

# 9 Competencies of Inclusive Music Practice

*What does Inclusive Music-Making look like in practice?*



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# Index

Process of Development .....	1
9 Competencies of Inclusive Music Practice .....	2
<b>Case Study Summaries:</b>	
1. Underpin all practice with Social Model .....	3
2. Get to know the learners .....	4
3. Work with other adults to support learners effectively .....	5
4. Respond effectively and incorporate learners' ideas, actions and contributions .....	6
5. Find/use tech that removes barriers .....	7
6. Choose appropriate teaching resources .....	8
7. Structure sessions effectively .....	9
8. Scaffold activities so learners can work together ....	10
9. Create a positive, nurturing environment .....	11
<b>Case Studies:</b>	
1. Underpin all practice with Social Model by <i>Amy Tolley</i> .....	12
2. Get to know the learners by <i>Hilary Cornell</i> .....	16
3. Work with other adults to support learners effectively by <i>Tim Wall</i> .....	18
4. Respond effectively and incorporate learners' ideas, actions and contributions by <i>George Webb</i> .....	20
5. Find/use tech that removes barriers by <i>Calina de la Mare</i> .....	22
6. Choose appropriate teaching resources by <i>Steve Barbe</i> .....	24
7. Structure sessions effectively by <i>Calina de la Mare</i> .....	26
8. Scaffold activities so learners can work together by <i>Tim Fletcher</i> .....	28
9. Create a positive, nurturing environment by <i>Annabel Clapham</i> .....	30
Background .....	32

# Introduction

This document is primarily for people working in music education settings who would like to develop their skills and understanding, and take their inclusive practice further. It includes 9 competencies\* with:

- Descriptors - ideas on what the competencies mean
- Indicators - pointers on what this may include in practice
- Reflections - invitations to reflect on how they manifest and grow in your own practice
- 9 case studies written by music leaders from the Core Hub Partners illustrating how the competencies have been applied to their practice.

## How did we develop 9 competencies?

At the start of Think22, a strategic programme of work that helped to bring inclusive practice to the fore in music education in England, the Drake Music team thought about what inclusive practice looks like and developed a set of competencies that would help tutors develop their inclusive practice.

These competencies were presented to our Music Education Hub partners and their practitioners and music leaders for consultation. The competencies were further fleshed out and co-creatively redrafted, gradually evolving into a set of 9 competencies. We asked some of those practitioners and music leaders to write case studies that illustrate the competencies in practice.

The competencies are not set in stone and should constantly evolve. Therefore, this is not an exhaustive list of competencies or case studies. We would love to hear about your inclusive music practice and additions to the competencies. Join our online community of Inclusive Music Teachers and Leaders [here](#).

We are working in an environment and a sector where Disabled People\*\* are underrepresented. Sharing these competencies is part of the process of addressing underrepresentation of Disabled People.

*\*Competencies are a set of demonstrable characteristics and skills that enable, and improve the efficiency of, the performance of a job.*

*\*\*The following words and phrases are capitalised as they represent a movement or community: Disabled People, Non-Disabled People, Disability Equality, and Inclusion.*

# 9 Competencies of Inclusive Music Practice

Get to know the learners

Respond effectively & incorporate learner ideas, actions & contributions

Create a positive, nurturing environment

Find/use music tech that removes barriers

Underpin all practice with the Social Model

Work with other adults to support learners effectively

Structure sessions effectively

Choose appropriate teaching resources

Scaffold activities so learners can work together

# Case Study Summaries



# Underpin all practice with the Social Model

This means:



- Identifying barriers faced by individual Disabled musicians
- Championing Disabled and Non-Disabled peers working together
- Advocating and sharing your learning
- Reflecting and making changes

In practice, this will include:

- Checking or auditing the space and resources you are using
- Using different communication techniques and styles
- Creating an appropriate, welcoming atmosphere with a sense of belonging
- Learners' access needs are valued and important to participation – access requirements are acted upon
- Giving choices to ensure the power shifts to the learner
- Support is in place to encourage learning
- Difference and diversity is celebrated in the session
- Opportunities for creativity and progression are identified, raising expectations of what is possible
- Exploring your own attitudes, language and assumptions before the session

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Underpin all practice with the Social Model by Amy Tolley [here](#).

## **Reflect:**

*What are your own attitudes, assumptions and expectations towards disability and Disabled People and how might these manifest in your practice?*

## **Reflect:**

*What indicators can you identify in your own practice?*

## **Explore:**

*Watch [this introduction to the Social Model of Disability](#). Discuss with your team how you might apply some of the questions raised in your sessions with your learners.*

# Get to know the learners

This means:



- Getting to know what works for each learner and what supports them to achieve
- Building flexibility into session plans
- Noticing and building upon what works
- Recognising the whole person and the wider picture

In practice, this will include:

- Getting to know your learners' starting points, motivation and access requirements to fully participate
- Noticing and amplifying the quietest voices
- Recognising and understanding communication methods that work best, e.g., in case of non-verbal/partially speaking learners
- Building the right support for the session: working with SENCOs and classroom teachers before and after sessions to clarify roles, assess the space for learners, question assumptions, reflect on the dynamics in the session
- Reflecting and making notes on what works or can be developed

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study [Get to know the learners](#) by Hilary Cornell [here](#).

