing, take-up of some subjects has declined over time. Of course, this is not necessarily a problem: these changes may reflect policy directions or other social trends; or they may reflect changes in policy and accountability measures over time.

32. Do you have any explanations for the trends outlined in the analysis and/or suggestions to address any that might be of concern?

Explanations of trends or suggestions to address

As these data show, the take-up of Music at GCSE and A-level has declined significantly since 2010. This decline has been largely concurrent with the introduction of the EBacc in 2012, which excludes all arts subjects. This means young people who are working to attain this standard are less likely to choose Music at GCSE and A Level, in preference for a subject included in the EBacc. It also means schools assign less time and resources to the teaching of music, instead focussing on EBacc subjects.

The impact of excluding arts from the EBacc could be seen to have been further exacerbated by the introduction of the Progress 8 school performance measure in 2016, which gives more weighting to achievements in EBacc subjects.

Whilst a lower number of young people attaining qualifications at A Level clearly has an impact on the talent pipeline for the hugely successful UK music industry, the most significant effect must be the perception of lower value and reduced importance of music as a subject, and also as an activity in a young person's life. Young people working towards EBacc may also choose to take part in extra-curricular music activities less, to prioritise working towards their exams.

That has repercussions for their other academic achievements which can be hugely boosted by active music-making, as this [Canadian study](#) demonstrates: [Canadian study: Guhn, Emerson, Gouzouasis: A Population-Level Analysis of Associations Between School Music Participation and Academic Achievement](#) " . <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-34936-001.html>

But it also will have an impact throughout their lives, where making music as a hobby on their own or in leisure-time music groups would bring them lifelong benefits in terms of physical and mental well-being.

To revalue music as a subject and as an extra-curricular activity, it would be helpful to include it in the Progress 8 and/or Ebacc subjects, thus ensuring more teaching time and support for this subject in all schools.

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

41. Are there particular GCSE subjects where changes could be made to the qualification content and/or assessment that would be beneficial for pupils' learning?

changes to GCSE qualification content or assessment

Some changes to GCSE music qualification content would be beneficial for pupil's learning.

An assessment of the current curriculum should consider ways of including the forms, genre and cultures of music making and learning from other cultures. The current music curriculum needs diversifying in terms of content and repertoire, to remove bias towards Western European Art Music / Classical Music and certain types of instruments or ensembles. It is, for instance, difficult to pass a GCSE playing the bagpipes, as there is a requirement to play in an ensemble, which is a challenge for an instrument that does not blend easily with other instrumentation in an ensemble.

Prof Nate Holder (education consultant) advocates for a change in a music curriculum that centralises Western European Art Music, and discriminates against other music forms in his powerful poem: <https://www.nateholdermusic.com/post/if-i-were-a-racist>

A review of the language of the music curriculum would be beneficial - for instance 'composing' would immediately appeal to a more diverse range of young people if it was 'music creation' (which could/should include creation of e.g. rapping, amplified band music, electronic music etc.)

Technology is also now widely used by young people in music-making which should be recognised and supported in the curriculum. This has the added benefit of offering greater access to the subject for young people with SEND or a disability, particularly physical impairments.

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

42. Are there ways in which we could support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes at key stage 3?

support pupil progress and outcomes at key stage 3 (age 11 – 14)

Ensuring that pupils have access to music making and music learning, whether in classroom teaching or in extra-curricular opportunities would support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes.

This is because music has clear academic, cognitive development and wellbeing benefits for children and young people as evidenced in research

- Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music](#) – identifies the many impacts music learning has on child's development and on skills required for school learning, but also on essential life skills:

Language skills

Literacy skills

Spatial reasoning skills

Memory skills

Executive functioning and self-regulation

Engagement and motivation

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

- [Canadian study: Guhn, Emerson, Gouzouasis: A Population-Level Analysis of Associations Between School Music Participation and Academic Achievement "](https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-34936-001.html)
- [Korbey: How Music Primes the Brain for Learning](https://www.nfhs.org/articles/how-music-primers-the-brain-for-learning/)

43. Are there ways in which we could support pupils who do not meet the expected standard at key stage 2?

support pupils who do not meet expected standard at key stage 2 (age 7 –10)

Ensuring that pupils have access to music making and music learning, whether in classroom teaching or in extra-curricular opportunities would support pupils who do not meet the expected standard at key stage 2.

