



Music Generation

National Development Office Strategic Plan

2022–2026

**Transforming
Young Lives
Through Music**





Creative Sounds (Music Generation Cavan/Monaghan, Leitrim, Longford and Roscommon). Photo by Kenneth Browne.

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Introduction

“What we want to do is really simple. We just want to make sure that everyone, whatever their background, gets access to music tuition. That’s the idea.”

Bono, May 2010

We believe that it is every child and young person’s right to be given the opportunity to access and participate in music.

We believe passionately in the power of music making to transform lives. We believe that through the joy of creating, learning and performing music together, children and young people’s artistic, educational, social and personal development is empowered.

We also believe that creative and performing Musician Educators play a powerful role in inspiring children and young people through the vitality of their artistry and diverse pedagogical approaches.

During our first decade, we journeyed with many partners to bring this big idea to life for thousands of children and young people. Through the power of partnership - between philanthropy, central government, Local Music Education Partnerships (LMEPs) and the Music Generation National Development Office – together we established the architecture of a national system of local performance music education provision. This new and vital element in Ireland’s music education landscape is a powerful legacy of our first decade, which has given unprecedented musical opportunity to tens of thousands of Ireland’s children and young people. It is also a collective achievement in which many committed partners have played critical roles for which we are deeply grateful.

As we embark on our second decade, our ambition is to strengthen, sustain and secure Music Generation’s position as a national programme of excellence providing accessible and inclusive high-quality performance music education that is diverse, creative and artistically ambitious.

Irish Association of Youth Orchestras with Music Generation Louth. Photo by Marc O’Sullivan.

To realise this ambition for the children and young people of Ireland, over the next five years the National Development Office has set out to:

- Influence and nurture a culture of continuous improvement across the Music Generation LMEP network, so that children and young people have the best possible **quality** of experience and outcomes in a variety of settings and across a range of musical genres and disciplines,
- Achieve the long-term **sustainability** of a publicly supported national system of local performance music education provision, and,
- **Advocate** to key audiences for the right of all children and young people to have the opportunity to participate in performance music education.

The overarching strategic priorities we have chosen – quality, sustainability and advocacy – establish the co-ordinates to guide us on our journey. Throughout the life of this plan, we will remain responsive to our operating environment, we will continuously strive to maximise our impact within available resources, and we will review annually to adjust our course.

Holding a unique position in the Irish cultural and educational context, we look forward to this next exciting stage of development for Music Generation and to pursuing our shared vision for the children and young people of Ireland with many committed partners – an Ireland where every child and young person is given the opportunity to transform their lives through the power of music making and learning. We are proud to present ***Transforming Young Lives Through Music:*** our 2022–2026 strategic plan.

Background & Context

About Music Generation

Music Generation originated in a government-funded¹ initiative in 2001, which sought to address how a national system of publicly supported local ‘schools of music’ might be provided in Ireland. This resulted in the publication of A National System of Local Music Education Services: Report of a Feasibility Study by Music Network² in 2003 which outlined the creation of a model that would be *‘...publicly supported, socially inclusive, community focused, of high quality, to complement the teaching and learning of music in the classroom.’*

Following government-funded pilot programmes, an independent evaluation concluded that the model provided ‘a workable and replicable framework for the development of music education services ...on a wider scale throughout Ireland.’³

Music Generation Clare. Photo by Paul Corey.



In 2008 U2 and The Ireland Funds gifted philanthropic donations to support further implementation of the model. Acknowledging the significance of these philanthropic donations the Minister for Education undertook to ensure the continuity of the programme following the philanthropically funded phase. These developments led to the establishment of Music Generation DAC in 2010 to advance the roll-out of the vocal and instrumental (performance music education) dimension of the model in the feasibility study. From 2011–2021 through two phases of incremental growth, Music Generation expanded nationwide.⁴

Music Generation operates through a devolved model of local delivery within an overall national framework. Locally, the devolved model involves the creation of Local Music Education Partnerships (LMEPs) that are led by Education and Training Boards and Local Authorities. Under the leadership of Music Development Officers, performance music education programmes are developed through these partnership structures in response to local need and context. Nationally, the Music Generation National Development Office (NDO) plays a strategic oversight role from a governance, funding, quality, advocacy and development perspective.