## Reflect:

*What can you identify in your own practice that relates to this competency?*

## Explore:

*The iPad is a very useful instrument, with opportunities to make music at different levels of complexity. Explore the [iPads for Music](#) step-by-step guides to get you started making music with iPads.*



# Work with other adults to support learners effectively

This means:



- Building effective support for the session
- Clarifying roles and expectations
- Being clear about your own approach to teaching and classroom management
- Sharing your approach and goals with school staff if possible

In practice, this will include:

- Spending time with SENCOs and classroom teachers before and after sessions to explore the session plan and purpose, methodology, and intended outcomes
- Creating a welcoming and responsive musical environment for the learner to explore and interact with at their own pace
- Allowing the learner to interact with the music in their own way and on their own terms before stepping in to guide and support
- Question assumptions and knowledge that will help/prevent learning and affect the dynamics in the session
- Identifying and allocating 1-to-1 or small group support, when and where needed

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Work with other adults to support pupils effectively by Tim Wall [here](#).

**Reflect:**  
*How can you model to and engage colleagues in the room in practices that support agency and control in learners?*

**Reflect:**  
*What can you identify in your own practice that relates to this competency?*

**Explore:**  
*Do, Review, Improve...*  
*A quality framework to support practitioners working with Disabled young people through information to help remove participatory barriers, as well as exemplifying good practice.*

# Respond effectively and incorporate learner ideas, actions and contributions



This means:

- Being flexible in your approach
- Making space for young people's ideas and contributions
- Change course of planned delivery based on learner ideas and contributions

In practice, this will include:

- Mirroring and encouraging active listening in the group
- Incorporating learner suggestions to hold focus and engagement
- Celebrating positive contributions and successes
- Recognising learners' creativity in the sessions, offering chances to present and play examples of work to the group
- Identifying and modifying methodology and activity
- Sharing control, power and leadership within the session
- Encouraging learners to answer questions from peers - learners feel empowered

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Respond effectively and incorporate pupil ideas, actions and contributions by George Webb [here](#).



**Reflect:**

*Consider each learner's strengths and assets. How can you incorporate them into your lesson planning and delivery?*

**Reflect:**

*What can you identify in your own practice that relates to this competency?*

# Find/use music tech that removes barriers

This means:



- Seeking out and using alternative/adaptive instruments to remove barriers, e.g., iPads
- Making low tech adaptations to instruments, e.g., velcro, masking tape, dots on ukulele
- Trying adaptive accessories, e.g., trombone stands for one-handed players
- Asking for support where more tech is needed

In practice, this will include:

- Focusing on and working with the needs of the learner
- Exploring and trying things out
- Looking at how others have used or modified tech - this can include observing Disabled artists who are using tech, to motivate and encourage progression

A selection of different software programmes, tech and apps that work excellently in the setting of the case study are:

- ThumbJam (iPad)
- GarageBand (iPad)
- Keezy (iPad)
- Tobii and Clarion
- Microphones
- FX pedals
- Gaming switches
- Audio recording software

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Find/use tech to remove barriers by Calina de la Mare [here](#).

## Reflect:

Consider how iPad apps can be part of and hugely expand the range of instruments in your toolkit.

## Reflect:

What indicators can you identify in your own practice?

## Explore:

The iPad is a very useful instrument, with opportunities to make music at different levels of complexity. Explore the [iPads for Music](#) step-by-step guides to get you started making music with iPads.

# Choose appropriate teaching resources

This means:



- Knowing access requirements and meeting them
- Exploring different resources to support sensory needs, e.g., Makaton, visual cues
- Adapting resources and responding to new barriers as we go along, e.g., sheet music, Braille, Figurenotes

In practice, this will include:

- Modifying and adapting methodology to meet learner needs
- Matching the activity to different learning styles
- Choosing resources that provide depth of engagement over time or are flexible for a range of activities
- Creativity to change and adapt resources
- Creating an environment that is engaging and encourages enjoyment and having fun with learning
- Resources reflect interests of learner
- Resources encourage diversity and understanding of equality, and challenge dominant models of musical styles and cultures

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Choose appropriate teaching resources by Steve Barbe [here](#).

## **Reflect:**

*Consider with the team the teaching resources in your 'collective toolbox'. Make a list of these and how they might work with your learners. Share them with your team so that if anyone is away, they are still in the 'collective toolbox'.*

## **Reflect:**

*What can you identify in your own practice that relates to this competency?*

# Structure sessions effectively

This means:



- Provide space for learner voice
- Pitch activity length to accommodate learners' attention, ability, preferences
- Clearly signpost session structure, e.g. by using PECS® (Picture Exchange Communication System).

In practice, this will include:

- Checking access and support requirements
- Identifying learners' current and future progression goals
- Structuring content of the session to include: team briefing, soft start, introducing and negotiating the session plan, breaks, group work, feedback, and team debrief
- Tuning in to the quietest voices in the room
- Responding to the feeling of the group to adapt the session structure dynamically
- Facilitating feedback from learners
- Carrying forward feedback into the next session
- Using all your communication skills, e.g., thumbs up or down, use of Makaton, support for non-verbal participants

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Structure sessions effectively by Calina de la Mare [here](#).



