Musicians' Union

Experiences of Harm and Risk in Music Education: Raising Awareness and Making Change

A guide to help music students—and their parents or carers—recognise and respond to harmful experiences within music education

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About the guide

This guide provides information for music students (or their parents/care givers) – whether studying at school, in extra-curricular education, or in further/higher education – to be able to recognise harmful experiences in music education and take action to address these. It's also designed to help MU members know what constitutes harm in education for their own understanding, and to take action if needed.

What are harmful experiences in music education?

Recognising and labelling harmful experiences in music education is important not only to prevent future abuses from occurring, but also anyone who has experienced harm in the past to come to terms with what has happened and how it has impacted them.

Harmful experiences may be caused by illegal behaviours such as sexual abuse, as well as discriminatory behaviours such as racism or sexual harassment. However, they may also include experiences that are not illegal or discriminatory but still have a profound impact on someone's experience of music education, negatively affecting their musical engagement, confidence, creativity, or career trajectory as well as mental health. Examples – as given below – include bullying or controlling behaviour from music teachers.

How common are abusive experiences in music education?

We don't have any data on how common abusive or harmful experiences in music education are. However, the Musicians' Union, together with Equity and the Independent Society of Musicians surveyed 680 students in higher education in 2018 and found that students within music, drama and dance higher education are at risk from inappropriate behaviour, bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination – but many do not report these experiences to their institution.

The 2023 Musicians' Census found that 20% of student respondents have been sexually harassed and 31% have either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment. Almost half of student respondents experienced or witnessed gender-based discrimination or harassment. Only 23% of student respondents reported that they hadn't experienced any forms of discrimination.

What's in this guide

Identifying and taking steps to minimize the risk of harm towards yourself or others can be challenging, so we've put together some guidance to help you recognise harm and create more safety.

In this document you'll find:

- how to create safer, more empowering musical cultures.
- how to recognise abuse, discrimination, and bullying; and

- how to make change or raise concerns.

There are also sources of support and advice as well as resources and further reading. The sections are divided into information for under-18s and for students who are 18 and over. This is because there are different behaviours that are illegal and different routes for raising concerns for children (under-18s) and adults (18 and over).

Throughout, we have given examples of harmful experiences to help you recognise them. The examples focus on abuses of power, and they purposefully include 'grey areas' where young people may be confused by the behaviours they are experiencing and have difficulty in labelling them.

These examples are chosen to encourage discussion and awareness of situations that may be difficult to recognise. In addition, while not all the examples below include illegal or abusive behaviour, such behaviour may begin with blurred boundaries such as in some of the examples.

It's also important to mention that **harmful behaviours in music education may be experienced differently by people who are in a minority in that space**. For example, students who are racially minoritised may find that experiences of abuses of power occurs alongside, or are exacerbated by, racism. This context can also make it more difficult to get support or raise concerns.

The information outlined below is specific to the UK context. All examples are either fictional or they are composites, i.e. they draw on aspects of different people's experiences.

About the author

This guide was written by Dr Anna Bull, a Senior Lecturer in Education and Social Justice from the University of York, with feedback from colleagues at Leeds Conservatoire.

Section 1: Creating safer, empowering musical cultures through youth voice

Music education experiences take place on a continuum from abusive to empowering, with many experiences likely to fall somewhere in between these two extremes. Some harmful behaviours that occur in music education are clearly at the abusive end of the continuum, and these may be easily recognisable as discriminatory or illegal. Other behaviours may be situated near the middle, for example experiences that are harmful in subtle ways that students struggle to label. Towards the opposite end of the continuum, many music education experiences are already positive but there may be ways in which they can become even more empowering.

A helpful framework for thinking about this continuum of music education experiences is 'youth voice'. Sound Connections, a music education support organisation specialising in youth voice, define youth voice as 'consulting young people, listening to what they have to say and acting on it together'. The UK has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children have the right to be heard, and to have their perspectives taken into account in decisions that affect them.

Youth voice is not only important for creating positive, empowering experiences in music education, but it is also an important principle in safeguarding. It ensures that young people are listened to in designing safer, more empowering music education spaces, as well as helping create a culture where they are able to speak up about any concerns they have – and listened to when they do so.

