

Hertfordshire Music Service Progression Strategy

If you're walking down the right path and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress. *Barack Obama*

Contents

Introduction	1
Context.....	2
Strategic Summary	8
Strategic Delivery	9
Action Plan	11
Interdependencies	11
Timescale	11

Introduction

Hertfordshire Music Service aims to improve lives by creating musical learning opportunities of all kinds, nurturing and growing happiness and confidence. It is our vision that all Hertfordshire's children and young people, regardless of background or circumstances, have the opportunity to discover or develop their unique musical voice and express themselves through the language of music.

Our role as the Hub Lead Organisation for the Hertfordshire Music Education Hub means that we are responsible for supporting, delivering, and enabling access to music education activity for children and young people within our local area. With the introduction of an updated National Plan for Music Education (NPME) in 2022, we are responsible for delivering on five strategic functions, one of which is Progression.

Context

1. Progress and Progression.

The words progression and progress are often used interchangeably. Whilst the subtle difference between the use of the words allows for this in most cases, it is worth drawing a distinction between the two terms at the outset of this strategy. An effective comparison of the two words and their best uses to be as follows:

Progress is a state in which something is moving from one state to another, whereas progression tends to refer to whether such progress is actually possible.

To give these definitions some context, progress could be represented by the driver of a car, and progression as the various routes and roads that the car could take to reach its desired destination. In this scenario, there are many factors that can have an impact on the perceived level of effectiveness and speed the driver has in reaching their chosen destination (progress), and the breadth of opportunities available which enable the driver to reach their chosen destination (progression). In terms of music-making, the following factors have influence over both progress and progression:

Progress:

- ▶ **Mindset** – the difference between personality types can play a factor in the desire to make progress, and the speed at which progress is made. For example, a more assertive and driven personality may make progress at a quicker rate.
- ▶ **Chosen destination** – where a young person wants to take their musical learning can have an impact on the relative rate of progress. The goal of becoming a grammy award winning songwriter will differ greatly to that of becoming an effective local music teacher in terms of milestones and distance between them.
- ▶ **Preparation** – how effective is the young musician in preparing for the next steps on their chosen journey, are they aware of the expected challenges, and suitably prepared for the unexpected ones? Any lack of preparation runs the risk of slowing or halting progress at an otherwise achievable hurdle.

Progression:

- ▶ **Diversity of pathways available** – some musical destinations have a stronger range of pathways available than others. Typically, the more popular a chosen pathway, the better the breadth of choice. A young person looking to be a professional harpsichord specialist is likely to have a smaller range of pathways available to reach that goal than a young person looking to be a professional Jazz drummer.
- ▶ **Quality of opportunities** – it takes more than an opportunity simply existing for it to have significant impact. The quality of experience delivered through that opportunity will have a notable impact on the outcomes it facilitates, including inspiration to take next steps.
- ▶ **Availability of resources** – any shortage of resource will have a direct impact on the progress of the journey, without it, the journey will halt at some stage.

When progress, and progression are looked at through this viewpoint, the case can be made that progress is dictated by a variety of internal and personal factors, whereas progression is facilitated by a range of external influences. It would be fair to say then, that progress is directly influenced by, and relies on the opportunity of progression, but that progression isn't reliant on or influenced by progress in the same way. In other words, without the opportunity for progression, progress is likely to be limited or non-existent, as it is the range of progression opportunities which influence the internal factors that drive progress.

It must be said that there is an area which my example fails to address – those that do not have the knowledge, or resource to get behind the wheel of a car in the first place. For these people, getting started, and making progress on their chosen journey poses an additional layer of potential challenges.

2. Progression in music-making

If the concept of progression is centred around the availability of opportunity, what does this mean for enabling progress through music-making? In short, the greater the level of musical opportunity, the more factors exist to positively impact the effectiveness of musical progress.

It is no co-incidence that we have traditionally seen places in the likes of the National Youth Orchestra and Junior Conservatoires largely populated by students at both independent schools and specialist music schools. This is a pattern which continues into higher education and into the professional world. These schools focus their resources on broadening opportunity for their children and young people, and where music making is concerned, this typically results in environments which deliver more contact time for music-making, through a broader range of diverse opportunities than those not making music in these settings.

When looking at a local example, the Purcell School, we can see from the description of the time spent on music curriculum activities that the opportunity to progress through music-making represents a vast increase in that received by those not attending music specialist environments:

“Depending on a student's age and instrumental commitments, approximately a third of curricular time at The Purcell School is spent on musical activities.”