## Reflect:

*Discuss with the team which learners are 'quietest' or contribute the least. Think about what barriers they might be experiencing - what can be done to remove these barriers? Involve learners in this conversation if appropriate and can be done without spotlighting or exposing.*

# Scaffold activities so learners can work together

This means:



- Offer several ways for young people to contribute to same activity, e.g., sing, play, or both
- Make space for individual, pair, small group work
- Make space for improvisation or free play
- Don't get stuck on there being a 'right way' to do or play something

In practice, this will include:

- Identifying choices with different roles where all learners can work to their individual strengths
- Creating opportunities to receive and give feedback
- Considering the pace of activities and providing space for learners to grow
- Acknowledging learner successes
- Celebrating every contribution and achievement on its own terms

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Scaffold activities so learners can work together by Tim Fletcher [here](#).

## **Reflect:**

*Think about what your own expectations might be about the 'right way' to do things in teaching, music-making or other life experiences. Think about times when mistakes, chance happenings, new ways of doing things have been a positive progression experience or development.*

## **Explore:**

*What is Inclusion?  
Making Music is  
the Key*

# Create a positive, nurturing environment

This means:



- Agree on ground rules with and for the group, value everyone's voice, e.g., learning contracts
- Embody the atmosphere you wish to create
- Reflect on your pace, space and tone and work to bring everyone with you
- Acknowledge and value diversity in the session

In practice, this will include:

- Creating a sense of belonging
- Nurturing and growing understanding of each other in the group, particularly around equality and celebrating diversity
- Celebrating the achievements of everyone in the session

To see these indicators in practice, read the case study Create a positive, nurturing environment by Annabel Clapham [here](#).

## **Reflect:**

*Consider how you can work with learners to set ground rules and value everyone's voices.*

## **Explore:**

*What is Inclusion?  
Making Music is the Key*



# Case Studies

*The following case studies were written by music leaders from Music Education Hub partners Essex Music Education Hub, Newham Music, and THAMES (Tower Hamlets Arts and Music Education Service). Through Think22, these music leaders participated in a programme of workforce development that aimed to embed inclusive practice across their hubs. The case studies illustrate how the competencies have been applied to their practice.*



# Underpin all practice with the Social Model

by Amy Tolley, Essex Music Education Hub



*This case study is based on 1-to-1 piano lessons in a formal Special Education school setting with a 13-year old learner.*

I have been working with R for approximately six years now, delivering a weekly thirty-minute individual piano lesson at a Special Education school. R is a 13-year old learner with a range of complex needs. These result in the experience of a range of barriers to learning and participation.

To ensure our lessons are safe, comfortable and enjoyable for R, I make sure that the room has a clear accessible entry space and that the furniture is always laid out in the same way. We have a verbal and tactile hello of a hand on shoulder to welcome him into the space and transition from the door to the stool. R's teaching assistant does not sit in on his sessions so we always have a clear handover at the door so the room is purely for music-making and he is assured she will be back for him at the end of the session.

R is sensitive to mood and reads this through intonations and inflections of the voice, so it is important to be upbeat and smiling when communicating. If R isn't his usual happy self, I use a sing song voice to support his transition into the session. Routine is imperative to R's learning, his lesson must be at the same time on a Monday morning and we have accommodated this even when I have been off unwell with an online lesson so that the rest of his day runs smoothly. He has a tendency to 'flap', rocking

backwards and forwards on the stool if he is excited or playing a favourite piece, and this could cause him to hit his head on the piano. I rest my hand there to ensure his safety.

R always has an MP3 player with headphones and sometimes additional wires with him and he likes to have the headphones around his neck and the player either in his pocket or on the piano stool next to him. He knows not to use them unless he wants to play me something but it is important to him to know that they are nearby.

The communication R and I have through music comes in many forms through the session, through playing the piano, vocalising and singing and also through pre-recorded music on his MP3 player. It is important that we have this shared language and over the time I have worked with him, I have seen his musical knowledge and understanding develop through our shared language of music.

## Page 15 of 32 - Underpin all practice with the Social Model

Originally R would only play pieces from Disney films but now we can engage with music from all different genres and periods. You can see in the clip that R is able to choose music that he likes to play and can now change the style of music he has heard to fit in with another piece in his head.

In this school setting, all of the learners are Disabled and we work together with teachers and other support staff so students engage in a variety of learning experiences with their peers and other adults in the school. Over time R and I have learnt to accommodate each other in our sessions, for example we usually sing a lot together, but on one occasion I had a bit of a cough and a raspy voice so R said "Amy cough, cough, cough, cough. R do the singing today" for which I was incredibly grateful!

Throughout the school year we actively encourage students to perform in both their class and whole school settings, for example when the school was putting on a performance of the Lion King, we learned the music and R played the piano. He has also participated in school talent shows, assemblies and a sponsored charity challenge for Captain Tom Moore in which R played 100 song introductions which was recorded for the school's YouTube channel.



[Watch R's 100 piano songs performance here.](#)

*"It is important that we have this shared language and over the time I have worked with him, I have seen his musical knowledge and understanding develop through our shared language of music."*

My teaching practice is largely learner-led and fluid over the time I am teaching. I make notes after each session so I can reflect on what aspects worked well and which worked less well on a weekly basis. I make sure I am aware of current interests, moods, developmental markers and any family elements that may affect R so I can best support him and ensure the sessions are relevant to him whilst supporting his musical development.

