

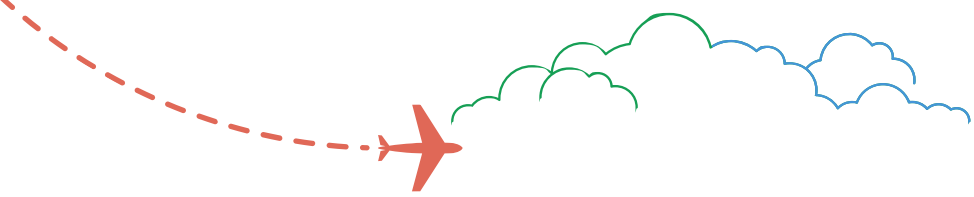


GSW MUSIC HUB

INCLUSION STRATEGY

OUR FLIGHT PATH TO BELONGING





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INTRODUCTION

Our Flight Path to Belonging

Welcome to the Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Wiltshire Music Hub's Inclusion Strategy – think of this as our suggested flight path to making sure musical opportunities are available for *all young people* in our area. We use "flight path" intentionally: unlike a rigid blueprint, it acknowledges that our journey will require continuous monitoring, course correction, and adaptation as we learn and grow. It is not linear, not a set pipeline, or even a roadmap, but with the right support, provisions and learning should set our young people on a trajectory towards a lifelong engagement with music, regardless of their background, circumstances, or individual needs.

We believe music has the power to connect us, inspire us, and make us feel like we belong. That's why we're passionate about creating a space where every young person, no matter their background or what makes them unique, has opportunities to get involved with music.

This isn't just a document that's going to sit on a shelf gathering dust. Nope! ***This is a living, breathing thing*** – something we'll use every day, talk about, and let grow as we learn and get better. We want this strategy to spark conversations, make us think, and help us all work together to:

- **Be open** to new ideas and different perspectives.
- **Celebrate** all the amazing ways we're different and how difference enriches everyone's experience.
- **Tackle** anything that creates unfairness, inequality or further barriers.
- **Bring us together** through the joy of music.



Drawing inspiration from Drake Music's vital questions for 'Supporting Inclusion,' our commitment to true inclusivity within the GSW Hub, and across our partnerships, is an ongoing journey, not a destination.

We'll know we're progressing when everyone involved actively considers:

- How are people excluded by the things we do?
- What do we want to change?
- What do we have the power to change?
- How can we proactively involve people with lived experience and personal expertise to bring about that change?

We understand that the more we learn, the more we realise the nuances of exclusion, acknowledging that achieving 100% inclusivity is a continuous aspiration rather than a fixed state. Our measure of success lies in this unwavering commitment to identifying and dismantling discriminatory practices, genuinely valuing the richness of our diversity, and striving for authentic inclusion in all aspects of our work, both internally and within the wider musical landscape.

We have outlined our process and backdrop, but to skip to the active elements, our cornerstones and commitments, please jump to page 9!



ABOUT GSW

GSW - Who, What, Where?

Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Wiltshire form a dynamic and diverse area in the South West of England, characterised by its blend of picturesque rural landscapes and vibrant urban centres. While not formally unified through shared infrastructure in sectors like health or education, the GSW Hub is thrilled to have the opportunity to work in collaborative partnership across this region; bringing together expertise and opportunity to better share and facilitate great opportunities to engage with music.

The Hub serves over 800 schools and approximately 250,000 children and young people, with a clear vision to ensure every child has access to high-quality, inclusive music education tailored to local needs, enabling them to reach their full musical potential. The consortium leadership, comprising Gloucestershire County Council (as the Hub Lead Organisation), Gloucestershire Music, Swindon Music Service, and The Music Works are charged with enacting this vision.

When realising inclusive work, context is key; and a grounding and understanding of the geographical area, the challenges and opportunities, in essence the day-to-day reality, is important backing to root our process in. The aforementioned juxtaposition of rurality with diverse urban areas means that 'access', in every sense, must be considered and bespoke. Whilst as a Hub we will continue to work with our partners and influencing groups to continuously monitor need, cold spots and emerging trends, the below gives some initial insight into the why a nuanced and agile approach is needed for strategy in this area.