We can break down 'youth voice' in music education into two separate aspects: learner voice and musical voice.

Learner voice

'Learner voice' refers the extent to which learners **have a say** in their own teaching and learning. It could involve learners having a say in:

- Whether and how they want the teacher to touch them to demonstrate how to play/sing
- Whether and how they want their teacher to correct any mistakes they make
- What repertoire they want to play
- Whether they want to participate in performances/competitions/ensemble opportunities
- Whether they prefer one-to-one or group lessons

Musical voice

'Musical voice' refers to young people's **creative voice,** as expressed musically. This could include:

- Deciding what sounds good

- Making musical interpretive choices
- Deciding how and whether they want to follow musical conventions

Approaching ‘learner voice’ and ‘musical voice’ may look different depending on the age, stage, aims and experience of the learner, as well as the context for musical learning that they are in. Both concepts are included here to offer food for thought for teachers in their own practice, and we encourage teachers in all contexts to consider the impact of ‘learner voice’ and ‘musical voice’ on their learners’ experiences.

For more resources on embedding ‘learner voice’ and ‘musical voice’ in music education, see this toolkit for teachers or read more in the Resources and further reading section.

Section 2: Recognising abuse, discrimination and bullying in music education

Now we introduce examples of music education experiences that fall at different points on the continuum of abusive to empowering. There are many other examples of harmful experiences in music education that may occur, but these ones are chosen to help identify some experiences that may be seen as normal and acceptable, even though they are harmful. First, examples are given from under-18s education, and then within higher education.

If you want to learn more about raising concerns and making change, skip to section 3.

Examples for students in under-18s education

Schools or education institutions that enrol pupils under 18 – including music education 'hubs' in England – are required to follow statutory safeguarding guidelines.

MU members can access a range of safeguarding resources designed specifically for instrumental and vocal teaching, including a Code of Conduct that we advise all our members to adhere to.

Members who teach will be aware that there is no formal regulation of private teachers in the UK, meaning that it falls to each teacher to satisfy their own notion of appropriate qualifications and training. Learners and parents should ask teachers about their approach to youth voice. If you or your child is learning with a private music teacher, we recommend you follow guidance from the NSPCC on employing a tutor.

Even within music education organisations, there may be cultures that enable – or do not inhibit – harmful behaviours from teachers or other staff/students. In order to help you think about what to look for in a music education setting, we recommend you consult guidance from the NSPCC on 'what to look for in a sports club, group or activity' as well as 'Safeguarding in the performing arts'.

In this section, there are two case studies exploring the types of harmful behaviour that may occur for under-18s in music education, linked to relevant guidance and terminology.

Case Study 1: Bullying and Abuse in Specialist Music Schools

> Sarah was a young teenager studying at a selective classical music boarding school. Her one-to-one lessons with her instrumental teacher often made her upset. Her teacher would often get angry at her because he thought she wasn't practising enough and as a result she would regularly cry in lessons. She felt that he was only getting angry at her because he wanted her to improve, and she also wanted to improve, so she felt that his anger was justified.
>
> Her best friend at school knew about what was happening because she had seen Sarah coming out of lessons upset. However, Sarah didn't feel she could tell any other adults at the school because she thought it was her own fault that her teacher was behaving this way, because she wasn't working hard enough.
>
> Over time, this behaviour took a toll on Sarah, and eventually she decided to leave the school and the teacher, giving up her dreams of becoming a performer.

Sarah's teacher's behaviour constitutes bullying – it is intimidation and a misuse of power which is causing Sarah emotional harm.

This behaviour could also potentially fall under the statutory definition of 'emotional abuse' if the behaviour involves age-inappropriate expectations being imposed on Sarah, and/or causes severe and persistent adverse effects on her emotional development. Emotional abuse is a safeguarding issue which the school has a legal duty to address.

As Sarah is studying at a specialist music school, there should be a heightened awareness of the risks of abuse or other harms for young musicians. Indeed, 'elite' status makes young athletes more at risk of abuse – it is likely that the same is also true for young musicians. Often teachers in highly specialised contexts are professional performers and may not have any formal teaching training. Organisations and institutions providing specialist education should therefore ensure that all teachers have specialist training to ensure their approach is appropriate to working with young people.