# Get to know the learners

## by Hilary Cornell, Essex Music Education Hub



*This case study is based on 1-to-1 sessions as a continuation of a nurture group in a mainstream school with a 10-year old learner.*

I started working with C in the Summer term of 2021, delivering weekly 30-minute group sessions with another three students, each with high support needs.

I was given a brief understanding of each individual's background by the school SENCO. I was advised that C is particularly introverted and reluctant to interact with peers or speak in groups, or to adults. It would be unlikely that C would participate in music-making, but would enjoy the experience.

In the first few sessions C seemed shy, and refused to join in, but showed some interest in the musical instruments as I was playing them. My sessions involved music-making using guitar, ukulele, drums, vocals and iPads, using apps like GarageBand and ThumbJam.

I loosely planned the sessions into small sections, with time to reflect in between sections if needed and allowing time and flexibility to discuss what we liked or disliked along the way. This allowed me to take note of progression, engagement, WOW moments and things that did not work as well as planned.

C's sessions were shorter and involved encouraging entering the music room with positivity towards music. To start with, C's sessions were about engaging her in music and increasing her resilience to music lessons each week. C quickly began to show trust in me, knowing I wouldn't force her to continue if she was distressed, but would play to her each week. I also allowed her to indicate when she would like to finish, and concrete this with a goodbye song.

I noticed she enjoyed listening to me playing piano the most and was not so keen on me singing as well. We continued this for a few weeks, increasing the length of time I played and the session time each time. I also very slowly began to increase the volume of the piano, observing her response.



## Page 17 of 32 - Get to know the learners

C's support worker noticed that not only had C's resilience greatly improved in sessions, but it had also increased in her school and home life. She had accepted music being played in the car, and at times in class. I suggested singing instructions on a daily basis, which was a great success. C's support worker still uses this each day to transition her around the school and for instructions. C's parent has explained that her sister can now sing at home again.

Having noted C's interest in piano, I sourced her a keyboard to take home and bring back each week. This gave her ownership of her own music and the option for her to play at home in her own time and space. I used her love of pets (something I have many of) to encourage her to make sounds or groups of notes that sound like different animals. For example, a spider creeping up the keys, or a snake sliding.

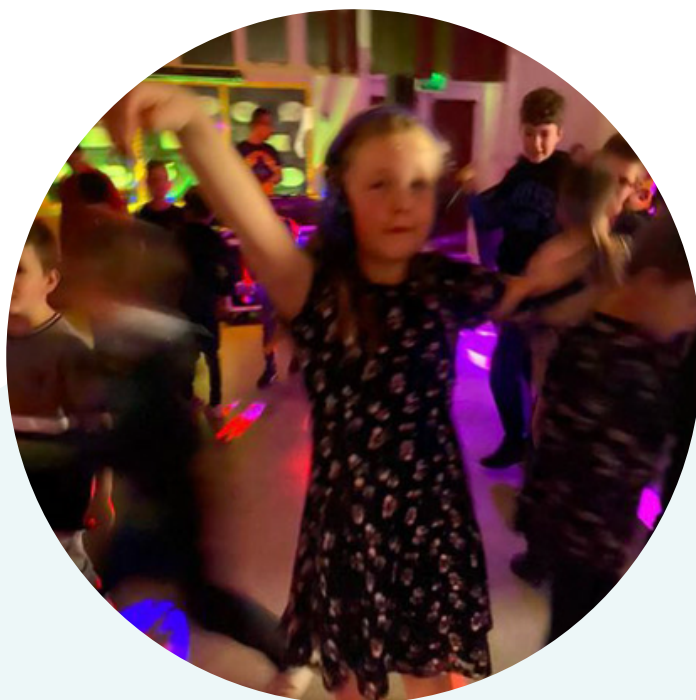
When the sessions came to an end, C's mum enrolled her in 15-minute, paid for sessions with me, which are a total success. C is now reluctant to leave music at the end of our lessons and questions various instruments. C now shows very little noise avoidance at school and at home and thoroughly enjoys music, with smiles and giggles every week. She asks: "Is today music day?" and knows the exact session time and will skip into music with her support worker.

Through the vehicle of these music sessions, all learners' confidence, resilience, companionship and ability to work and create music together has grown incredibly, within music sessions, daily school life and at home. They also have music skills they may never have realised they had.

*"Having noted C's interest in piano, I sourced her a keyboard to take home and bring back each week. This gave her ownership of her own music and the option for her to play at home in her own time and space."*

*"C having fun at the school disco surrounded by music and noise. She would never have stepped near the building let alone inside to attend this pre music sessions."*

**C's parent**



# Work with other adults to support learners effectively

by Tim Wall, Newham Music



*This case study is based on group sessions for 3-4 Disabled learners in a mainstream government primary school in Newham, East London. The learners attend the sessions with one or two supporting adults and the sessions take place in an unused classroom.*

My approach to these music sessions is to create a welcoming and responsive musical environment for the children to explore and interact with at their own pace. Gradually I introduce more structured music-making as they become more familiar and comfortable with it. I usually set up a variety of instruments on the floor, along with some coloured fabrics and other sensory items. Playing through an iPad and speaker is a background musical atmosphere. I am usually playing the ukulele or clarinet when children enter the room and begin to interact with them in an improvised musical way as they choose how to be in the space. Depending on how this is going on the day, it can then evolve into a welcome song and other activities.