Demographic Insight

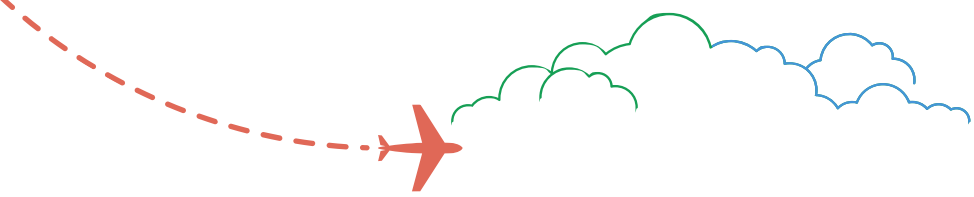
While swaths of this region are generally considered relatively affluent, it is important to acknowledge the presence of pockets of deprivation. These can be found in certain urban areas and, to some extent, within more isolated rural communities. Data from sources like the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) highlights that while the region may not be as uniformly deprived as some areas, disparities exist.

The census data for ethnicity, as well as community representation, also shows a varied picture. With an average of 91% identifying as white ethnicity in the 2021 census across the area, but with more interrogation, this figure reveals a more intricate demographic landscape. Swindon, for example, shows a higher proportion of residents identifying as Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh at 11.6% compared to the Wiltshire average of 5.1% and Gloucestershire's average of around 6.5%. Similarly, the percentage identifying as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African is also higher in Swindon at 2.6% compared to Wiltshire (1.6%) and Gloucestershire (around 1.2%, or 3.6% for Gloucester City). These figures demonstrate the need for targeted and nuanced approaches to community representation and inclusion strategies.



While the region celebrates its diversity, it's also important to acknowledge the occurrence of hate crimes and racist incidents. These incidents can affect minority communities and highlight the need for ongoing efforts to promote inclusion and combat prejudice. Data from Gloucestershire Constabulary indicates that a rising number of hate crimes have been recorded in the region, with racial or religiously aggravated offences being a significant proportion. Incidents against the LGBTQIA+ community, have also been increasing across the region. (Source: Gloucestershire Constabulary).

Important context when looking to deliver for young people in school settings is the well documented rising number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This indicates an increasing prevalence, or understanding, of special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities among the young population, placing a greater demand on support services and SEN educational provision to be genuinely fit for purpose in supporting all young people reach their potential.



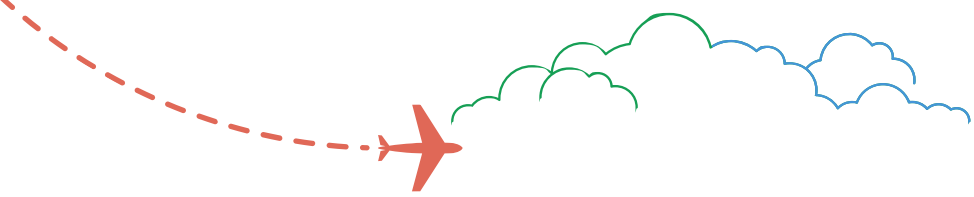
As a brief insight: Swindon saw an increase in open EHCPs from 2022 to 2573 in 2023 (Swindon Borough Council data), while in Gloucestershire, only 35% of EHCPs were provided within the statutory 20-week timeframe in 2023 (Gloucestershire County Council data). This growing need is further underscored by Wiltshire Council's ongoing SEND Transformation Programme, which includes expanding special school places and resource bases (Wiltshire Council information).

Disability rates across Gloucestershire (17.7%), Swindon (16.8%), and Wiltshire (18.2%) in the 2021 Census are broadly in line with or slightly higher than the UK average of 17.6%, indicating that roughly one in six people in the region identify as disabled. Despite this significant proportion, accessibility and adjustments are often perceived as exceptional rather than a standard expectation, highlighting a need for more widespread inclusive practices. Whilst regional specific data for younger age groups isn't available, nationally, looking at the 16-24 year old age bracket in England, 13.4% reported that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot or a little, showing that this is still a key consideration for ensuring all young people are included.