Other adults at the school should also raise concerns if they become aware of any potential harms. In order to do this, the school should have a 'low-level concerns policy' where they record in writing any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work. Having a process like this in place can destigmatise the act of raising an issue, by normalising collective accountability in the working environment.

It is significant in the example above that Sarah's best friend is aware of the problems that Sarah is having, but she is also unaware of the possibility of raising

concerns about the teacher's behaviour. The school should ensure that all pupils and teachers are aware of what constitutes appropriate behaviour for students and staff and know how to raise concerns. This could include clear and visible signposting of support mechanisms, reporting processes, and examples of harmful behaviours through posters and other media and sending all students (and their parents/caregivers) information at the start of each academic year about how to report concerns.

However, specialist music schools should go beyond their statutory duties in creating an empowering approach for pupils. They can draw on 'youth voice' approach to do this. Pupils should have the opportunity to discuss and contribute to staff and student codes of conduct and policies for teaching and learning. This is part of 'learner voice': learners **having a say** in their own teaching and learning.

Case Study 2: Power Dynamics in Private Music Lessons

> Sam, who is 17, is having private, one-to-one lessons with a piano teacher at the teacher's house. The piano teacher has a reputation of producing students who go on to win competitions and have successful careers, so Sam was very excited to be able to work with him.
>
> In order to show him how to play certain techniques, the teacher touches the back of Sam's hand with his fingers. He also touches Sam's knee with one finger to show him how to do pedalling. The teacher always asks Sam 'do you mind if I touch you?' and Sam always says he doesn't mind. However, in reality Sam finds it uncomfortable and confusing and would prefer that his teacher didn't do this. Sam also feels vulnerable as he has his lessons at his teacher's house, and there is no-one else around. He becomes nervous about going to lessons due to this discomfort.
>
> Sam hasn't told anyone about this because he doesn't know who to tell, and he doesn't want to make a big deal out of it. But most importantly, he doesn't want to cause trouble and risk his opportunity to work with his teacher. Sam continues with his teacher but becomes more withdrawn in lessons and is relieved when he has an excuse to miss them.

The MU's Safeguarding Code of Conduct advises against touch in music lessons but acknowledges that teachers will make their own decisions about this. Sam's teacher is showing an awareness of the risks of touch and so is asking his permission before touching him.

However, due to the power imbalance between Sam and his teacher – where his teacher is well-known and highly regarded, and Sam feels lucky to be learning with him – Sam feels unable to say 'no' when his teacher asks about touching him.

If he were having lessons in an education institution, Sam's teacher would be in a position of trust towards him as Sam is under 18. This would make it illegal for his teacher to pursue a sexual relationship with him. However, Sam does not know this,

and even though there is no indication that the teacher wishes to pursue a sexual relationship with Sam, he still feels uncomfortable.

This example demonstrates the risks of touch even with consent. Instead of asking permission to touch students, teachers should instead offer pupils options when asking to use touch. For example, Sam's teacher could ask whether Sam would prefer to be shown the technique through touch or whether he should explain it verbally or demonstrate physically.

This example also demonstrates the risks where music education occurs outside institutional settings, with private teachers. Other than directly asking the teacher to stop, there are no options for Sam or his parents to raise concerns about his teacher's behaviour as the teacher is not working under any regulatory body and has not broken the law.

Examples for Students in Higher Education: 18 Years and Over

Once students are 18, statutory safeguarding legislation does not apply. Higher education institutions must uphold the Equality Act which prohibits harassment on the basis of nine 'protected characteristics' such as gender, sexuality, 'race' or age, as well as prohibiting sexual harassment. In England, from August 2025, higher education institutions must follow regulatory requirements to address harassment and sexual misconduct, including training all staff and students to be aware of these issues. Institutions will also have codes of conduct or policies for staff and students that set out appropriate behaviours. Nevertheless, where there exist entrenched cultures that normalise harmful behaviour, this can be difficult to challenge, as some of the examples below outline.