This approach allows for children with a variety of needs, behaviours and responses to be in the room at the same time and simultaneously have different musical experiences. However, as I am the only facilitator, it can be difficult to support multiple pupils at once if they are scattered around the room, want to be away from others or have different interests. It is therefore vital to engage the other support staff in the room, who generally have little training or experience in music, to support the children so they can all have continual opportunities interact musically throughout the session. It also can make the sessions much more challenging if there are adults in the room who are not engaged with the music and are talking amongst themselves.

*"My approach is to create a welcoming and responsive musical environment for the children to explore and interact with at their own pace."*

In order to engage staff in supporting the children and the musical environment as a whole, I try to brief new staff before they enter the room about what to expect and what I am hoping to create for and with the children. Through my own actions in the session, I then try to model how I would like the adults to interact, with a focus on them finding an instrument or way of making music themselves, or following the lead of a child. Even having done these things, I often find that the staff have a different

## *Page 19 of 32 - Work with other adults to support learners effectively*

expectation about how the children should behave in the session and seek to intervene and direct them. When I see this occurring, I usually say something to the adult such as "It's okay if they hold the ukulele like that" or "It's fine if they don't want to play anything". I often find a very effective direction to the adults is to ask them not to speak, which usually forces them to find new and musical ways of interacting. Another effective intervention is to simply hand them an instrument of their own, which focuses them not on controlling a child but on adding to the music.

While there are times when it is necessary for supporting adults to intervene with a child's behaviour for safety reasons, I have found that by directing and encouraging them towards musical ways of participating themselves then by extension the children are supported in their own musical experience. This can be a challenge in itself as staff are often changing and there is not always the opportunity to brief them or give them tips during the session. Some staff adapt to the sessions very quickly while others find it difficult to understand how to interact despite my encouragements or explanations. To overcome this I am currently in the process of setting up a training session for the support staff, where I will run some musical activities with them and explain some of the rationale behind what we are doing. It is my hope that I will be able to run similar sessions in all the settings where I work as a way of establishing a more consistent way of working with the adults to support the children in my sessions.



# Respond effectively and incorporate learner ideas, actions and contributions

by George Webb, Essex Music Education Hub



*This case study is based on extended curriculum music sessions in a mainstream school, working in a small group with learners aged 6 and 7.*

I have been working with N and J since the beginning of the Autumn term and have delivered 5x 30-minute sessions. N and J are both high energy, active students with a need for additional support to address barriers to learning and participation in this setting.

In the sessions we have been improvising with iPad apps (ThumbJam, Bebot) and composing music using Incredibox, Bloom, Figure. Recently N and J have composed with GarageBand to develop bigger arrangements – recording voice and piano as well as using virtual smart instruments within the app.

N and J have many ideas all coming at once and like to change direction in activities very quickly, losing or shifting focus. Both students express themselves loudly in sessions and throughout everyday school life. During the music sessions N and J work together, they are developing a sense of turn-taking, also encouraging each other with musical and behavioural choices. N's class teacher has recognised his creativity in the sessions, and N has presented and played examples of his work to his class.

To keep N and J engaged, I structure the session with several short activities:

- warm-up
- main activity
- re-focusing song/activity
- main activity
- goodbye song

N and J are now familiar with how the session is set out and remind me if they feel I'm going to miss a section. This has helped with their progression - familiar structure with variation whilst allowing room for flexibility by incorporating their suggestions to hold focus and engagement.

*"N loves going to his music lessons, he is always excited to share what he has been learning and this earned him a gold award in assembly."  
N's class teacher*

Both students are very excited when entering the music room and look forward to the Hello Song, N and J sing and clap along and offer suggestions (made up names for themselves or objects/fidget toys) for who to say hello to within the song. N likes to pick up and examine anything and everything in the room and often asks "what is this?". My response to N's inquisitive behaviour is to incorporate the items picked up into the Hello Song and the explanations of what they are, which N enjoys. I feel this gives him a sense of ownership to the song and allows for creative input. J joins in with dancing during the Hello Song and enjoys the energy responding to the tempo and dynamic of the music. I encourage J to express himself through dance in these sessions and join in dancing/moving as much as possible whilst playing guitar and singing.

The main activity of the sessions is creating an original composition using smart instruments (GarageBand), voice and piano. N and J have named the composition Sonic as the music represents Sonic the Hedgehog. N and J are very keen to try out all the smart instruments in GarageBand. To manage this choosing section I ask N and J to reflect on the sound of each instrument before this can develop into frenzied scrolling on the iPad.

Once N or J select a smart instrument, I encourage them to play for the other and decide if they both like the sounds, if they can adapt or experiment with the sounds within the settings and if they are going to use the instrument within the composition. This has helped slow the pace of choosing a virtual instrument, encouraging them to think beyond the 'here and now' and contemplate ahead to the overall arrangement of the composition.