Nationally, in 2023, around one in five (20.3%) of children aged 8 to 16 and 23.3% of 17 to 19-year-olds had a probable mental health challenge (NHS England, "Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2023"). While specific local data for Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Wiltshire isn't readily available, this national trend strongly suggests that mental health challenges are a significant concern for young people in these areas, further supported by reports of lengthy waiting times for CAMHS, such as the median of 78 days reported for Gloucestershire CAMHS in 2024. With research from Gloucestershire based charity Barnwood Trust highlighting that 44% of young people impacted by disability or mental health challenges felt that they couldn't do what they wanted to do – this is evidently a key and growing need that demands proactive engagement from service providers, including the Music Hub.

Summary

This data provides a snapshot that highlights the need for a nuanced approach to understanding the diverse needs of the population across Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Wiltshire. It also underlines the absolute need for inclusive practice to be standard, not an add-on, in the planning and delivery of programmes.

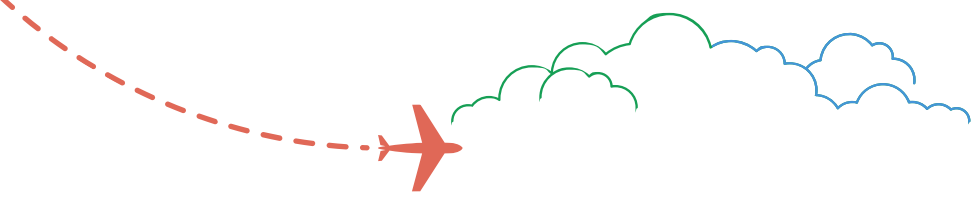


MAPPING OUR FLIGHT PATH

This Inclusion Strategy is intended as a dynamic and actively utilised document, guiding the Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Wiltshire Music Hub's commitment to equitable access and belonging. Its development has been informed by comprehensive consultation with our valued Hub partners and, crucially, the perspectives of young people within the region. We have undertaken a review of existing provisions and previous initiatives, alongside a youth voice audit and a topline needs analysis of the GSW area. Furthermore, we have examined inclusion policies from other Music Hubs nationally, identifying key themes and diverse approaches.

In formulating this strategy, we've drawn from key frameworks to ensure music is for everyone. The HEARD model guides us to be Holistic (valuing personal, social, and musical outcomes), Equitable (targeting support where it's needed most), Authentic (developed with those we serve), Representative (reflecting our diverse society in participants and colleagues), and Diverse (valuing all musical forms). Youth Music's IDEA pillars ensure we consider Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access across our vision, culture, policies, engagement, and musical offer. Furthermore, the social model of disability informs our approach by recognizing that barriers in society, rather than individual impairments, often cause exclusion, driving us to actively remove these obstacles and make reasonable adjustments. This continuous shaping and delivery of this inclusion strategy will be a collaborative endeavour, centring the voices and experiences of young people, and will continue to be strategically led and coordinated by The Music Works in their capacity as the Inclusion Lead for the Hub.

We also take inspiration from Professor Sonia Blandford's '4 As' model of social mobility: I can (Aspiration), I do (Access), I have (Attainment), I am (Achievement) (Blandford, S., 2013). This next section will primarily focus on the "I do" – what we want to feel, intrinsically that we represent in terms of belonging– and the "I can" – the aspirational outcomes we aim to achieve through active commitments to change.