This statement from the school does not include the additional personal practise, or any extra-curricular time spent on music by its students. The impact of these results is clear to see in inspection reports of the school:

In the two categories of Educational Quality, Inspectors found ‘the quality of pupils’ academic and other achievements is excellent’ (the highest ISI grading), and ‘the quality of pupils’ personal development is excellent’.

Inspectors commented especially that:

‘Pupils attitudes to learning are exemplary’ and that ‘The standards of musicianship achieved by the pupils are outstanding’. Additionally, ‘Pupils achieve high standards in their other academic work also’

Without a paradigm shift in education across the country, it would be unreasonable to expect similar outcomes to be replicated out of specialist music environments. However, I do believe that through well-formed approaches to facilitating progression, work can be done to bridge the gap, and facilitate a greater level of equity, and equality in the breadth of musical opportunities available to all children and young people.

3. Progression aims of the hub

Music hubs are expected to deliver against 3 aims as part of the 2022 National Plan for Music Education. Progression, and therefore opportunity, is inherently linked to each of the 3 aims:

1. **Support schools and other education settings to deliver high-quality music education**

In supporting the delivery of high-quality music education it is a hubs responsibility to ensure that the quality of opportunities available across a range of settings is consistent and facilitates the best possible musical environment for children and young people to make progress effectively. Hubs are best placed to act as a facilitator of information and resource around best practice, of relevant CPD, and can assist with, or directly deliver opportunities where exists a gap in knowledge or expertise so that progression opportunities locally remain strong.

2. **Support young people to further develop their musical interests and talent, including into employment**

In supporting young people in their development of musical interest hubs are expected to ensure that children and young people can clearly see that their participation in any given musical opportunity has a place in supporting their chosen outcomes, especially where that does, or might include further study and future career opportunities. It can take time for children and young people to settle on their chosen path, but it is important for all musical opportunities to be set up in a way which supports those yet to decide on their future pathway in feeling as if the progress they are making can still contribute to that future regardless of what it may hold.

3. **Support all children and young people to engage with a range of musical opportunities in and out of school**

In supporting all children and young people to engage with a range of opportunities both in and out of school it is the responsibility of the hub to work with those involved in providing musical opportunities for children and young people to ensure the accessibility and availability of all opportunities is as equitable as possible. A progression opportunity can only assist in the progress of a child or young person if the opportunity they are looking to participate in can be engaged with. It’s about ensuring that all that can be done has been done to facilitate that choice to participate. Where a musical opportunity relevant to the chosen musical journey of a young person which is available locally, but the young person

chooses to participate in a sporting activity instead, it can be said that the hub has to a degree been effective in ensuring the opportunity is available – though it may wish to explore other options to enabling that participation. Where a young person chooses to participate in a sporting activity because the musical opportunity they want to participate in exists elsewhere, but not in their area and has no facility for remote access, it is fair to say that the hub has more work to do in making relevant musical opportunities more accessible.

It is then over to us as the lead organisation of Hertfordshire's music hub to ensure that we work to effectively co-ordinate and facilitate the musical opportunities available, ensuring that they are well signposted, suitably diverse, of high quality, and accessible enough to truly be able to give the children and young people of Hertfordshire the best chance of making meaningful progress on their musical journeys. This meaningful progress should allow those children and young people to be well equipped to take steps into further study or a career in music, or at the very least be able to use the wealth of skills their broad music education has afforded them in support of their future pursuits outside of the music industry.

4. Current approach to Progression in Hertfordshire

There exists in Hertfordshire a vast number of valuable and impactful music-making opportunities for children and young people which facilitate strong progress, with these networks of opportunity having historically produced a strong track record of children and young people progressing through to further study and careers in music.

The implementation of the Suzuki approach at the St Albans Music School is an example of progression pathways working well in Hertfordshire. Students take part in weekly violin lessons using the Suzuki method, with students of all ages coming together regularly to participate in group learning/performing across a wide range of ages and abilities. The current age range is 4-16, and the children and young people involved are encouraged to both watch and perform with students in different ability groups. End of term performances will always include differentiated pieces for all participants to perform together. This approach allows the youngest and most inexperienced members of the community to regularly learn from the older students and allows those older students to provide mentorship and effectively model best practice to those earlier on in their musical journeys.

