

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr ymchwiliad: [A oes gan blant a phobl ifanc anabl fynediad cyfartal at addysg a gofal plant?](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for the inquiry: [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#)

AEC 46

Ymateb gan: Sefydliadau cerddoriaeth a'r celfyddydau

Response from: Music and Arts organisations



Anthem Music Fund Wales, Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias, Disability Arts Cymru, Live Music Now, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Ty Cerdd and UCAN Productions are pleased to submit their evidence for the consultation on whether disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare.

Key evidence & recommendations

Music can have a positive transformative impact on disabled and neurodivergent children and young people, including **improving health and wellbeing, motor skills, speech and language development, IT and technology skills, employability, confidence and self-esteem.**

Currently, disabled and neurodivergent children and young people face a number of barriers to inclusive educational musical experiences. **The key barriers are a lack of suitable curricula and learning pathways, a lack of confidence and training opportunities for teaching staff and a lack of resources and space in the school timetable to provide music education.**

Disabled and neurodivergent children and young people can have **rewarding and transformative musical experiences through out-of-school participatory music organisations, providing families and carers are supported to overcome barriers such as transportation, personal assistance costs etc.**

The National Music Education Plan does have a focus on partnership working between schools and out-of-school providers, training for teaching staff and facilitators and the development of learning pathways, but **investment in this area is crucial to make lasting change, ensure equality of access and develop these opportunities further.**

1. Summarising the case for music education

The benefits of music for young people are well documented and understood. Music improves mood and calms the nervous system, it helps us regulate emotion and cope with challenges. It builds confidence and self-esteem, encourages self-expression, develops an individual's social and emotional intelligence and helps them connect with others. It also hones skills of self-reflection and learning, and makes us more resilient.(1) Furthermore, many neurodivergent young people have a special affinity for music, with around 5-10% autistic children having exceptional musical potential (absolute pitch).(2)

1.1 Skills development through music Many of the music activities developed by practitioners in the field also employ technology to facilitate young people's musical interactions. UCAN Production delivers music projects for vision-impaired young people. Its work has shown how technology-based tools can therefore help individuals to develop an understanding and a facility with technology, which can in turn hone skills for life and employment (see case studies below). Music can help young people develop other physical skills, such as fine motor skills, or speech and language development, as well as musical skills.

Case Study: Skills development through music, UCAN Productions

LH, a young man with vision impairment was introduced to accessible forms of music technology – Native Instruments Maschine (a tactile buttons-and-pads based music making platform). He says that it has changed the way he hears music and he has now begun to understand how music is structured and layered. He is fascinated by the technological applications. With UCAN's support, this led him to engage with other forms of sound recording technology – 'Reaper' software with added screen-reader functionality. He is now learning to record and edit sound and voice on his own computer with UCAN's support. As a result of this, and engaging with radio/podcast style recording exercises, it has been observed that his confidence, vocal projection and even posture have spontaneously improved. He has developed a proactive desire to learn more about these recording and production skills and how he can use them himself, despite his vision impairment. He is learning all these skills as part of an Arts Award – an accredited qualification created by Trinity College London.

1.2 Developing a diverse cultural product for Wales Wales is the land of song, and is well known for a strong output of music from a variety of genres. Young disabled people are currently left out of this narrative, in part due to extremely varied access to music in education settings. We have an opportunity to feed audiences hungry for cultural products that embrace diversity. In other parts of the UK, music groups of diverse musicians are drawing large audiences and making significant contributions to the cultural economy. Success stories of disabled-lead ensembles in the wider UK include the [Paraorchestra](#), the [National Open Youth Orchestra](#), [Sonic Bothy](#), [BSO Resound](#), plus popular music outfits like

[John Kelly](#), [Dean Rodney Junior and the Cowboys](#), and many, many more – these are successful touring groups with established audiences who are keen to see this work. However, there is a lack of pathways in Wales for disabled musicians to help harness this potential and reach these audiences. By developing a diverse musical workforce in Wales and providing the support they need to flourish, we will help create new creative currency for our nation.

1.3 Health & wellbeing benefits of music Evidence from the work of music organisations with disabled and neurodivergent young people have shown significant health and wellbeing benefits for the participants, and by extension, their families and carers. Harnessing the therapeutic benefits of music can help to relieve the pressure on the NHS, the care system and other health and wellbeing services. Furthermore research by Youth Music and Ipsos Mori in 2020 found that music was the most popular hobby amongst young people(3). Disabled and neurodivergent young people that cannot access music may be missing out on a potentially lifelong hobby, and the benefits to health, wellbeing and resilience that this can engender.