Case studies 3 and 4: Bullying and Controlling Behaviour in Higher Music Education

> Jamie's higher education institution held a public masterclass with a very famous visiting musician and teacher. Jamie was chosen as one of the students to play at the masterclass. During the masterclass, the teacher yelled at him, asking him why he was playing in a certain way, mocked him to the audience, and made a comment under his breath that 'I don't know why some of these students bother'. Afterwards, Jamie felt distressed and humiliated, and considered dropping out of his degree.
>
> There were staff from the institution present at the masterclass, including Jamie's own instrumental teacher. Jamie's teacher asked him afterwards if he was ok, but no-one raised any concerns about the behaviour of the visiting musician or gave any indication that they thought that it wasn't ok. Jamie concluded that his teacher must have agreed with the visiting musician's comments about him. Jamie asked another teacher who had been present if he thought that the visiting musician's behaviour was ok, and the teacher responded that this visiting musician only shouted at people who he thought were really good, so Jamie should take it as a compliment.
>
> This experience negatively affected Jamie's confidence for the rest of his degree, contributing to his struggles with practising and increasing his performance anxiety.

This behaviour is bullying. Bullying is defined by Help Musicians (drawing on ACAS' definition) as

> *unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either: offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting. [It involves] an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.*

In this case, the visiting musician's behaviour is intimidating, and humiliates and undermines Jamie.

Bullying is not illegal under the Equality Act unless it is related to a 'protected characteristic' such as race, sexuality, gender identity, or age.

However, Jamie's higher education institution should have a code of conduct that explicitly states that bullying is not acceptable. Visiting staff should also be required to uphold the code of conduct. As such, Jamie has the option of making a complaint to his higher education institution about this behaviour if he chooses to, following the guidance set out in section three, below.

Alternatively, Jamie might ask his college or department to undertake culture change work to address the culture that allowed this behaviour to occur and led to a staff member excusing and justifying it. For example, bystander intervention workshops could for staff and students could help them to feel empowered to challenge such behaviour if it occurs again.

Jamie could also raise this issue with the students' union, who could work with the college/department to ensure that there are processes in place to make sure that all

visiting staff agree to uphold the institution's code of conduct. Find more information about changing cultures in this way.

> Sara is in her first year of a performance studies undergraduate degree programme in higher education as a singer. Her singing teacher has told her to make various changes to her lifestyle to improve her voice, such as not eating certain foods, giving up her part-time job, and telling her how many hours she needs to sleep each night. She has also given Sara instructions on what to wear and how much weight she needs to lose. In lessons, Sara's teacher chooses the repertoire she will learn and gives her strict instructions on correct musical interpretation. If Sara doesn't do what her teacher tells her, her teacher says she will never make it as a singer. Her teacher also compares Sara to her other students in ways that make Sara feel like she is inadequate.
>
> Sara knows from other students that this teacher always controls her students' lives in this way. Other students either follow the teacher's instructions or get a reputation for being 'rebels' which means that the teacher doesn't put any effort into supporting them. They are not allowed to have lessons with any other teachers, or to participate in masterclasses or summer schools. Her teacher also forbids her from entering competitions or performing without her permission.
>
> Sara can't change teachers as there are no other teachers at her institution who teach in the genre she sings in. Singing is the only thing she wants to do with her life, and she feels she is learning a lot from her teacher, so she realises she will have to do what her teacher tells her. However, she becomes very short of money as a result of giving up her part-time work, and she loses friends as she is less able to socialise. Her self-confidence decreases and she is reliant on positive approval from her singing teacher in order to feel good about herself. She becomes very controlled in what she is eating and her mother expresses concern about the amount of weight she has lost. Nevertheless, her singing is improving.

This controlling behaviour is clearly harmful to Sara. Even though her singing is improving, this does not justify such controlling behaviour from her teacher. This behaviour may constitute bullying, according to the definition given above. The teacher's behaviour could also be discrimination under the Equality Act if it was related to a protected characteristic, for example, if the teacher's controlling behaviour inhibited her ability to practice her faith this would constitute discrimination on the basis of religion/faith. If Sara had an eating disorder, or had previously had one, there are also health risks around the teacher's attempts to control her eating and her weight but this is not related to a protected characteristic.

Sara's experiences can also be contrasted with the principles of 'learner voice' and 'musical voice' as outlined above. In her current situation with her teacher, Sara does not have a say in how she is learning, nor in her musical, creative expression.

