



## Music in Autism Resource Bases: what the evidence shows and how to act on it

A guide for policymakers and others with a strategic interest in autistic learners

### Why music in ARBs?

Music education is a curriculum entitlement for every child, including autistic young people. Music is also important beyond the curriculum:

“For autistic pupils, music-making can support communication, regulation, social connection and self-expression, while also recognising musical strengths and the potential for exceptional musical ability in some children.” (Ockelford, 2015; Shaughnessy et al., 2024).

Research indicates that music builds confidence and wellbeing and can be both a tool for communication and a means of building communication skills for autistic young people.



But our research found that currently, many don't get the same access to music in school as their peers.

Autistic pupils should not be systematically excluded from curriculum entitlement that their peers take for granted. As the number of ARBs within mainstream schools grows rapidly across UK nations, the urgency of this issue is increasing.

To address this gap, we've created a series of policy briefings, and a practical guide for educators backed by four years' of evaluation and research evidence.

### What our research found

- An evidence gap – no UK research on music education in ARBs
- System disconnection – only 36% of survey were accessing the support they're entitled to through a local music hub or music service
- Most ARBs are not supported by music specialists
- Resources, budget and expertise were named as the main barriers
- The findings point to the need for system-level support and policy change



### What policymakers and other stakeholders can do:

1. Download the policy briefing relevant to you (England, Wales, Northern Ireland).  
<https://bit.ly/MusicInARBs>

2. Consider how you can act on the six recommendations.