Case Study: Live Music Now Inspire Programme

Live Music Now's Inspire Programme was launched in 2016 with the aim of enriching music provision for children and young people with additional learning needs attending specialist schools. The programme benefits partner schools by providing additional live music experiences for pupils, offering opportunities for support staff and classroom teachers to develop confidence in supporting musical activities, and enabling specialist music staff to draw on the additional resource of professional musicians in the classroom. It also embeds training and mentoring for Live Music Now musicians to become flexible, responsive and inclusive music leaders. The programme uses the Sounds of Intent framework to support pupils' musical progression, including those in the earliest stages of musical development.

Case Study: Canfod Y Gan project, Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias

"The 1:1 session that our son has been having with the tutor has made a huge difference to him. To begin with, he really looks forward to the session. He loves music and the opportunity to sing and play the keyboard with a musician is great and he enjoys it so much. The tutor will experiment with different methods, such as asking him to draw to music, this relaxes him. Whilst he is listening to the tutor playing the cello, he will draw, and we can hear his breathing slowing down. Following the session, he is much less anxious which is brilliant, it is so good to see him relaxed and happy. As a family, we really appreciate these sessions". Parent, Canfod Y Gan project

2. What are the barriers for schools and childcare providers in providing inclusive and accessible music education?

2.1 There is unequal access to music education in some educational settings

The benefits for all young people in taking part in regular music activities are significant and various. Music not only impacts on young people's musical skills progression, but crucially on their social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Serotonin and Oxytocin are released through music and help regulate emotional responses and behaviours, supporting children's mental health and learning. Music also supports wider ways of communicating and provides a community and place to belong.(4)

However, despite these well-understood benefits, research by Live Music Now, Anthem, Disability Arts Cymru and the National Plan for Music has found that opportunities for young disabled people and children to participate decrease as school age increases, 40% of Specialist Schools have no music curriculum to follow; and teaching staff working in ALN settings report a lack of confidence and training opportunities.(5) Furthermore, Live Music Now has found that young people attending enhanced provision, such as specialist units attached to mainstream schools, often do not have access to the music teaching that goes on in the mainstream. Support is often very localised across Wales and with less support in rural areas than in urban ones. All young people in education should have equal access to music, but currently this is not happening.

2.2 We need educational pathways in music for disabled and neurodivergent children and young people

At a three-day online conference in 2021 supporting music education in Wales' special educational school provision, organised by Anthem, Disability Arts Cymru and Live Music Now, music leaders voiced their need for an inclusive, creative and flexible approach, adaptable to individual needs, which steps away from the confines of a music curriculum and the predefined roles of performer/audience, giving agency and control for music making to individuals to express themselves their way. Lack of time, lack of support and a lack of understanding of the pressures faced by teachers, are all key barriers to making this happen.(6)

Furthermore, disabled musicians are often judged on mainstream/able-designed criteria by the curriculum and organisations, for example wanting individuals with "clear talent or potential". This highlights the need for robust educational pathways for disabled young people.

Some work is starting to happen in Wales to develop such pathways. One example is a collaboration between The National Open Youth Orchestra (NOYO), the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, to establish a Cardiff NOYO Centre and reduce the musical exclusion of young disabled musicians, develop their skills and increase sector support for them. Another example is the work undertaken in

Gwynedd and Denbighshire by Canolfan Gerdd Wiliam Mathias.(See case studies below). However more work such as this needs to happen to create a joined-up progression pathways for disabled musicians from early years through to young adulthood and beyond.

Recommendation:

- For every child to have equal access to music education, teachers and providers must be given time, support and resources to explore and develop appropriate educational pathways.

2.3 We need suitable training for teachers and facilitators

A study in 2023 commissioned by the National Music Plan for Wales from Dr Beth Pickard at the University of South Wales (7) highlighted the significant lack of training for practitioners working in the education of children and young people with disabilities, despite the rich practice in this field. It identified an urgent need to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence of all teachers and practitioners in music education for children and young people with disabilities. It recommended that the National Music Plan could have a key role in leading the development of suitable training, and being an advocate in schools for the importance of music for education and wellbeing. Training and resources are needed for music educators (tutors / specialist classroom teachers etc) as well as separate training for non-music-specialist classroom staff who are likely to be supporting and probably even expected to deliver music education. Training teachers in delivering person-led music education (as opposed to music therapy) will lead to increased employability for young disabled musicians, as well as improved resilience and skills development. There is also a lack of disabled musicians working in the field of music education, and training pathways will also need to focus on building a workforce of disabled practitioners and disabled-led pedagogy.