Students from this Suzuki group will regularly take next steps into the regional youth orchestra, and then into the county level orchestras – this pathway from regional orchestra to the county orchestra system represents another area of progression currently working well across the county, with members of the County Youth Orchestra regularly taking next steps into further study and professional careers in music. One such former graduate of the Hertfordshire County Youth Orchestra is now one of the Suzuki teachers in St Albans, having participated in the programme themselves. Their journey from Suzuki participant, to member and leader of HCYO, further study in music, and a career which encompasses both teaching for HMS and performing is something we look to emulate through the outcomes of this strategy.

At present HMS uses a range of approaches to gain knowledge and understanding of the impacts of the various progression pathways available across the county:



- ▷ **Exams** – various music exam boards operate across Hertfordshire. HMS hosts a number of exam sessions at its music centres across the county and is in the process of strengthening partnerships with exam boards to make our approach to supporting children and young people through exams even stronger.
- ▷ **Progress reports** – progress reports for students receiving instrumental tuition are completed yearly.
- ▷ **Feedback** – this is received from various sources, including parents, schools, and students themselves. Not only can this feedback come from various sources, but it is often delivered to various sources across the organisation making it difficult to track.
- ▷ **Employment** – A number of former pupils have returned to work with HMS following the completion of their studies. Colleagues across HMS have stories of meeting people across the music industry who began their musical journey in Hertfordshire, often with HMS. At present we have no formal way of collating and tracking this information.

The data available via the government website on school performance gives us another insight into how musical progress may be having an impact in Hertfordshire. When looking at the top 10 highest ranking schools in Hertfordshire for Progress 8 scores we are aware of 815 young people participating in musical opportunities. When looking at the same statistic for the 10 lowest ranking schools in Progress 8 scores, we are aware of only 159 young people participating in musical opportunities - a significant decrease.

A similar trend is seen in relation to the 10 highest and 10 lowest performing secondary schools in Hertfordshire with respect to “Staying in Education or entering employment (2021)”, with figures of 796 and 165 respectively.

Whilst there is work to do in analysing this data and its implications further, it would suggest that there is a direct link between schools with a strong music-making presence, and both the academic performance, and the likelihood of young people continuing into further education and employment upon leaving secondary school.

5. Gaps in Musical Opportunity in Hertfordshire

Despite the positive work being seen currently, there do exist a range of gaps in musical opportunity within Hertfordshire which prevent there being a comprehensive network of progression opportunities available. The gaps we currently see can generally be attributed to these challenges:

- ▷ **Geography** - the opportunities currently available range in levels of quality and accessibility depending on where a young person lives. In some areas there are a wealth of opportunities both in and out of school, whereas other areas have a narrower range of opportunities available. As an example, a young person living within a mile of the Watford School of Music currently has access to a greater number of musical opportunities than a student 5 miles away from the Broxbourne Music Centre. The Hub has work to do in better identifying the geographical areas where the level of opportunity available is likely to have a significant adverse impact on potential progress, and work together to address those opportunity gaps.
- ▷ **Diversity** – Some areas have strong levels of opportunity in music-making rooted in the classical style, which has the potential to leave those children and young people looking to



progress in other areas of music with limited options to progress towards their chosen destination. The risk is that some of these children and young people will be left feeling as if the direction they want to take their music-making in cannot be achieved and will discourage them from continuing this path.

- ▶ **Expertise** – Music represents such a broad subject that it can often pose challenges to balance workforces with the breadth of expertise reflective of the industry. Those who have the relevant background, training, or upskilling in delivering certain types of skills, specialisms, or opportunities can be rare to find, or in some cases encourage into working with young people. Whilst upskilling can be an option, it can have a knock-on impact to the work, or potential work relating to that teachers current specialism(s).

With the provision of musical opportunities linked so closely to specific staff expertise which has been developed across years of training, any scenario where a colleague leaves an organisation can have an adverse impact on the quality or availability of certain types of opportunity, and it can take significant amounts of time to replace the opportunity offered as a result of that expertise. The sharing of skills through CPD is an example of a mechanism currently in place to mitigate this potential impact, but this risk cannot be mitigated in all cases.

Partnerships are another effective and agile way currently used to bridge gaps in expertise but rely on being able to identify and successfully reach an agreement with a potential partners of high enough quality in their delivery, who are well placed in their offer to fill the identified opportunity gap.

