

Thursday 16 May 2019

Nottingham Music Hub announces new approach to supporting access to music for disabled children

An initiative announced today by the Nottingham Music Hub (NMH) will pilot a new approach to ensuring that disabled children are able to participate fully in making music through Whole Class Ensemble Tuition at primary school.

Research recently conducted by a Consortium of leading access to music organisations has found that a lack of knowledge about the existence of adapted instruments is a major barrier to ensuring parity of opportunity for disabled children.

Virtually all standard musical instruments require two highly dextrous hands to play and hold them, and so without the right enabling equipment and/or adaptations many children are being unnecessarily excluded.

Despite the Department for Education's stated commitment to "equality of opportunity for all pupils, regardless of ... whether they have special educational needs or disabilities", the Consortium found that no national data set exist on levels of participation in music by disabled children.

Moreover, their survey findings show that less than 25% of parents with disabled children and only 54% of music educators responding to the survey agreed with the statement "I know how and where to source an adapted musical instrument".

Rachel Wolffsohn, General Manager of The OHMI Trust (OHMI) a charity dedicated to music-making for physically disabled people, said "OHMI has shown that traditional instruments can be adapted for any number of disabilities, but that's only half the story. We desperately need projects like this one with the NMH and Creative United, to bring the instruments and teaching skills to the children. We are really excited to be a part of it."

The pilot initiative being launched next month by NMH in partnership with Creative United and The OHMI Trust will aim to identify and respond to the specific needs of all children in Year 3 of mainstream primary schools across the city, ensuring that they are able to take part fully in the Whole Class Ensemble Tuition that forms part of the standard curriculum of education in Year 4.

Ian Burton, Chief Executive of the Nottingham Music Hub said "We genuinely believe that music is powerful and can have a transformative impact on children. Nottingham Music Hub is committed to sharing the joys of music making with all children and our teaching strategies are designed to be inclusive. Since we started working in the city, the number of children learning instruments has gone up exponentially and we want to make sure that this includes disabled children and children with special needs because everyone deserves the opportunity to make music."

The pilot has been initiated by Creative United which operates the Take it away scheme, an Arts Council England funded initiative that aims to make the purchase of musical instruments and associated equipment

and accessories easier and more affordable for parents wishing to support their child's learning and participation in music.

Peter Knott, Midlands Area Director, Arts Council England, said: "At the Arts Council we believe that every child and young person should have the opportunity to take part and experience great art and culture. We're delighted to support these plans to offer disabled/less able bodied children the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument when these chances may not have been available in the past. I, for one, look forward to seeing and hearing the results."

If successful, the partners hope that their approach to building the knowledge and confidence of both parents and teachers around the availability of adapted instruments and equipment will be adopted more widely, helping to substantially increase the number of disabled children being actively encouraged to participate fully in learning and playing music from an early age.

****ENDS****

For further information about the Consortium research findings and/or the Nottingham Pilot Programme please contact:

Mary-Alice Stack
Chief Executive, Creative United
mary-alice.stack@creativeunited.org.uk
Direct line: 020 7759 1115
Mobile: 07947 451355

Notes to editors

Nottingham Music Service/Education Hub

Nottingham Music Hub believes that music makes a difference. As a registered charity and lead partner for the Nottingham Music Education Hub, it is committed to making music more accessible and inclusive. The charity runs/supports instrumental tuition in nearly 80% of primary schools in Nottingham City. NMH also supports young people from across the city to develop their musical skills by participating in diverse ensembles and performances, contributing to the cultural life of Nottingham City.

www.nottinghammusichub.org.uk

The OHMI Trust

The OHMI Trust works to remove the barriers to music-making faced by people with physical disabilities. Any deficiency in an upper limb makes nearly all musical instruments unplayable to any reasonable standard. As a result, thousands are excluded from music-making, including most disabled children. The OHMI Trust strives for full, undifferentiated, participation in musical life for disabled people through the creation and provision of adapted musical instruments and enabling apparatus. It also undertakes and commissions research into pedagogic practises, instrument design, and manufacturing methods.

www.ohmi.org.uk

Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

Creative United & Take it away

Creative United is an independent Community Interest Company that provides finance-based products and services designed to deliver economic growth to the arts, creative and cultural sectors. Creative United receives regular funding from Arts Council England as a Sector Support Organisation within its National Portfolio.

www.creativeunited.org.uk

Take it away is a Creative United initiative that gives music-makers the backing they need. With subsidised interest-free loans for musical instruments, equipment, software and tuition, we help to support musicians at every level. Take it away is funded by Arts Council England and Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

www.takeitaway.org.uk

Take it away Consortium

The Take it away Consortium is made up of the following organisations which all specialise in providing inclusive access to music making: Creative United, Drake Music, Open Up Music, The OHMI Trust and Youth Music.

Since March 2018, these organisations have agreed to work together as a Consortium on activities that can help advance their shared objectives to help increase the provision of affordable and accessible musical

instruments for children and young people, enabling them to progress to the next level of musical excellence and demonstrate their achievements through high quality practice and performance opportunities.

The objectives of the Consortium are to:

1. Improve our collective understanding of the potential demand for adapted and specialist musical instruments for use by aspiring and professional musicians of all kinds and in particular disabled children and adults across the UK.
2. Enable existing prototype adaptations (from OHMI, OpenUp Music, DM Labs and other sources) to be taken further into small scale batch production for wider distribution and use.
3. Enable the development of bespoke new accessible musical instruments to meet the needs of an individual, and the documentation and sharing of designs in the open source model
4. Explore ways in which we can develop and train a workforce that has the knowledge and skills to introduce and demonstrate adaptive instruments located in 'centres of music retail excellence' around the UK.
5. Provide financial assistance to families and individuals that need access to these types of instruments by providing a combination of grants and loans to ensure equality of access for all.
6. Raise the profile of music-making by disabled children and adults, increasing awareness of the opportunities and sources of support available to enable more people to access music.