N and J have also recorded voice parts to the composition. They enjoyed listening back to their voices and experimenting with effects to manipulate the sounds. At times the recording of the voice parts proved challenging as they would get excited and talk over the other's part. I responded to this issue by giving the responsibility of recording (counting the other in and pressing record and stop) to the non-recording student. This has helped to keep them focused and engaged in the activity.

By structuring the sessions with several short activities, yet also being flexible to incorporate N and J's ideas, behaviours and energy, I feel that these sessions have been successful in their learning. This is reflected in their excitement to attend the sessions and how proud they are to share the content of their work.

By the end of half-term, N and J will have created an original composition and presented and played it to their peers. At the end of these presentations there is time for the class to ask them questions on what they have presented. I have previously noticed that in answering questions from peers, students feel empowered, have a greater sense of achievement for their work.

# Find/use music tech that removes barriers

by Calina de la Mare, THAMES



*This case study is based on an all-ability inclusive music collective that brings together Disabled and Non-Disabled musicians aged 11-25.*

An inclusive music ensemble aims to develop the participants' musical practice by focusing on and working with the needs of the musicians involved.

*"I don't need easy,  
I just need possible."*

**Bethany Hamilton,  
Disabled athlete**

I lead Soundbox inclusive music collective; creating music with Disabled and Non-Disabled musicians aged 11-25. The tech discussed below works excellently in our setting.

We use iPads and backline (i.e. microphones and amplifiers etc.) to remove barriers to playing music. iPads are ideal for inclusive settings as there are different software programmes and apps that can be used. The iPads can be hooked up to portable Bluetooth speakers such as Minirigs.

## Accessible Apps

- **ThumbJam** has 40 instrument samples with many scales to play in any musical style. The participant uses their finger to slide across or tap the screen to make sounds. The iPad can be programmed to have 'Guided Access' so the settings stay the same. Soundbox uses iPads and our participants create music on them each week.
- **GarageBand:** You can record synth or real time sounds and then play them back or alter the sound using FX (special effects).
- **Keezy:** The screen consists of eight coloured rectangles, each representing a different sound. There are pre-set sounds, or you can record your own. Sound is recorded onto the rectangles, which can then be played back in any order; on their own or together. It can be used as a sampler or a way of playing specific sounds in an ensemble. In Soundbox we have used it as a sampler and as a sound designer tool.

## Accessible musical instruments using eye and body tracking

**Tobii, Eyeharp** and **Clarion** software use eye and body tracking technology to trigger musical sounds. A shape is shown on the screen and the eye focuses on the circle to create a sound. There are orchestral and percussion samples to choose from. Soundbox participant J uses Eyeharp with an external speaker, using different sounds for sections of the music we make.

## Backline

- **Microphones:** These encourage sound making as they can give people confidence due to being able to make greater volume on their instrument: e.g. vocals, acoustic guitar. The mics are plugged into guitar or portable (e.g Roland) amps so that they can be moved around the room easily. Our participants S, D and D like to use the mic for vocals. Participant A uses the mic with acoustic guitar.
- **FX pedals** e.g., delay: These encourage the creation of different sounds from the acoustic instruments that are being played. You can play the instrument near a microphone which is attached to the FX pedal and the effect is immediate, creative and can take the instrumental sounds into a new area. We used the delay pedal recently in Soundbox and it brought the house down! Participant J enjoyed using it with voice. We tried it with N's drum, C's cello, and D's shaker.

## Other Tech

- **Gaming Switches** can be used to trigger samples by connecting them to software e.g., **Soundplant**, which works by assigning samples to keys on the laptop. We used these for a concert; we assigned samples to two switches and participants triggered them.
- **Audio recording software** e.g., **Logic Pro** and **Audacity:** We record the sounds we make in our sessions and listen back in the next session; we can then work on the music further.



# Choose appropriate teaching resources

by Steve Barbe, THAMES



*This case study is based on small group sessions for 4 or 5 learners with additional learning needs aged 5-8 years in a mainstream school.*

I have adapted an approach called "Bucket Time" passed on to me by my predecessor. In Bucket Time (which we call "Box Time" as we don't have a bucket!), objects are brought out of a box one at a time. The idea is for these objects to act as focused stimuli for short activities.

My sessions follow a similar structure each time, i.e.;

- Hello Song
- Song "What is in the box today?" to the tune "Skip to my Lou" to introduce the first item from the box, and then again and again for each subsequent item.
- Each object might be a toy character, prop, instrument or iPad to use in an interactive way with an appropriate song. E.g. if it's a rabbit we might do "Sleepy Bunnies". If it's an instrument we may then get several instruments out so we have one each.
- When each item is finished with, I say "(prop name, e.g. drums) finished!" together with the Makaton sign for "finished".
- At the end of Box Time I say "Box Time finished!", again together with the Makaton sign.
- Goodbye Song
- Then I say "Music Time finished!", again with the Makaton sign.

Up until last week this was going quite well for over a year (although since September this year, the cohort has changed). Then last Thursday one of the children was particularly excited right from the start. This child has behaved similarly on previous occasions. The two members of staff present stopped one of my activities before it had barely begun, saying that this would be too triggering for the child. This was "Sleepy Bunnies", where the children pretend to be asleep, then wake up and jump around when the music livens up.