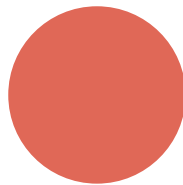
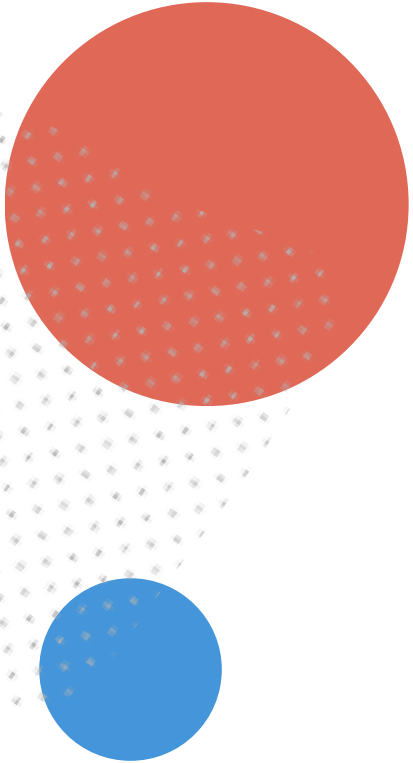


What We Want Inclusion to Feel Like

For the GSW Hub, inclusion isn't a policy – it's a feeling. It's the deep-rooted sense of belonging, where every young person, educator, and partner feels valued, seen, and heard. It's the vibrant experience of togetherness, where our diverse backgrounds and perspectives enrich our collective musical journey. This is why our approach is steeped in the power of relationship-based practice, recognising that meaningful connections are the bedrock of true inclusion. With this in mind, we have developed 'cornerstones' that aim to articulate that aimed-for experience into reality. These tenets represent the fundamental principles that will guide our work, shaping not only what we do, but crucially, how it feels to be part of our musical community.

These 8 reflective cornerstones are intentionally bold. They will push us, challenge our assumptions, and at times, make us uncomfortable. We believe that it is within these challenging spaces that true growth and positive change occur. By openly confronting inequalities and embracing difficult conversations, we will foster a more just and equitable musical landscape.

These cornerstones will be paired with 8 proactive 'doing' commitments. Together, they will articulate not only the feeling of inclusion we strive for, but also the tangible actions that will bring it to life. This is our commitment to ensuring that every interaction, every opportunity, and every musical experience offered by the GSW Music Hub is rooted in a genuine and lived sense of belonging for all.





OUR CORNERSTONES



We are radical listeners and youth-centric designers: We actively and radically listen to the lived experiences of young people, especially those facing barriers, and centre their voices in the design and delivery of all our programmes and policies, even when it challenges traditional norms.



We embed equity as core business: Equity is a fundamental principle in all aspects of our operations – from strategic planning and resource allocation to artistic programming and partnership development – moving beyond performative inclusion towards systemic change. We ensure this is enshrined in policy as well as delivered in practice.



We challenge underrepresentation at all levels: We actively address underrepresentation not only in participation but also within our staff, leadership, and partner organisations through progressive recruitment, collaborative partnerships, cross-genre music-making and by embedding active accountability measures that reflect the diversity of our communities.



We create authentic representation and diverse musical futures: We genuinely represent the breadth of musical genres, practices, and cultural heritage within our programs, ensuring that young people see themselves and their musical interests reflected and valued, fostering diverse pathways into music.

OUR CORNERSTONES

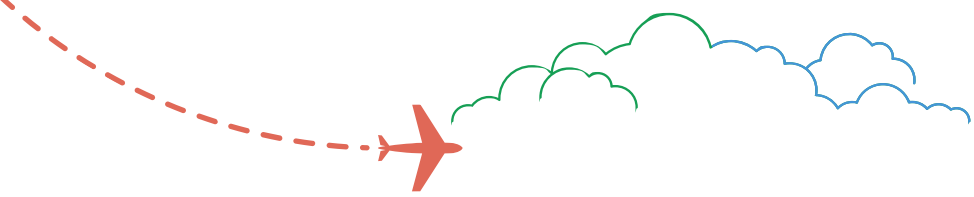
We strive for accessible and anti-oppressive communications: We adopt communication practices that are proactively accessible, culturally responsive, and actively work to dismantle oppressive language and stereotypes, ensuring our messaging fosters belonging and understanding for all.

We forge transformative partnerships for systemic change: We build deep and challenging partnerships with community organisations, schools, and other stakeholders who share our ambition for radical inclusion, working collaboratively to dismantle systemic barriers and advocate for equitable music education.