1. Funded by the then Department of Education and Science and the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism
2. Music Network CLG is Ireland's national music touring and development organisation and was founded by the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon in 1986. Music Generation DAC is established as a subsidiary company of Music Network CLG.
3. Thompson, K. (2007). Music Education Project Report. Available at: <https://www.musicnetwork.ie/content/files/Music-Education-Project-Report-KTCL-22-August-2007.pdf> (Accessed: 19 December 2021).
4. 2010–2015 Phase 1: Louth, Mayo, Sligo, Cork City, Laois, Wicklow, Carlow, Limerick City, Offaly/Westmeath, Clare and South Dublin; 2016–2021 Phase 2: Cavan/Monaghan, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Galway City, Galway County, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Roscommon, Waterford and Wexford; 2018–2021 National Expansion: Kerry, Kildare, Longford, Meath, Tipperary, Dublin City, Fingal, Limerick County and Cork County.

Performance Music Education

Music Generation focuses on the provision of performance music education⁵ across the breadth of vocal and instrumental music making, creating, learning and performing in the broadest possible range of genres and styles of music. This includes pedagogical approaches and practices appropriate to particular musical cultures and traditions and is delivered by professional Musician Educators across a range of teaching, learning and participation contexts.

Our philosophy has been built on the belief that children and young people deserve to experience accessible and inclusive high-quality performance music education that is diverse, creative and artistically ambitious. During our ten-year journey, this philosophy has constantly challenged our thinking and understanding about the pedagogy, the practice and the purpose of performance music education from social, cultural and educational perspectives.

In giving life to this philosophy, the range of diverse programmes developed by local partners in response to local need and context has informed some of the distinctive characteristics of Music Generation's approach. This distinctiveness is evidenced through children and young people:

- Experiencing a range of performance opportunities, from engaging with their Musician Educator, to participating in performances, presenting themselves as musicians or artists and connecting with the wider music ecology within their community,
- Making meaning from these experiences personally, musically and relationally,
- Becoming musically skilled, creative, innovative and expressive, developing greater self-confidence and personal growth and becoming culturally and socially connected, and
- Envisioning a place for music in their lives that will allow them to fulfil career, social or personal goals.

5. Recognised by the Department of Education as non-mainstream music education, performance music education complements and enriches, but does not replace, the mainstream music curriculum provision of the formal education system.

The findings from our research partnership with St Patrick's College, Dublin City University – Possible Selves in Music⁶ – revealed these new ways of thinking about the distinctiveness of our approach which aims to move beyond simply training future musicians to contributing to the holistic development of children and young people – psychologically, sociologically, pedagogically, and culturally.

“What is at the heart of Music Generation is strategically leveraging the best outcomes for children and young people, personally and socially within vibrant communities, which have music as part of their fabric.”

Possible Selves in Music, 2016⁷

Over the lifetime of this plan, through research and evaluation, we will work towards articulating a stronger shared understanding of our distinctive approach to performance music education with the Music Generation network.



Music Generation Louth. Photo by Dave Keegan.

6. Flynn, P. & Johnston, T. (2016) Possible Selves in Music: Summary of a research partnership between Music Generation and St Patrick's College Drumcondra. Available at: https://www.musicgeneration.ie/content/files/17012020_Possible_Selves_in_Music_summary_document_2016.pdf [Accessed 25 March 2022].
7. Flynn, P. & Johnston, T. (2016) Possible Selves in Music: Summary of a research partnership between Music Generation and St Patrick's College Drumcondra, page 16. Available at: https://www.musicgeneration.ie/content/files/17012020_Possible_Selves_in_Music_summary_document_2016.pdf [Accessed 25 March 2022].

