



Sound Connections' Investment Programme for Music Hubs & Partners

Programme Guidelines

About Sound Connections' Investment Programmes

Sound Connections is a creative, values-driven, and youth-centred charity, and our mission is to ensure that all children & young people can experience music & creative opportunities that are relevant to them, & responsive to their needs, in a changing world.

Embedding and elevating the voices of children and young people is in the DNA of our organisation and we have developed our youth voice* and participation practice since our organisation's inception in 2002, and more deeply since 2008 through Wired4Music (W4M), our flagship programme offering 16–25-year-old creatives hands-on support, mentoring, funding, and training through events and professional development activities. This in turn feeds into our wider organisational culture and collaborative approach, with our values of inclusivity, equity, accessibility, and participation at the centre of all that we do, as young people are embedded across all levels of the organisation.

Our investment programmes (Activate, Cultivate, Generate and Innovate) are designed to support young people, practitioners and organisations to:

- Explore and experiment with new ideas
- Develop skills, confidence and knowledge for working inclusively with children and young people through music
- Build networks and professional contacts
- Develop project development skills, such as fundraising, project management and evaluation skills.

**Please refer to our [Youth Voice and Participation Handbook](#) to understand what we mean by 'youth voice'.*

Purpose of the ACTIVATE Fund

Activate is our investment programme for Music Hub partnerships to develop or deliver action-focussed work with their young people.

This year we are looking to support work that has a focus on early years music-making in London only, so that we can test out partnering our [Emerging Music Leader Scheme](#) trainees with Activate activity.

What is on offer?

We have a total of £6,000 to invest via one of two pathways:

1. 3 x grants of £2,000 for 3 x individual Music Service/Hub to each deliver a project in 1 x London borough
2. 1 x grant of £6,000 for 1 x Music Hub partnership to deliver a project in a minimum of 3 x London boroughs.

All grantees will also have access to:

- Termly mentoring sessions with a Sound Connections team member specialising in youth voice and participation and/or Early Years
- Free places on all Sound Connections' training and networking events in the 26-27 academic year, including our Early Years and Youth Voice and Participation training and networking events
- A supported process throughout the lifespan of the investment cycle.

What types of activity can the fund support?

This year we are looking to support work that has a focus on early years music-making. The sorts of things you might want to apply for can include:

- Experimenting with new approaches to early years practice
- Programming early-years focussed activity and developing your relationship with the early years community in your local area
- Facilitating an early years music event(s)
- Investing in training-up some of your team in early years practice so that they can support, programme, or deliver early years activity in future
- Bringing in specialised early years practitioners to lead sessions with your community.

Whatever it is, it needs to be child-centred, engaging in early years activity and development, and supporting your organisation to take your next steps in deepening your early years practice.

Eligibility and what we need from you and your project

1. You must be either an individual Music Hub/Service working in one London borough, or a Music Hub Partnership working across a minimum of three London boroughs
2. The project needs to start in Autumn Term 2026 and be complete by 31 March 2027
3. There must be a focus on early-years music-making and children's voices and participation need to be central to the project
4. We ask you to demonstrate that you are already committed to youth voice and participation and that it is already part of your work in some way
5. You need to show that this investment will take your early years work further
6. Ideally you will match-fund the project by 50% which can be a combination of in-kind and/or cash
7. You commit to attending Sound Connections' youth voice training and network sessions (online) in the 2026-27 academic year
8. You commit to reporting on your activity by the 31 April 2027.

How to apply

1. If you would like to have an informal chat with one of the team, please email jasminep@sound-connections.org.uk
2. [Complete and submit your application](#), along with uploading a [budget form](#), by 9am Monday 29 June 2026. You can find the application questions in one place [here](#).

Timeline

1. Applications open – Thursday 30 April 2026
2. Applications close – 9am, Monday 29 June 2026
3. Projects confirmed – no later than 10 July 2026
4. Project induction meeting – September 2026, date tbc
5. Projects start – Autumn term 2026

6. Projects complete – no later than 31 March 2027
7. Reporting complete – no later than 30 April 2027

Projects we've previously supported

In 2025-26 we supported the following projects through Activate:

- **Bristol Beacon: Youth Voice Development:**
A pilot project trialling ways of developing more youth voice work in their ensembles programme through training, developing youth voice committees, culminating in a major co-created music festival.
- **Young Ambassadors Programme – Norfolk & Suffolk Music Hub:**
A year-long training programme designed to support a diverse cohort of young people with SEND to develop key skills and explore pathways into the music and creative industries.
- **Leics Connect – Leicestershire Music Hub:**
An annual training programme designed to invest in, and develop the skills of, young people who want to help shape the future of music education.

Learn more about each of the projects we supported through Activate in 2025-26 [here](#).