We champion data-driven accountability and courageous reflection: We rigorously collect and analyse disaggregated data to understand the impact of our inclusion efforts, holding ourselves accountable for progress, and fostering a culture of courageous reflection on our biases and areas for growth.

We cultivate a culture of belonging through relationship: We foster a Hub culture, internally and externally, rooted in genuine relationship-based practice, where every individual feels a strong sense of belonging, value, and respect, actively challenging exclusionary behaviours and celebrating difference.





OUR COMMITMENTS

Moving now to what active changes are needed to enable this. These 8 commitments translate our foundational cornerstones into tangible action, charting our dynamic flight path towards a more inclusive future. These commitments represent a set of objectives – our current direction – focused on equitable access, genuine belonging, and the celebration of every young person's unique musical journey. We recognise that the horizon of inclusion is limitless, and our flight will be ongoing; that these cover themes and that there will still be specific actions that will need to be executed to deliver our cornerstone values.

Cornerstone One

We are radical listeners and youth-centric designers.

Commitment One

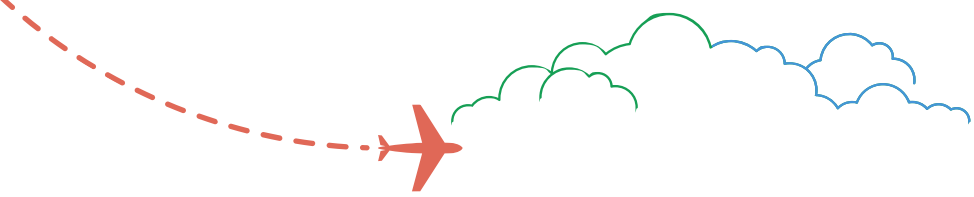
By December 2025, we will develop and begin to roll-out a hub-wide Youth Voice strategy and activation plan. We will embed this within our own governance structure, via active Youth Advisory Panels, a young people representing on our board and as co-chair. We will implement inclusive mechanisms for governance that focus on qualitative impact and ensure targeted through-lines for specific groups who may be traditionally under-represented.

Cornerstone Two

We embed equity as core business.

Commitment Two

By September 2026, we will implement an Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) framework that will be applied to all new strategic decisions and funding allocations, with findings reported annually to the Hub board and informing resource distribution to prioritise areas of greatest need.



Cornerstone Three

We challenge underrepresentation at all levels.

Commitment Three

By January 2026, we will conduct a reflective representation review, to best understand what current representation there is across the Hub, and how and why we might improve this. We also commit to increasing the participation of young people from underrepresented groups in GSW activity by 25% by August 2025. This is an ongoing commitment that will be reviewed annually thereafter.

Cornerstone Four

We create authentic representation and diverse musical futures.

Commitment Four

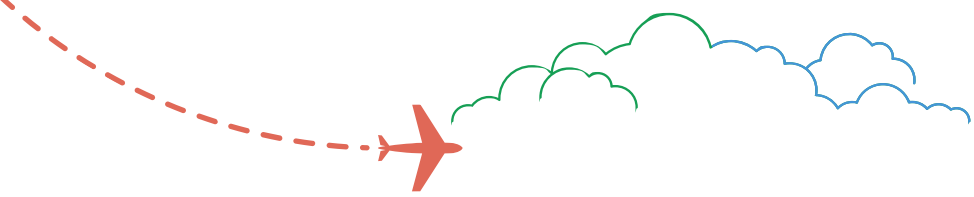
We will ensure that youth voice activations, and our youth advisory panel, alongside our lead school and schools panel, are actively involved in shaping our commissioning model from 2026 onwards. Ultimately leading to the musical genres, practices, and cultural heritage represented to demonstrably broaden to include at least 20% more diverse forms by Summer 2027 (compared to a baseline audit in September 2025), as evidenced by project content, participant feedback, and collaborative partner input. We will also host, through partnerships, a range of annual industry pathway events that are a direct response to the insight from these groups, covering genre pathways, barriers to industry (such as insight into access riders and accessible venues) and celebrating local role models of success.