- ▶ **Resource** – There remains to be a finite level of resources for all organisations and schools across the county to deliver musical opportunities, resulting in regular choices made about not only what opportunities can be offered, but what are unable to be facilitated. This poses a challenge to all involved with creating and developing opportunities to be able to prioritise what is felt will be the most impactful use of resource, even if that is known to leave gaps in other areas of opportunity. This challenge can often result in a favouring of delivery of opportunity which is best suited to the skills of those already available within the workforce.
- ▶ **Signposting** – in some areas a lack of consistent signposting to the breadth of musical opportunities available locally, county-wide, and nationally means that some children and young people are left unaware of some of the activities they can be involved with. This includes signposting to the range of possible careers in the music industry outside of performance. We see this currently in a lack of consistency of signposting towards county level groups, with signposting being very strong from certain teachers, schools, or areas, but less strong from others.

Linked to this is a lack of consistency in the signposting of how children and young people are made aware of the more subtle links between participation in certain opportunities or certain subjects outside of music which can support pathways to careers in music (e.g. woodworking skills supporting a route to becoming a violin maker/repairer).

- ▶ **Approaches** – Some current approaches to delivering musical opportunities can on their own create unintended ceilings to progress. This is mostly seen in the delivery of short projects, which can have strong levels of initial impact, and generate interest in music-making, but can in some cases leave participants without a viable route to continue with a musical opportunity of a similar type past that project end date. Often this can be a result of financial challenges from schools/parents following an initial project fully funded through HMS.
- ▶ **Overview** – HMS, local schools, and hub partners do not have easy or consistent access to information on the full range of musical opportunities across the county. It is challenging for all involved in offering relevant musical opportunities to work together in linking the progression pathways without this overview – our first step in addressing this is in progress with the HMS regional engagement plans.
- ▶ **Data Sharing** – Information relevant to pupil progress, which can support the signposting of relevant opportunities to children and young people, is not consistently shared between relevant stakeholders. For example, where a young person takes a graded music exam the information on the result of the exam will be made available to a different set of people depending on who the application was made with/where the exam was taken. In the best cases, the result is known by not only the young person, their family and that person's teacher (if applicable), but by their school, and by HMS so that the result can be celebrated, and further opportunities offered based on the achievement.

The common link across these factors is a lack of consistency, both in how musical opportunities are made available to the children and young people of Hertfordshire, and the way the impact of these opportunities is tracked. We must therefore work to achieve greater levels of consistency across the county, and in doing so create a more equitable landscape for the facilitation of musical progress.

Strategic Summary

HMS believe that this context of musical opportunity leaves us with a clear route forward, through our progression strategy we must use our resources as the hub lead organisation to:

Demonstrate and harness the power that regular participation in a diverse range of musical opportunities has in facilitating progress.

In achieving this we will empower more people with the knowledge of how continued participation in a variety of musical opportunities can support their long-term goals and assist sustained progress. This in turn will strengthen an overall culture of participation in, and signposting of musical opportunities, and help to provide those creating and developing those musical opportunities in Hertfordshire the impetus and resource to strengthen and broaden the opportunities available.

Strategic Delivery

The following steps are the stepping stones to achieving this:

1. Facilitate Participation in Opportunities

In order for children and young people to be able to participate regularly in opportunities which facilitate their musical progress, it is essential that the tools and resources are in place which support a strong culture of opportunity signposting. By developing a tool which contains key information on all musical opportunities available in Hertfordshire and beyond, and is openly available and accessible to all, we can empower users with the information needed to participate in more opportunities which contribute to musical progress.

In developing this tool, it will be essential to include all opportunities offered by not only HMS, but by hub partners, schools, national organisations, and all other providers. This tool should allow the end user to easily be able to identify not only the essential information about each opportunity available in a well formatted and consistent way, but a mechanism such as a certification mark to provide users with a level of confidence about opportunities which have been quality assured by the hub in key areas such as teaching standards and safeguarding practices. Information on how each opportunity listed relates to future study, or a future career opportunity will be essential for empowering children and young people with the information to make positive decisions relating to their future.

2. Define progress and how to effectively track it

In order to demonstrate the impact participation in this variety of opportunities has on progress we must first establish an agreed approach to measuring and tracking progress. This approach must be easily understandable, and actionable by a range of stakeholders to ensure it has the potential to generate a strong level of buy-in across a number of settings and increase the validity and quality of the findings. Working closely with schools, partners, and other stakeholders throughout the design and development of this approach will help us to best understand the various factors we must consider to achieve an effective balance of simplicity and quality of tracking. It is essential that any approach implemented has the ability to recognise both qualitative and quantitative forms of data and information that take into account not only musical progress, but progress in other areas such as social emotional development.