This is because music has clear academic, cognitive development and wellbeing benefits for children and young people as evidenced in research

- Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music](https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292) – identifies the many impacts music learning has on child's development and on skills required for school learning, but also on essential life skills:

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Memory skills

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- [Canadian study: Guhn, Emerson, Gouzouasis: A Population-Level Analysis of Associations Between School Music Participation and Academic Achievement "](https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-34936-001.html)
- [Korbey: How Music Primes the Brain for Learning](https://www.nfhs.org/articles/how-music-primers-the-brain-for-learning/)

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

Accountability

The Review acknowledges the importance of understanding how schools and colleges are performing, and that curriculum and assessment practices are inextricably linked to accountability and performance measures. The Review may therefore make recommendations on these arrangements; and offer commentary on the impact of accountability on the curriculum and assessment system and how planned changes should interact with the system as a whole.

Accountability includes collecting and publishing [data on school and college performance](#), in order to hold schools and colleges to account for the service they provide; to inform their decision-making; to provide information on standards to policymakers and the wider public and to help parents make informed choices about their child's education. ...

The next questions in this section invite general views on the accountability system... and how it, potentially, might be adapted to better support system improvement and a broad and balanced curriculum.

44. To what extent, and in what ways, does the accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?

accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions

The current accountability system has clearly affected decisions pertaining to the music curriculum in schools.

As music is not included as an Ebacc subject, and is not included in the Progress 8 assessment measures, schools downgrade music as a subject and focus less time and resources on ensuring attainment. This is illustrated in [this report](#) by the Cultural Learning Alliance: <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf>

The report shows that the ultimate outcome of this downgrading of music has been a 19% decline in GCSE Music uptake and the 43% decline in A-level Music uptake since 2010. 42% of schools no longer enter any pupils for Music GCSE. And as the music teaching positions in schools reduce, less people train to teach music – the number of Initial Teacher Training recruits for Music has fallen by 56% from 2010.

This is alarming in the case of music, not just because of the threat to the talent pipeline of the hugely successful UK music industry, but for two other reasons:

1. the huge benefits making music (singing and playing) brings to children and young people in general: improving their academic outcomes, their social skills, empathy and teamworking, and their physical and mental wellbeing, and including such practical impacts as reducing absenteeism. As evidenced in research including:
 - a. Sue Hallam, Evangelos Himonides, [The power of music](#) <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>
 - b. Canadian study: [Guhn, Emerson, Gouzouasis: A Population-Level Analysis of Associations Between School Music Participation and Academic Achievement "](#)
 - c. [Korbey: How Music Primes the Brain for Learning](#) <https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2019-34936-001.html>
 - d. Corrigall, Trainor: [Associations between length of music training and reading skills in children.](#) <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2011-27426-003>
 - e. Dittinger, Chobert, Ziegler, Besson [Fast brain plasticity during word learning in musically-trained children.](#) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28553213/>
 - f. [Music reduces absenteeism - NAMM foundation Music and the Arts May Reduce Chronic Absenteeism: A Four-Year Study in New York City Public Schools](#) https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1702635688/newyorkmillsorg/numbk7auwafwapqqogyp/filedownloadashx_58.pdf

2. the huge benefits young people can reap throughout their lives if they receive a foundation in music making during their school time, either in the classroom or as school-based extra-curricular activities. This foundation is a proven route to being a hobby musician either on their own or with leisure-time music groups, such as brass bands, ukulele groups, jazz big bands, rock or pop bands, steelpan groups, amateur orchestras, and choirs of all sizes and genres.

The benefits adult hobby musicians reap range from better physical and mental health and wellbeing to reduced dementia risk and better ageing, as well as social connection and reduction in loneliness.