Cornerstone Five

We strive for accessible and anti-oppressive communications.

Commitment Five

By March 2026, all our core online, social media print communication materials will meet WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards and be compliant with Unlimited Artists/AMA CultureHive's Accesible Marketing Guide. We will conduct an annual review of our language and imagery to ensure they are inclusive and anti-oppressive, informed by feedback from community groups.



Cornerstone Six

We forge transformative partnerships for systemic change.

Commitment Six

By August 2025, we will create a network for inclusive practice that shares learning, creates space and supports challenge for partners, practitioners and educators. We will hold space for community organisations to begin building key, impactful partnerships. By the end of 2025 we will create a resource library, that pools our learning and highlights missing toolkits/resources.

Cornerstone Seven

We champion data-driven accountability and courageous reflection.

Commitment Seven

Annually, starting in September 2025, we will collect and analyse disaggregated participation data (including ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic background) and publicly report on our progress against inclusion targets, using findings to inform a biannual internal review of our practices and biases.

Cornerstone Eight

We cultivate a culture of belonging through relationship

Commitment Eight

Within each academic year, from 25/26 onwards, we will implement annual training on inclusive practices, relationship-based approaches and inclusive safeguarding. We will embed inclusive safeguarding and recognising inclusive quality as part of our wider Quality Assurance Framework.



PRACTICAL POINTS

Bursary Schemes and Tuition Subsidies: are available and supported across our core and partner programmes. For information about Gloucestershire, see [here](#). For Swindon and Wiltshire, see [here](#).

Specific targeted programmes: for information about our work with specific groups, or to flag an area that the Hub currently doesn't work in, please get in touch, all details below.

Lead Schools: will play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive environments within their own communities and acting as exemplars of best practice. They will supporting other schools in their local areas to develop their own inclusive ecosystems and share effective strategies. More information will be provided soon, as the process gets up and running.

Newsletter: we are committed to modelling belonging and embedding reflective practice and a key part of that is listening, responding and sharing. There will be key opportunities for peer sharing and feedback throughout the year. To hear about them, please [sign up to our newsletter](#).

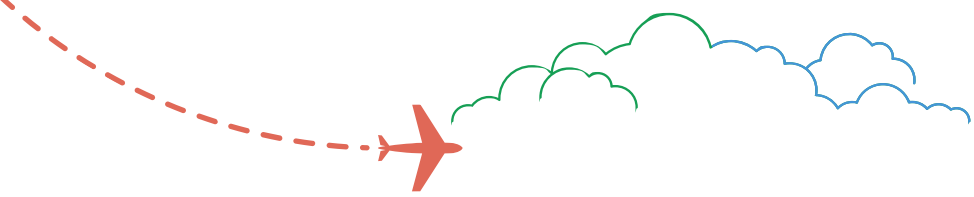
Get in touch: further to the structured sessions, we welcome conversation, friendly challenge or sharing of resources at any point.
Please do get in touch:

For Hub enquiries: GSWMusicHub@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Or ring: 01452 427242

For inclusion and youth voice: jthomsonsmith@themusicworks.org.uk





THANKS AND FURTHER READING

Our sincere thanks to all partner organisations, stakeholders, schools and young people who fed into this strategy. We are committed to this being a starting point, an opportunity for further conversation and exploration. If you'd like to contribute, please do get in touch.

Please see below for a list of referenced reading and source material – we will add to this list with suggested resources:

- Drake Music: [Supporting Inclusion](#)
- Youth Music: [IDEA framework, including the 8 pillars of inclusion](#)
- AMIE and Youth Music: [HEARD model](#)
- Further resources from More Music: [Reaching Out Network](#)
- Musicians' Union (The MU): [The Social Model of Disability](#)
- Blandford, Sonia. Achievement for All: Raising Aspirations, Access and Achievement. Paperback, 20 June 2013
- Barnwood Trust: [What change is needed](#)
- Unlimited Artists & AMA CultureHive: [Accessible Marketing Guide](#)