We believe in an Ireland where every child and young person is given the opportunity to transform their lives through the power of music making and learning.

Music Generation Cork City/The Kabin Studio.
Photo by Dave Keegan.

Mission

Our mission is to empower children and young people to realise their full potential through access to, and participation in, high quality performance music education.

Music Generation Laois. Photo by Dave Keegan.

Values

Quality

Placing quality of experience for children and young people at the heart of our work.

Diversity

Practicing and promoting diversity, equality and inclusion: social, cultural and pedagogic in all settings where we work and have influence.

Partnership

Working collaboratively with many partners using influence and engagement to build trusted relationships to achieve our goals.

Curiosity

Listening and learning; continuously curious about how to do better, thinking big, embracing research and innovation, and planning strategically.

Accountability

Holding ourselves to high standards of transparency, accountability and effectiveness, committing to sustainable growth, and being active in relation to our responsibilities to the environment.

Our Strategic Priorities



Top Right: Music Generation Dublin City. Photo by Dave Keegan.
Top Left: The Ireland Funds with Music Generation Waterford. Photo by Aengus McMahon.
Bottom: Music Generation Laois. Photo by Alf Harvey.

Quality

Influence and nurture a culture of continuous improvement across the Music Generation network, so that children and young people have the best possible quality of experiences and outcomes.

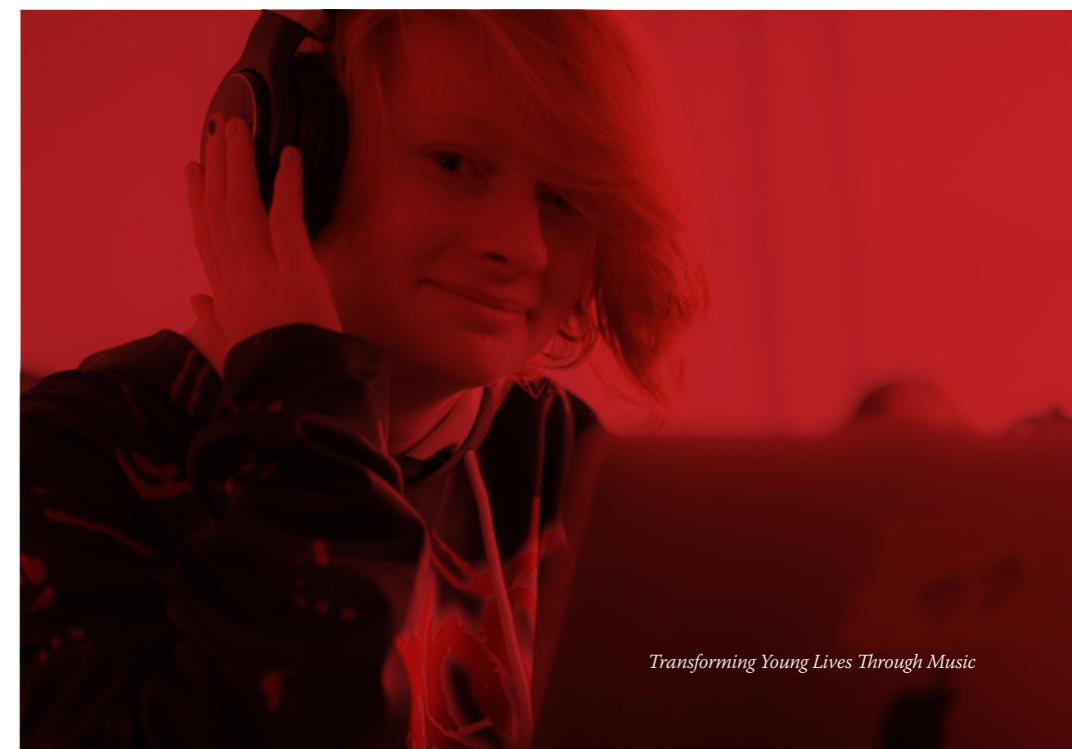
Sustainability

Achieve the long-term sustainability of a publicly supported national system of local performance music education provision.