Recommendations:

- Develop the knowledge, skills and confidence of all teachers and practitioners in music education for children and young people with disabilities through training which is developed and delivered with the support of disabled musicians, disabled-led organisations and organisations modeling inclusive music practice and delivering high quality inclusive music training. .
- Any training provision should take a strength-based approach and seek to nurture a culture shift to valuing young disabled people's experiences of music through understanding the social and interactional models of disability

Case study: Developing Pathways for Disabled Young Musicians, Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias

Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias based in Caernarfon provides music training, performance & creative opportunities of the highest quality in North Wales. They strive to reduce barriers to engagement, expand horizons and foster achievement in music. For 20 years CGWM has worked in partnership with Gwynedd Council's Learning disabilities team to develop music opportunities and pathways for people aged 18+ who have learning disabilities and/or autism. In 2018 they secured funding to develop their Canfod y Gân provision (www.canfodygan.cymru). This work has recently been expanded to include a Junior Canfod y Gân project, funded by Anthem. This project aims to develop and expand musical provision for disabled children and young people in Gwynedd and Denbighshire by running music sessions and workshops outside of school hours, working in partnership with various agencies in North Wales. The Canfod y Gân project has enabled CGWM to expand its team of tutors who are confident in working with disabled and neurodiverse children and young people.

"The project has meant that our daughter has something in common with her siblings and she is so proud to tell us about Canfod y Gân, the performances have given everyone something to aim towards and to celebrate their achievement." (parent of Canfod y Gân participant)

Case study: Career development for young aspiring professional musicians: BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and National Open Youth Orchestra

The National Open Youth Orchestra (NOYO) aims to create opportunities for young disabled and non-disabled musicians. It is working with BBC NOW and RWCMD to establish a Cardiff NOYO Centre. Young disabled people are often unable to access musical opportunities available to their non-disabled peers and the broader orchestral 'ecology' is often unsupportive and/or inaccessible to young disabled people. The project will develop their skills in playing with other young people as part of a diverse and dynamic orchestra and helping them to progress personally. The participants will receive one-to-one lessons, ensemble rehearsals and NOYO mentorship and industry lines into professional placements with partner institutions and schools.

2.4 Existing resources for teaching music with disabled and neurodivergent children and young people are often not bilingual

There are efficacious tools available to teachers and facilitators of music education for disabled and neurodivergent young people, but which are currently only available in English.. One example of this is the Sounds of Intent framework

<https://www.soundsofintent.app/>

which is a model of musical development that sets out how we all engage with music. It is a framework designed to help teachers, practitioners and carers understand how children, young people and adults engage with music in different way. It helps with understanding what musical engagement can look like and how to support it according to people's varying musical abilities, interests, preferences and needs. Developed through a decade of early years research, it has led to the development of meaningful curriculum tools such as *Count Me In*, a series of music and sound files for making music inclusively with children and young people with learning disabilities.(8)

2.5 We need more partnerships and networking between mainstream education and out-of-school expert providers

Anthem Music Fund Wales runs the Atsain fund, which gives grants to enable projects to break down barriers to music for young people, with disabled children and young people being one of its priorities. Funded projects focus on developing pathways, exploring new instruments and teaching techniques as well overcoming practical access barriers such as prohibitive travel costs, personal assistance costs, and additional support for parents and carers, who experience considerable financial and emotional strains in daily life, making it hard for them to access music provision out of mainstream education. The fund has a specific focus on partnership-working, with music, youth, disability-led and wellbeing organisations working closely with local authorities, schools and other key agencies. Anthem also runs the Atsain network of over 50 members, which enables these organisations to meet and share best practice, challenges, opportunities and solutions.

Our project evaluations show that disabled and neurodivergent children and young people have rewarding and transformative musical experiences as a result of partnership projects between mainstream education and out-of-school participatory music organisations. These experiences can have a significant impact on young people's wellbeing, skills development and even potential career paths.

Recommendations:

- We welcome the focus on partnership in the new Music Education Plan but continued investment in this area will be key for making lasting change
- The Atsain network should continue to grow and flourish, enabling best practice-sharing and collaborations to thrive, between all organisations breaking down barriers to music for young people.
- We welcome the Arts Council Wales' Creative Learning through the Arts programme; its Creative Collaborations funding strand encourages partnerships between schools and arts organisations, and we would like to see its mission include bringing more disabled artists into schools for quality of opportunity and the importance of role models.

