Inclusion Strategy - Barking and Dagenham Community Music Service 2026-27

What is the purpose of the strategy?

Our Inclusive Music Education Strategy will ensure that the CMS recognises the unique qualities, ideas, voices and perspectives of our diverse local population. Additionally, the strategy ensures that we will provide a range of diverse and suitable musical opportunities and progression pathways for all those in contact with our service.

Context and Demographics

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is situated approximately 9 miles east of Central London. It is an Outer London borough within the London Riverside section of the Thames Gateway, an area designated as a national priority for regeneration. The borough's three main towns are Barking, Chadwell Heath and Dagenham.

According to the 2021 Census, Barking and Dagenham is home to approximately 218,900 residents and experienced the third-largest percentage population increase of any local authority in England between 2011 and 2021.

The borough has a notably young population, with around 31% of residents aged under 20, highlighting the importance of investment in opportunities for children and young people.

Barking and Dagenham is one of London's most ethnically diverse boroughs, with 44.9% of residents identifying as White, 25.9% as Asian and 21.4% as Black. We recognise the importance of reflecting this diversity within our music education offer and ensuring that all communities see themselves represented through the repertoire, experiences and opportunities we provide.

The borough continues to face significant socio-economic challenges and was identified as the most deprived London borough in the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation. As a music service, we believe that financial circumstances should not be a barrier to musical participation, progression or achievement. We therefore strive to provide inclusive and affordable opportunities that support the development of musical talent for all children and young people.

Demand for SEND provision continues to increase, with Autism Spectrum Disorder representing one of the most common identified needs among children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans. We are committed to ensuring that our programmes are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of children and young people with SEND, because we believe everyone deserves the opportunity to engage with and benefit from music.

What is musical inclusion?

Musical inclusion is an approach to music education and participation that ensures every child and young person has equitable support to make, learn, and progress through music, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances.

What are the main challenges to musical inclusion and accessibility in the area?

1. **Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Health Conditions**

Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those with physical, sensory, cognitive, communication or learning needs, long-term health conditions, and complex needs.

2. **Socio-economic Disadvantage**

Young people are facing barriers arising from poverty, economic hardship, deprivation, housing insecurity or limited access to cultural opportunities. This is a particular area of focus within our borough.

3. **Cultural and Identity-Based Barriers**

Young people who may experience barriers to participation due to ethnicity, race, culture, faith, language, gender, sexual orientation or other protected characteristics. We recognise the need to address inequalities and ensure equitable access to opportunities.

4. **Social Vulnerability and Safeguarding Factors**

Young people who are care-experienced, young carers, refugees, asylum seekers, those experiencing family instability, bullying, discrimination, trauma, exploitation or exposure to violence.

5. **Educational Vulnerability**

Young people who face challenges engaging with education, including those at risk of exclusion, attending alternative provision, persistently absent from education, electively home educated, or experiencing barriers to learning within mainstream settings.

These five areas are considered our driving strategic priority areas. They will be referenced within our action plan to ensure that we provide musical opportunities for all those who face significant challenges in our borough.

Capacity and Funding to provide for groups facing challenges

The CMS works with funders to ensure that a sufficient percentage of funded revenue is allocated annually to specifically working with children from challenging circumstances (CCC) listed above. Due to this, CMS is committed to sustainable resourcing for inclusion and can ensure that practical application of the action plan is implemented below.

Strategic Priorities 26-27	Measurables	Timeline
Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Health Conditions	The CMS will continue to grow their ARPs delivery programme, increasing the reach in 26-27 to 2 new ARPs provisions and upskilling an additional teacher in working with pupils with SEND.	Sept 26 – Aug 27
	The CMS will provide training for all CMS staff to support the development of our inclusive practice.	
	CMS will work with partners to provide a breadth of opportunities to all CYP including bespoke programmes for those in special schools or with SEND.	
Socio-economic Disadvantage	The CMS will provide subsidised rates for classes, activities and instrument hire for those from lower socio-economic brackets and PP children	Sept 26 – Aug 27
	The CMS will strive ~~endeavor~~ to place opportunities and workshops across the borough to overcome travel difficulties linked to economic status	
	The CMS will provide opportunities for socioeconomically challenged young people to sit music exams	
	The CMS will regularly review the participation of Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium pupils to ensure that engagement reflects the socio-economic profile of the borough and will implement targeted interventions where disparities are identified.	
Cultural and Identity-Based Barriers	Provide curriculum advice for schools to diversify their music curriculums providing wider access to music education that reflects the cultural diversity of Barking & Dagenham	Sept 26 – Aug 27
	Provide access to training and resources to CMS staff that support them to deliver teaching that is diverse and culturally relevant	
	CMS will review participation data to check that uptake reflects the borough's diversity and all children and young people feel represented in its programmes and progression pathways. Targeted action will address any disparities in access and engagement.	
Social Vulnerability and Safeguarding Factors	To work collaboratively with schools, families, local authority services and partner organisations to ensure that vulnerable children and young people are appropriately supported and safeguarded throughout their engagement with CMS.	Sept 26 – Aug 27
	To identify and reduce barriers to participation for children and young people experiencing social vulnerability, ensuring that they can access, engage with and benefit from high-quality music education opportunities.	
	To provide safe, supportive and inclusive musical environments that foster wellbeing, confidence, positive relationships and a sense of belonging for vulnerable children and young people.	
Educational Vulnerability	To equip CMS staff with ~~the~~ knowledge, skills and confidence to support the wellbeing of children and young people, enabling them to recognise potential vulnerabilities, respond appropriately and create safe, supportive learning environments.	Sept 26 – Aug 27

	To ensure that children and young people who are at risk of exclusion, attend alternative provision, are electively home educated or experience challenges within mainstream education can access and participate in CMS programmes.	
	Partner with schools and relevant local authority teams to develop meaningful progression routes that help educationally vulnerable children and young people fulfil their musical potential and succeed, whatever their educational circumstances.	

Key Documents / websites

• DfE (Department for Education) (2011). The Importance of Music: a national plan for music education. London: DfE. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-importance-ofmusic-a-national-plan-for-music-education

• Lonie, D. (2013). Why music? A research rationale for making music with children and young people experiencing additional challenges, in Mullen, P. and Harrison, C. (eds.). Reaching Out: Music education with 'hard to reach' children and young people. London: Music Mark, 3-11.

• Mullen, P. (2011). Working with Children in Challenging Circumstances. Conference presentation at Leading Music Education Conference. London, Ontario, May 2011.

• Youth Music (2018). Guidance for Music Education Hubs: Developing an inclusive approach to the core and extension roles. http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/resource/An%20inclusive%20approach%20to%20the%20core%20and%20extension%20roles.pdf

• ONS (2021) Census Data. https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000002/

• LBBD (2021) SEN Report. https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/Internet/documents/s150161/SEND%20Provision%20Report.pdf

• Local Government Inform (2021) OMD In Barking and Dagenham https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/lgastandard?mod-metric=8985&modarea=E09000002&mod-group=AllBoroughInRegion_London&modtype=namedComparisonGroup