Advocacy

Advocate for the right of all children and young people to have the opportunity to participate in performance music education.

Music Generation Clare. Photo by Paul Corey.





“Playing with Music Generation has been a great experience for me... I have played with like-minded people who are passionate about music and I have built some great friendships.”

Young Musician, Music Generation Waterford

Music Generation Waterford. Photo by DGM Photographic.

Strategic Priority 1: Quality

Context

Since Music Generation's establishment in 2010 our philosophy has been built on the belief that children and young people deserve to experience accessible and inclusive high-quality performance music education that is diverse, creative and artistically ambitious. Through research and learning, our continuous curiosity about how to achieve this led us to devise a Quality Strategy and to develop a Quality Framework in collaboration with our local partners. The underlying intention of the Framework is that any child or young person engaging in a Music Generation programme should experience the best possible quality of opportunity and delivery. Fostering a culture of reflection and continuous improvement is core to achieving this intention.

Over the lifetime of this plan, we will continue to develop our focus on quality of experience for children and young people. We will achieve this by working collaboratively with local partners to support the further development of a culture of quality. This will be done by developing and strengthening the Music Generation learning network, by investing in research and evaluation, and by initiating targeted funding opportunities to enrich programming and practice.

We also recognise that we have more work to do in developing and articulating a stronger shared understanding of our approach to performance music education across the Music Generation network, particularly in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. Through research, we remain committed to progressing this throughout the life of this plan and to sharing such learning.

Music Generation Clare. Photo by Paul Corey.



Music Generation Clare. Photo by Paul Corey.

Strategic Goal

To influence and nurture a culture of continuous improvement across the Music Generation network, so that children and young people have the best possible quality of experiences and outcomes in a variety of settings and across a wide range of musical genres and disciplines.

Objective 1

We will work in an in-depth and long-term way with Music Generation local programmes to support the further development of a culture of quality.

Actions

- We will evaluate and review our 2019–2021 Quality Strategy and use the learning to inform the development of a revised quality strategy that will be implemented throughout the life of this plan.
- We will develop and articulate a stronger shared understanding of our philosophy and approach to performance music education and share learning across the network.

- Through a partnership approach, we will collaborate with Music Generation local programmes⁸ to
 - Cultivate and inspire a culture of continuous improvement for quality in programming and practice,
 - Embed the concepts of the National Development Office Quality Framework,
 - Engage in quality review processes to build a dynamic picture of local programming and from this compile and analyse qualitative and quantitative data in order to inform and support continuous learning, and
 - Undertake structured evaluation to account for, and assess, the impact of our co-created plans to embed quality in programming and share learning a cross the national network.

Music Generation Laois. Photo by Dave Keegan.



8. This will involve working collaboratively with Music Development Officers, Musician Educators, Directors and Line Managers within Lead Partner organisations as well as members of LMEPs and a future Child & Young People’s Forum.

Objective 2

We will collaborate with local and national partners to inspire and support artistic and pedagogical excellence in programming and practice across a range of settings.

Actions

- Over the life of this plan, we aim to develop additional targeted funding opportunities to initiate creative partnerships that enrich programming, practice and engagement between Musician Educators and children and young people, particularly in out-of-school contexts. We envision that these opportunities will
 - Ensure a balance between performance music education and music-making experiences that occur in school environments⁹, youth and community settings and in the wider public realm,
 - Build upon exciting initiatives that have been developed through our Creativity & Collaboration Fund (festivals, national and international collaborations, progression opportunities to support increased youth participation, community-based ensembles, artistically ambitious programmes which facilitate connections with the wider music ecosystem and the creation of new work for, with and by young people), and
 - Support our learning about further developing digital and technological possibilities for performance music education.

9. Recognised by the Department of Education as non-mainstream music education, performance music education complements and enriches, but does not replace, the mainstream music curriculum provision of the formal education system.