- i. Brain health – [Music in childhood boosts brains in later life | The University of Edinburgh](https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2022/music-in-childhood-boosts-brains-in-later-life) contributes to healthy cognitive aging.
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2022/music-in-childhood-boosts-brains-in-later-life>
- ii. Loneliness – [How Can Music Engagement Address Loneliness? A Qualitative Study and Thematic Framework in the Context of Australia's COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdowns](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9819799/)
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9819799/>

In a survey of Making Music members (music groups and hobby musicians), 48% of those playing/singing as adults had first learned to do so at school. If children are not given this opportunity at school, then the likelihood of them taking it up as an adult leisure activity are greatly reduced. Making Music's [Adult Music Learning Manifesto](#) shows that accessing music making is much harder for adults who never had a foundation in music at school.
<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/campaigns-and-advocacy/adult-music-learning-manifesto-2020>

46. Should there be any changes to the current accountability system in order to better support progress and incentivise inclusion for young people with SEND and/or from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds? If so, what should those changes be?

accountability system changes to support SEND or socio-economically disadvantaged

What changes to accountability system?

The current accountability system has clearly affected decisions pertaining to the music curriculum in schools.

As music is not included as an Ebacc subject, and is not included in the Progress 8 assessment measures, schools downgrade music as a subject and focus less time and resources on ensuring attainment. This is illustrated in this report by the Cultural Learning Alliance: <https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CLA-2024-Annual-Report-Card.pdf>

Ensuring that music is given equal weight in the accountability systems with other school subjects would better support progress and incentivise inclusion for young people with SEND and/or from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Valuing music in the curriculum in this way would ensure the correct resources and time were given to music learning and music making, which has proven benefits for young people with SEND

There is research that suggests that making music can improve the ability to communicate, concentrate and achieve for children and young people with autism, dyslexia or ADHD.

E.g.: [Neural Biomarkers for Dyslexia, ADHD, and ADD in the Auditory Cortex of Children: ...In children playing a musical instrument, after three and a half years of training the observed interhemispheric asynchronies were reduced by about 2/3, thus suggesting a strong beneficial influence of music experience on brain development.](#)

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/neuroscience/articles/10.3389/fnins.2016.00324/full>

Giving music equal weight in the accountability systems would require schools to allocate the resources required to ensure young people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds were given equal access to music learning.

Research from the Child Poverty Action group suggests young people from disadvantaged backgrounds miss out; the [‘Cost of the School Day’](#) report from 2022 found that ‘Pupils experiencing poverty in England are financially excluded from full participation in a wide range of school subjects and activities, including...

music...’. [https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/The Cost of the School Day in England- Pupils%27 Perspectives.pdf](https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/The%20Cost%20of%20the%20School%20Day%20in%20England-%20Pupils%27%20Perspectives.pdf)

The cost of instrumental/vocal lessons (these are usually charged for, even in school, and rarely subsidised) is a barrier to entry: 71% of music teachers reported that the cost of lessons is a barrier for learners and 25% of children who have never played an instrument said this was because of the cost. (ABRSM [‘Learning, playing and teaching in the UK in 2021’](#) https://www.abrsm.org/sites/default/files/2023-08/web_abrsm-making-music-uk-21.pdf)

Ensuring young people have equitable access from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds could open up opportunities and routes into the music industry – which currently lacks diversity. It can also ensure they can access the benefits of lifelong music making, which has positive impacts on health and wellbeing and can prove vital to their life opportunities.

Section 8: Qualification pathways 16-19

51. Are there additional skills, subjects, or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19 education, regardless of their chosen programmes and qualifications, to support them to be prepared for life and work?

skills, subjects or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19

If all students, regardless of whether they were focussing on music as one of their A-levels or technical qualifications, were to have music learning and music making opportunities either in the classroom or outside it but still within the school/FE college context, this would truly help to prepare them for life and work.