## *Page 25 of 32 - Choose appropriate teaching resources*

I moved on to another object from the box with an activity which staff accepted. Then I tried the "brolly activity", using the fabric from a large golfing umbrella like a mini parachute. We had not got very far with this activity, when staff asked me to abort that activity too, as the child was becoming boisterous and yelling loudly. I found this frustrating, as I was running out of material I had planned.

I requested a short meeting with the members of staff later that day. The staff admitted they were playing things by ear with this child, and they found it extremely exhausting. It was agreed that I could try these activities again in future, but I would always have spare activities on hand, including some that are possibly less triggering for this child, i.e. I would always have spare objects in the box.

Always having spare material to hand is the learning point here I feel, including material that is more calming and less stimulating if needed.



*"Always having spare material to hand is the learning point here I feel, including material that is more calming and less stimulating if needed."*



# Structure sessions effectively

by Calina de la Mare, THAMES



This case study is based on an all-ability inclusive music collective that brings together Disabled and Non-Disabled musicians aged 11-25.

These are some examples from [Soundbox](#), an inclusive music collective in East London.

## Planning

We find out background about the participants e.g., if loud sounds are intense for an individual; check that access is suitable; have a selection of musical instruments and tech available.

## Theme

We use a termly theme. It can be loose e.g., the theme for this term is 'Listening'; listening to a different composer each week; to each other's music; to a recording of music already created.

## Structuring content and timings

This is the structure that we use in Soundbox.

- Tutor briefing
- Soft start jam: it allows for people arriving at different times, choosing instruments and getting settled. It gets the group listening and playing music straight away. Vary the rhythm and dynamic of the jam, and keep it going! As long as 30-45 minutes of jamming works well.
- Soundcheck the volume of the jam during the soft start to make sure it is not too loud
- Briefly introduce the session plan
- Listen to sounds recorded in the previous session (e.g. on portable sound recorder Zoom)
- Respond to the sounds
- Break (a break-out space is available)
- Break out into smaller groups to share musical ideas. Participant Y likes to make up stories and the smaller groups work well for hearing these. C likes the smaller group as it gives them more space to hear and make their sounds.
- Participant Jukebox: a participant shares their favourite piece of music to play or dance to!
- Brief feedback
- Tutor debrief



*"Have a check in with all the participants during the music making session."*

### **Signposting**

The structure of the session written on the board using words/colours/pictures:

- Jam!
- Hello! and listening (to music we made from last session)
- Break
- Small groups
- Share ideas
- Jukebox Jam!
- Feedback

### **Other points to think about**

- Tune into the quietest voices in the room, e.g., participant J is non-verbal and works with Eyegaze. We solo their sounds to hear them clearly. Participant C is shy and quiet so we make sure that their likes and dislikes are noted and solo their sounds as sometimes they can get a little swamped in the group.
- Listening to the room: we walk around the group and listen to (and record the sounds); solos if the participant is happy to play; structuring the piece so that the quieter sounds can be heard by putting them at the beginning or the end on their own or in a duo e.g., J and C we often put at the beginning or end so their sounds can be heard; use amplification, e.g., J's sounds on Eyegaze can be quiet so an amp helps; we use a guitar amp for A on acoustic guitar.
- Have a check in with all the participants during the music-making session either by chatting to them in the group or by noting reflections.

### **Feedback**

- Verbal/Musical: We ask around the group one by one for a word or sound that communicates their experience from the day's music-making.
- Written feedback: lay out paper and pens to use on the way out of the session.
- The participant can answer a simple question: what was your best musical moment of the morning? Is there anything you would like to change? Or they could write down or draw a thought or emoji.
- Check in: student support tutor - a tutor who can observe/help with any personal issues during the session; perhaps could sit next to a particular participant and listen to their thoughts and music; pass them instruments; check between sessions with the families and carers.

### **Support for Non-verbal participants**

- Thumbs up/down
- Use of Makaton
- Soloing/recording sounds in Keezy

*"The participant can answer a simple question: what was your best musical moment of the morning?"*

# Scaffold activities so learners can work together

by *Tim Fletcher, Essex Music Education Hub*



This case study is based on group sessions for learners aged 8-10 years in a mainstream school.

In my experience of encouraging young people to be musically creative, it can sometimes be difficult to get them to do so within a traditional musical landscape, especially if they have limited technical skills related to instrumental playing. I have encouraged some simple improvisation with small groups of learners in the past, but in order to overcome barriers related to technical skill, I had chosen instruments to play that required little practical ability, such as the piano, and the students could generally play individually. On other occasions they improvised as a group on percussion instruments. Sometimes the outcomes were pleasing, perhaps by luck more than judgment, and they were often rather haphazard and lacking in focus.

Last term I ran a 'music nurture group' at a primary school. I had utilised many different activities with the group, including one where the learners would improvise their own musical ideas in response to what I was playing. I had also used the piano to encourage the learners to experiment with improvising, but this seemed to be rather directionless; although successful, it was almost impossible to create something that didn't work. I was interested in encouraging the learners to be more thoughtful about what they were creating, and promoting some thinking about purpose and context.