Sara – perhaps together with other students in the same position – could talk to the Head of Teaching at their institution about the situation. Ultimately, however, this behaviour from her teacher might be considered normal and acceptable at her institution. If this is the case, then Sara and other students may need to work together as a collective to find ways to challenge the existing culture, as outlined in section three. The principles of 'learner voice' and 'musical voice' could be used to open up a conversation within the institution or the department about positive learning cultures.

Case study 5: Sexual Harassment in Music Education

Eilidh is studying music performance in higher education as a postgraduate student. She has struggled in the past in education due to anxiety and she also has a diagnosis of ADHD. Playing music is one place where she really feels safe and happy, and she has managed to get a place on a postgraduate programme at her dream institution.

She has a very good relationship with one of her lecturers, who is only a few years older than her. This lecturer works a few hours a week at the university and the rest of the time works as a freelance musician. He encourages students to follow him on social media so that he can boost their profiles to his networks. Eilidh follows him on social media and he starts sending her friendly, chatty private messages on the social media platform. She is pleased to have developed a friendly relationship with a musician and teacher who she admires.

Over time, his private messages start becoming more sexualised, for example, he asks her what she is wearing for forthcoming performances and tells her what he thinks she would look 'sexy' in. He tells her about problems in his relationship with his wife and asks for explicit photos of Eilidh. Eilidh is flattered because she finds him attractive but she is also confused because these interactions only occur online and when she sees him in person he ignores their messaging. Nevertheless, Eilidh becomes emotionally and sexually involved with him online and over time becomes more and more dependent on him.

Over time, she comes to realise that this relationship is harmful for her. It is increasing her anxiety and negatively affecting her studies and self-confidence. She feels ashamed of what has happened and wants the messages to stop. However, she feels that if she stops messaging him, it will impede her career as he is very popular and well-known in the music scene locally. She doesn't want to tell anyone what has happened as this may also lead to him getting in trouble and blaming her.

Eilidh talks confidentially to someone at her university about the situation. They tell her that they can only take action if she puts her name to a formal report against him. She feels this is too risky. Instead she starts to avoid him both at the university and in other music spaces but she can't get away from his messaging online. She feels her mental health is deteriorating further and starts to think that her only option is to drop out of university and move back to her home town, or even to take her own life.

Eilidh's experience constitutes sexual harassment, which is defined as:

> *conduct of a sexual nature that has the 'purpose or effect' of creating an intimidating, degrading, humiliating, offensive, or hostile environment (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020).*

It's important to note that, while Eilidh was subjected to sexualised behaviour from her lecturer over a period of time, it would still count as sexual harassment even if it

only occurred once, if it created creating an intimidating, degrading, humiliating, offensive, or hostile environment for her.

Power imbalances, such as between lecturers/teachers and students, or between professional musicians and aspiring musicians, create a greater risk of sexual harassment, and can also mean that it is more harmful when it occurs. This means that higher education institutions need to be particularly vigilant about ensuring that they are doing everything possible to prevent sexual harassment from occurring, or to respond appropriate to make sure it doesn't continue to occur once they receive a report.

While in some higher education institutions, there are policies prohibiting sexual relationships between staff and students, in many others, there is no such prohibition. This can make situations such as Eilidh's very confusing for students as they may not recognise the behaviour as sexual harassment but may mistake it for consensual sexual interactions. This confusion can also occur when students try to report such behaviour to their institution. As such, all music higher education institutions should have policies that prohibit staff from entering into relationships with students over whom they have current or potential teaching, pastoral or assessment responsibilities. If Eilidh is studying England, her institution will also be subjected to regulations from the Office for Students from August 2025 onwards. These regulations require higher education institutions to take steps to prevent abuses of power between staff and students, such as prohibiting intimate relationships between staff and students. As a result, her institution should be proactive in addressing her disclosure, and should explore ways to take action to stop the sexual harassment whether or not she makes a formal report.

In addressing situations like this, it's important to be aware that those who perpetrate sexual harassment may be targeting multiple people, either simultaneously or one after another. As a result, when Eilidh spoke to someone at her university, the risk to other staff and students should have been considered, in a risk assessment. This is part of employer's duty under the Worker Protection Act to prevent sexual harassment to staff.