Who we are

Anthem Music Fund Wales' vision is a Wales in which music can empower every young life. We were established in 2018 following a Welsh Government report exploring ways to support young people's music making and learning in Wales. We fund youth music organisations working to break down barriers through music, we undertake advocacy and research, and we provide an online portal of resources and support for young people interested in music. Our Youth Forum brings together young creatives aged 17-24, who help us find ways to generate opportunities, nurture talent, and enable access to music for all young people in Wales.

Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias : Every person's musical journey is different and CGWM's aim is to help each person identify, achieve and surpass their personal goals be it gaining a place at music conservatoire or having the opportunity to hear live music. This is achieved by a variety of activities including one-to-one music tuition at our Centres in Caernarfon and Denbighshire, ensembles, pre-school music classes, concerts, masterclasses, community music sessions and our Wales International Harp and Piano Festivals. CGWM's activities are delivered by a team of 45 freelance music tutors over 85% of whom are able to deliver activities bilingually.

Disability Arts Cymru (DAC) is the lead organisation for disability arts in Wales. DAC operates as a membership organisation with almost 400 artists across Wales. Its key aim is to support disabled and Deaf artists and creatives thrive in the creative industries. DAC also encourages arts organisations to join us to help work towards a more reflective and inclusive arts sector.

At DAC art is used to educate and remove the barriers that restrict disabled people, their life choices, and right to live independently and equally within society. All of our work and activities aim to be accessible and barrier-free. We embrace diversity and are proud to promote and celebrate the language and culture of Cymru in this context.

Live Music Now is a charity working and campaigning to create inclusive, measurable social impact through the power of music. Our professional musicians work with older people (many living with dementia), children and young people facing disabling barriers, families living through challenges; and carers and key workers. By connecting people through music and evaluating its impact, we advance musical practice and change how we understand and support underrepresented and vulnerable people in our society. Our work is evidenced as enhancing health and wellbeing and building skills, confidence and engagement. www.livemusicnow.org.uk

The Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama is the National Conservatoire of Wales. It is a specialist institution operating within a national and international peer group of conservatoires, and it is the only provider of specialist conservatoire training in Wales. Based in Cardiff, young artists from Wales train at RWCMD alongside their UK counterparts

and an international peer group drawn from over 30 countries. Facilities at RWCMD rival the best in the world.

Ty Cerdd's mission is to promote and celebrate the music and musicians of Wales. We provide direct support for composers, and collaborate with Wales's professional music organisations, taking full advantage of our in-house recording studio, record label, publishing imprint, hire library and archive. We work with a growing network of musicians and performing groups across Wales, offering them artistic expertise and promotional support, and helping them to connect with composers and audiences. We fund a range of work in communities across Wales through Lottery funds that we distribute for Arts Council of Wales.

UCAN Productions supports children and young people with vision impairment by offering access to opportunities which increase confidence, develop skills and abilities, and help them fulfill their potential. Its music participation work funded by Anthem is developing new best practice guidelines and techniques to share with partners and networks, exploring new ground in music technology accessibility, and providing accredited Arts Awards to participants.

Citations

- (1) Holford, Anita. *Eight ways that music can support young people's wellbeing and learning*, 2021. Online: www.westsussexmusic.co.uk
- (2) Ockelford, Adam, *Music, Language and Autism* (2013). Jessica Kingsley Publications
- (3) Youth Music & Ipsos MORI, *The Sound of the Next Generation*, 2020
<https://youthmusic.org.uk/sound-of-the-next-generation>
- (4) Grant, Dr Carrie. *We Are All Musical*. 2021 Conference on Music for Children & Young Disabled People with Additional Learning Needs.
- (5) Welch, Graham, Prof, Institute of Education, UCL, Consultation on the provision of music in Special Schools in Wales, Summer 2021.
- (6) Summary findings, *We Are All Musical*. 2021 Conference on Music for Children & Young Disabled People with Additional Learning Needs.
- (7) Pickard, Dr Beth. *A Scoping Study of Training Opportunities in Wales for Practitioners working with Young People with Additional Learning Needs or Disabilities*. 2023
- (8) *Count Me In*, Sounds of Intent <https://soundsofintent.app/count-me-in/>

Further references

Arts & Disability: *Young Disabled/Deaf People Outcomes Report* (Disability Arts Cymru, November 2020)

[Reshape Music](#): *A report exploring the lived experience of Disabled musicians in education and beyond* (Youth Music, October 2020)

[The Power of Music](#): *a research synthesis of the impact of actively making music on the intellectual, social and personal development of children and young people* (Susan Hallam, 2015)