I was interested in the idea of learners developing their own motifs to portray a character in a film, and I played some examples on the piano, including the two-note motif for the shark in 'Jaws' (which I was surprised that they all seemed to know - I assume that it's so embedded in our societal consciousness that even small children know it...). I decided to use a simple children's story 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff', as the 'baddie' (the troll) could have a menacing motif, and the three goats could have three similar but distinct motifs. One group of three students created the motifs on the piano. The other three students explored the use of percussion instruments as sound effects. To perform the piece, the students had to follow the story and play their motifs and sound effects at the correct time - in a way, the story was the 'score'.



## *Page 29 of 32 - Scaffold activities so learners can work together*

Overall, this was successful, as the learners had the opportunity to choose their own way of using the instruments, especially with the percussion instruments which were used in imaginative ways, sometimes being struck against each other, or being manipulated in unusual ways.

The more structured approach to creativity was a good idea, as the learners could easily relate to the story and understand what they needed to do. The creative aspect was open enough to enable them to do so with relatively little guidance from myself or the other staff. The learners enjoyed the process, requesting that they try it again the following week (I used the story of 'The Three Little Pigs').



*Listen to 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' performance here.*

*"The more structured approach to creativity was a good idea, as the learners could easily relate to the story and understand what they needed to do."*

# Create a positive, nurturing environment

by Annabel Clapham, Essex Music Education Hub



*This case study is based on whole class sessions in a Special Education school setting. The groups were more ability than strictly age based, but were mainly around 7-9 for the younger group and 10-11 for the older group with some slightly older children and some slightly younger in each group.*

When working with a whole class of students, especially with those who have varied and complex needs, it can be difficult to create an environment where all students feel included, valued, nurtured and confident enough to create a positive outcome on their own musical journeys or in collaborative sessions.


I was given the privilege to deliver music-making sessions at an all-age Special Education school throughout the Spring and Summer terms of 2022. The specific class upon which this case study will be based includes students facing many differing barriers and experiencing a wide range of needs and access requirements. This in itself presents challenges in providing a session in a positive and nurturing way. How do you pitch a session to make sure that everyone, no matter their own barrier, feels able to engage in the session and feels supported by you as the provider of that session?

Due to the physical impairments of some of the children I was aware that they may struggle with some instruments that are traditionally used for group teaching. Luckily, each class has a box of percussion instruments which are age and ability appropriate for the students. I had decided the easiest way to lead sessions would be to bring my own keyboard and, upon the teacher's suggestion, stick mainly to using nursery rhymes and tunes the students would know, incorporating some Makaton signage.

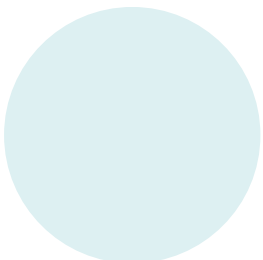
After my first session, where I was struggling to hold the focus of some of the students, I decided in subsequent sessions to try and bring myself down to their eye level by sitting with them on the floor crossed legged with my piano in front of me. I believed this would allow me to engage with them much better as I was no longer 'talking down to them'. I was on their level, engaged with them in the creative process and so was able to help them feel like this was not a normal teacher/student dynamic but something softer, more collaborative, more focused on them and their musical journey rather than a specific outcome.



As with any group interaction there was a mixed response, but I believe overall the positives outweighed the negative. It did create a positive and nurturing environment which encouraged most students to be creative, including one who I was told probably wouldn't engage, to actively participate in the sessions, some with the help of a support worker and some independently. The one drawback was that the piano itself then became a distraction, but I ended up incorporating this into the sessions by setting aside a time at the end of each session to allow any students who would like to play or improvise along with some chords I was playing.



*"... something softer,  
more collaborative,  
more focused on them  
and their musical  
journey rather than a  
specific outcome."*



# Background

Think22, and its predecessor Think2020, were Youth Music funded strategic programmes of work that helped to bring inclusive practice to the fore in music education in England. They focused on:

- Advocacy and campaigning for inclusive practice and addressing underrepresentation of Disabled People\*
- Workforce development across the sector
- Delivery of inclusive music sessions in schools and other learning settings for children and young people

This document, one of a series of four resources, was developed as part of the Think22 programme, working with our four core partners: Essex Music Education Hub, Newham Music, THAMES (Tower Hamlets Arts and Music Education Service), and Coventry Music. These resources are a reflection of Drake Music's core organisational approach of Disabled and Non-Disabled educators, musicians, leaders, artists and practitioners working together.

There is a need for more Disabled leaders, musicians, and educators in the music education sector: Think22 and Think2020 started from the position that as we are working in an environment where Disabled People are underrepresented, there needs to be action to bring about change.

These resources were created to address these needs and ensure conversation and action continues in the music education sector.

Think22 resources to explore:

- [What is Inclusion? Making Music is the Key](#)
- [Supporting Inclusion - Taking positive action in your organisation](#)
- [9 Competencies of Inclusive Music Practice - What does Inclusive Music-Making look like in Practice? \(this document\)](#)
- [Let's Make Music - Fun musical activities for young musicians to learn about tempo, rhythm, melody, and turn-taking](#)

\* The following words and phrases are capitalised as they represent a movement or community: Disabled People, Non-Disabled People, Disability Equality, and Inclusion.