- Working with local partners and the research sector, we will commission evaluation and research initiatives which:
 - Document excellence in performance music education,
 - Examine performance music education with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion and from this make recommendations to develop a more inclusive approach to how we work, and
 - Examine the impact that performance music education has on children and young people’s holistic development and general wellbeing.

Objective 3

We will continue to develop and strengthen the Music Generation national network throughout the life of this plan.

Actions

- We will extend and grow the learning network¹⁰ to encompass training¹¹, continuous professional development and peer learning opportunities.
- We will cultivate opportunities to strengthen our learning network and recognise excellence in practice through national and international research and learning partnerships.
- We will seek to strengthen the position of Local Music Education Partnerships by:
 - Commissioning and publishing case studies to learn more about the role and function of LMEPs in inspiring a culture of ambition for children and young people’s experiences in performance music education,¹² and
 - Establishing an LMEP forum to facilitate discussion, information dissemination and shared learning.

10. In the context of this action, the learning network encompasses Music Development Officers, Musician Educators, Administrators and Resource Workers and a future Child & Young People’s Forum.
11. Accredited and non-accredited.
12. This work will dovetail with aspects of Advocacy strategic priority.

Strategic Priority 2: **Sustainability**

Context

During our first decade, the role and function of the Music Generation National Development Office (NDO) evolved incrementally, as we journeyed from a 'start-up', expanded our development on a phased basis and scaled nationally. Having now arrived at the point of national expansion, the development of this new strategic plan has provided us with the opportunity to envision a deeper strategic focus for sustainability which will involve securing, consolidating, and developing growth and achievements to date.

It will require us to strengthen partnerships with our current funders and stakeholders, as well as exploring the possibility of diversifying and establishing new partnerships during this next strategic cycle for the organisation. It will also focus on extending and deepening programming opportunities, while seeking to ensure strong and flexible governance and funding structures to sustain the wider Music Generation workforce across a range of managerial, administrative, artistic and tuition roles.

Music Generation Laois. Photo by Dave Keegan.



Strategic Goal

To work towards achieving the long-term sustainability of a publicly supported national system of local performance music education provision.

Objective 1

We will work to secure a local and national infrastructure that is well resourced (in human¹³ and financial terms) and characterised by exemplary governance.

Actions

- We will revisit the original aims of Music Generation vis-à-vis the Music Network Feasibility Study to evaluate the strengths of the model, the role of the National Development Office (NDO), and how this relates to the continued work of the NDO, in conjunction with its partners.
- Based on the findings of this evaluation and recommendations, we will assess and determine with Government and local partners the next stage of the governance and financial model, and work with our partners to realise these recommendations throughout the life of this plan.

Objective 2

We will continue to broker strategic partnerships with a range of existing and new stakeholders.

Actions

- We will continue to work with U2 and The Ireland Funds in seeking to secure philanthropic investment from additional partners to advance our vision and mission to develop new growth areas and responding to new options that may arise in the lifetime of this plan.
- We will continue to use the asset of philanthropy to leverage additional investment from additional partners to support these new growth areas.
- We will seek to strengthen our existing partnerships with Government and public sector organisations in education and in the arts and culture sector, and we will develop new relationships with relevant actors in the children, youth and social inclusion sector.

Objective 3

We will continue to provide insight and information to the Department of Education and to local partners in respect of the appropriate human and other resources required to deliver high-quality performance music education programmes.

Actions

- We will continue to keep under ongoing review Music Generation workforce resourcing to understand current capacity, appropriate human resources and the relationship this has to sustainability and quality to enable the fulfilment of Music Generation’s mission.

Objective 4

We will continue to ensure that the Music Generation National Development Office works effectively within available resources.