3. Broaden the range of diverse opportunities

We will establish an approach to addressing gaps in opportunity which lessens the duplication of local opportunities by different providers which serve the same purpose. In areas where for example there is a high-quality school jazz band which rehearses after school, there is an opportunity to explore whether the school is willing and able to engage in supporting students from other local schools to attend their group. In HMS as the lead



partner of the hub supporting this to happen, we strengthen the level of opportunity available to children and young people in that local area without the need to use our resource to offer a second high-quality jazz band in that area, allowing us to use resources in a way which provides an opportunity which doesn't already exist locally. A similar approach can be used in ensuring we do not duplicate opportunities which exist through our partners.

It is important in this approach to ensure that new opportunities offered are broadening the range of diversity in a way which is led by demand and interest. Therefore, it is important that we enable children and young people, and the educators that work with them to have a variety of well signposted mechanisms to provide feedback on the types of opportunities relevant to them.

4. Recognise progress and best practice

Establishing ways to regularly recognise and reward a range of positive outcomes related to the participation in, and offering of musical opportunities will allow us to strengthen a culture of progress through opportunity. Recognition can be given for:

- ▶ Children and young people making good progress.
- ▶ Children and young people who demonstrate regular participation through strong attendance.
- ▶ Children and young people who dedicate their time and efforts to participation in a range of opportunities.
- ▶ Providers being innovative in the way they provide diversity or quality within the musical opportunities offered.

There should exist different approaches towards recognition given depending on the impact of the achievement. Smaller scale achievements can be rewarded and recognised by the likes of certificates, and the organisation of local events. The larger and more impactful achievements can be recognised through county-wide award ceremonies and other initiatives. It will be important to continually strive for innovation in the way in which we recognise and reward these positive outcomes, and of what we recognise and reward, so that our approaches remain relevant and provide the greatest levels of impact.

5. Share results

To be effective in demonstrating how participation in a range of opportunities impacts progress we need to establish mechanisms for sharing both qualitative and quantitative data with customers, hub partners, schools, and Arts Council England, and other relevant parties. The way in which this data will be presented and shared should be different for each of the target audiences to ensure the messaging is clear and can have the greatest level of impact in developing a culture of participation in a range of musical opportunities.

Action Plan

The development of an action plan to accompany this strategy will begin in January 2024 and should be in place for September 2024. The action plan will detail the specific steps taken to achieve the outcomes of this strategy and will outline relevant timescales and reporting periods. The action plan will also outline Key Performance Indicators that should be used to assess the impact of the strategy. It is important that these KPI's reflect the work undertaken to "establish an agreed approach to measuring and tracking progress" as part of delivery point 2 of this strategy.

Interdependencies

The intended outcomes of this strategy are closely linked with the outcomes of other strategic areas for Hertfordshire Music Service, including but not limited to the work done through the HMS ED&I and the HMS Vocal strategies, and the Local Plan for Music Education.

An example of where multiple strategic aims align is in the diversifying of our workforce through the ED&I strategy, and the way in which this closely aligns with the aims to broaden the range of diverse opportunities available for the children and young people of Hertfordshire. By actively working to broaden the cultural diversity present within the HMS workforce, it will put us in a stronger position to draw upon the wider range of cultural experiences within HMS and offer an even more diverse range of music-making opportunities.

Timescale

Without a fundamental shift in either the core vision and values of Hertfordshire Music Service, or the landscape of education across England, it is unlikely that a change in strategic direction with regards to progression will be needed for years to come.

Participation in opportunity to facilitate progress has been present in education of all types for as long as education, or indeed music, has existed; the more of something you do, the better you get, and the more opportunities become available because of your progress. As this strategy has this principle at its core, and fundamentally aims for HMS to better communicate and harness the power of this principle to even greater levels of effectiveness, this strategic direction won't lose its relevance to musical progression with a passing of time.

There are however relevant events which should trigger a review of this strategy, and points at which HMS should reflect upon the effectiveness of the outcomes of the strategic delivery points.

The events which should trigger a review of this strategy are:

1. A fundamental change in Vision, Values, and/or Purpose from Hertfordshire Music Service
2. Any release of an updated or new National Plan for Music Education

It will however be important for there to be regular reviews of the outcomes of this strategy. As such, an Interim Progression Review of the outcomes of the 5 delivery areas should be undertaken in April 2027.

The purpose of this review is to assess the effectiveness of the outcomes of this strategy and has the scope to recommend additions/changes to delivery based on the outcomes seen. A date of further review will be set at this time.

By the time the Interim Progression Review is undertaken, HMS should be able to demonstrate relevant and meaningful outcomes for each of the 5 delivery points outlined within this strategy against the steps taken in the Progression Action Plan.