The skills required to make music, especially in a group with others, are exactly those that future employers will be looking for: listening, empathy, ability to work as a team, problem solving, leadership, social skills. See Sue Hallam’s research [The Power of Music](#). <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0292>

There is a mental health crisis, for children and young people as well as adults. Music making, at a hobby and leisure-time music group level, can make a difference physically and mentally to these challenges, as research proves, e.g. singing helps release serotonin and oxytocin. Therefore, making sure that young people have the skills and habit of music making in their educational setting, means they will be more resilient for their future lives and have tools to support their mental health challenges post-education.

Introducing young people to music in their educational setting will ensure that as adults they will have access to the many opportunities afforded by leisure-time music groups to make music throughout their lives - within their communities and at a low cost. Introducing young people to this accessible leisure activity ensures them a longer healthy life. This is an approach we see in education to encourage lifelong participation in sport and physical activity i.e. Physical Education is a core part of the curriculum and opportunities to participate in sport are available through schools and colleges even for those not studying this subject. If we were to take the same approach with music, we would support young people to have lifelong participation and the impacts on the health, wellbeing and life chances of life long music makers are proven. [The Social Biobehavioural Research Group: The Impact of Arts and Cultural Engagement on Population Health](https://sbbresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Arts-and-population-health-FINAL-March-2023.pdf)
<https://sbbresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Arts-and-population-health-FINAL-March-2023.pdf>

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

54. Do you have any further views on anything else associated with the Curriculum and Assessment Review not covered in the questions throughout the call for evidence?

Any further views

For this past generation, understandably, in an effort to improve schools' performance and drive up attainment for young people, the focus of curriculum content and quality assessment has narrowly focussed on subjects which seemed the most relevant directly to young people's future working lives.

But in the last 25 years we have learnt a lot more about music education and music making as positive influences on child brain development and learning ability, on their other academic achievements. We have evidence to show how those young people with parents able to support and pay for music education have excelled above their peers, thus further disadvantaging those from challenging socio-economic backgrounds. We have seen how those from ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds whose music is not represented in the music curriculum engage less with music learning and don't access the benefits. And we have seen how children with SEND who are not currently given enough access to active participation in music are also denied access to the benefits.

We have also learnt in the last quarter century that accelerating technological change, climate challenges and political upheaval in the world mean that the young people passing through the education system now need to be flexible, adaptable problem-solvers with excellent abilities to work with others, and with mental resilience to succeed in their post-18 lives and contribute to society and the economy. It is therefore time now to widen the scope of the curriculum to include subjects such as music and other arts to equip young people more widely with the skills and resilience they need in life, rather than focussing on narrow skillsets which may be outdated by the time the ink dries on this review.

We also need to even up the opportunities and outcomes for all young people, including those with SEND, disabilities, from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and music can help here, too.

We therefore suggest that:

1. Music should be embedded and integrated in all learning programmes and curricula from age 5-19.
2. Music learning and making opportunities should be available outside the classroom, too, in all school, college or nursery settings for ages 5-19
3. Music should be considered and used as a support for young people with particular challenges, which could be their socio-economic background or SEN or disabilities, to improve their learning readiness and their academic outcomes.
4. The music curriculum needs to be diversified and teachers given more flexibility to adapt repertoire, music creation and genres taught to suit their local populations and their pupils' interests and cultural backgrounds.

Our perspective comes from supporting around 250,000 people in leisure time music groups, for whom music is a hobby activity that bring them great benefits. We know, from surveys and regular conversations on music education with our members that their access to music at school was fundamental to their continued music making as adults. They, and we, are concerned that the erosion of quality music education will see fewer and fewer adults emerging with the skills and enthusiasm for taking part in music groups.

We asked adult hobby musicians in our membership about their own music learning background:

- i. 48% first taught to play / sing at school
- ii. 76% first learnt to play between ages of 6 and 12
- iii. 80% can read music well, and 15% a little
- iv. 55% had to be able to read music to join their group
- v. 23% had sat exams / assessments at school level,

The skills they need to be in a music group as an adult - playing musical instruments/singing, reading music notation and playing/singing in ensemble – they mostly learned at school, or at school age. If young people are leaving school without these skills, will they be able to join the leisure time music making community?