Actions

- We will organise the available resources of the National Development Office (NDO) appropriately, continue to support and develop expertise within our executive team and review current administrative processes to ensure they are fit for purpose to deliver the goals of this strategy.
- We will uphold best practice in relation to our corporate governance and adherence to relevant legislative and regulatory obligations, review Board membership and committee structures annually and re-organise as required to align with the goals of this strategy.
- We will develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy and work towards embedding it in all aspects of our work over the lifetime of this strategic plan.

13. Human resource includes managerial, administrative, musician educator artistic and tuition roles



Irish Association of Youth Orchestras with Music Generation Louth. Photo by Marc O’Sullivan.

Strategic Priority 3:

Advocacy

Context

This aspect of our plan builds upon U2's founding vision:

“What we want to do is really simple. We just want to make sure that everyone, whatever their background, gets access to music tuition. That’s the idea.”

Bono, May 2010

All children and young people have a fundamental right to participate in the arts and cultural life.¹⁴

Music Generation wishes to continue to advocate for this right to become a reality and for children and young people to realise their potential through access to, and participation in, high-quality performance music education.

During our first decade, our advocacy – building awareness, influencing decision makers, modelling best practice, researching the benefits and telling the stories of young people making music across Ireland – enabled us to build a nationwide infrastructure of performance music education through which children and young people can participate in cultural life. However, we recognise that barriers to access and participation remain – for example, financial, geographical, cultural, technological and available expertise. In some cases, these barriers have been exacerbated for children and young people by the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with our partners, stakeholders and audiences, we will continue to advocate to break down these barriers.

As a learning organisation we will cultivate and nurture a more research based and evidence-informed approach to advocacy and our work, so that the benefits of performance music education are better understood, and more widely shared.

¹⁴ We endorse and embody the values enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of The Child, in particular, Article 31. In 1992 Ireland ratified the UNCRC. Article 31 has two clauses, indicating that parties to the Convention: 1. recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. 2. shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.



The Music Generation Harp Collective. Photo by Dave Keegan.

Strategic Goal

We will advocate to key audiences for the right of all children and young people to have the opportunity to participate in performance music education.

Objective 1

We will continue to raise awareness of the value of performance music education in the lives of children and young people.

Actions

- We will continue to affirm the value of commitments made by Government, policy makers and other relevant stakeholders to performance music education, and the inherent benefits these commitments have on the lives of children and young people.
- We will continue to amplify, promote and increase awareness of Music Generation’s achievements and impact among a range of stakeholders and audiences.
- We will continue to promote access for all children and young people and work to remove barriers to participation.

Objective 2

We will actively encourage and facilitate child and young person-led advocacy that speaks to their experience of, and ambitions for, the value that performance music education plays in their lives.

Actions

- We will seek to increase the opportunities for children and young people to be heard and to influence the work and direction of Music Generation.
 - We will establish a children and young person’s forum to ensure their voices are heard and championed across all dimensions of Music Generation’s work.
 - We will work closely with local partners and existing child and youth forums to give meaningful participative opportunities to children and young people.
- We will nurture strategic relationships and build alliances with child and young person advocacy partners.

Objective 3

We will continue to engage in research and anchor our advocacy in evidence-based learning.

Actions

- We will curate and commission new research with a range of sectoral and third level partners.
- We will use research findings to underpin our advocacy strategies, to stimulate discussion and to provoke debate about the value of performance music education in the lives of children and young people from psychological, sociological, pedagogical and cultural perspectives.

Music Generation Laois. Photo by Alf Harvey.



Music Generation National Development Office 2022–2026 Strategic Plan

Music Generation Dublin City. Photo by Dave Keegan.



Transforming Young Lives Through Music



“Music is the biggest part of my life. I couldn’t go a day without listening to music. No matter what mood I’m in, or how I’m feeling, I have a song to go with that mood.”

Young Musician, Music Generation South Dublin

Music Generation Galway County. Photo by Mike Shaughnessy.

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**Music
Generation**

Music Generation is Ireland's National Music Education Programme. A Music Network Initiative, co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, The Department of Education and Local Music Education Partnerships



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education