It is common for people who have been subjected to sexual harassment to be concerned about putting their name to a formal report. This is a valid concern; many people who report sexual harassment experience retaliation (also known as 'victimisation') as a result of reporting someone. However, it can be difficult for employers and education institutions to take action in the absence of a formal report; if they were to fire Eilidh's lecturer, they would have to investigate sexual harassment and find evidence of it. In this case, the written messages would be helpful evidence, but if these messages identify Eilidh as the person reporting, then there could be negative consequences for her.

More and more institutions are now finding ways to take proactive steps to address this issue without putting all the responsibility on victims/survivors. The Equality and Human Rights Commission, in their new guidance for employers on preventing sexual harassment, states that where 'concerns' have been raised, it 'would likely be reasonable for the employer to take steps to investigate and ensure it does not happen again'. While this guidance is for employees only, not students, it constitutes

good practice that should also be applied in higher education. The 1752 Group, a research and campaigning organisation addressing this issue, recommends 'proactive investigations' in such situations. For example, the University of Cambridge has a policy that includes 'university-instigated investigations' which means that when they may investigate in the absence of a formal report.

In this situation, the institution could instigate their own investigation to find out whether other students and staff are being targeted, and if so to gather evidence to take action. At the same time, they should put in place measures to keep Eilidh safe while studying, such as ensuring that she is not being taught by this lecturer.

The institution may also need to work with other musical organisations in their area who employ this lecturer to gather evidence, while sharing any personal data in a balanced and proportionate way.

Section 3: Raising concerns and making change

Even where students' concerns do not meet legal thresholds for schools or colleges to take action, they may still be harmful, for example by inhibiting students' musical or learner voice. Such harms should not be underestimated; they may lead to students losing confidence, losing enjoyment in music, or even giving up music.

Formal mechanisms for raising concerns may work in some situations, while in others, it may be necessary to open up discussions about how to create positive and empowering musical cultures.

Depending on whether this behaviour occurs in higher education (for 18+year olds) or in under-18s education, there are different routes for formally raising concerns.

Raising concerns: under-18s

- If you are enrolled in a school or further education college, there should be a named safeguarding lead who you can talk to about any concerns. They have a legal obligation to act on such disclosures.
- You can read more in the MU's Safeguarding Code of Conduct
- However, many young people in music education may not feel comfortable raising concerns about their teacher's behaviour. Or, the concerns you have may not meet the threshold for taking action over safeguarding.
    - If this is the case, you may need to take steps to try and change the musical culture where you are learning, as outlined below.

Raising concerns: 18-year-olds and over

- Your university or higher education institutions (HEI) should have a system for reporting any harmful behaviour such as bullying, harassment, or abuse.
    - Be aware, however, that HEIs are usually unable to act on anonymous reports. Instead, they should be using anonymous reports to monitor the culture in different parts of the institution.
    - If there are multiple students who are affected by the same situation, you may wish to work together to raise concerns. This may involve making a formal complaint (which should be able to be done jointly) or you may prefer to request informal action be taken.
- Some HEIs' policies will allow witnesses, bystanders or others, including teachers/lecturers, to raise concerns or make reports. However, unlike in under-18s education, HEIs do not always take action on concerns or reports from witnesses or bystanders.
    - If, as a staff member (or any other witness/bystander), you have directly witnessed bullying or harassing behaviour, you can report this yourself. Behaviours still count as harassment (whether sexual, racial, or related to other protected characteristics) even if they were not directed at you; they may still have the purpose or effect of creating a

hostile or degrading environment if you were present when they occurred.

- If you did not witness the behaviour directly, HEIs might not take forward a formal report based on your account. However, you should take other steps to make sure that the behaviour is documented and addressed wherever possible, such as raising your concerns with your line manager or head of department; reporting any incidents with as much detail as possible via an online reporting system (such as 'Report and Support' which is used in many UK HEIs); and ensuring those targeted are signposted to support services within the HEI, in particular specialist sexual violence teams.
- Before raising issues around harassment or sexual violence, it is a good idea to discuss this step with your union representative to ensure that, in the event that you are victimized for raising these issues, you are supported. Victimisation is **when someone is treated less favourably** as a result of being involved with a discrimination or harassment complaint. It is illegal under the Equality Act. Your union can support you if this happens.

- However, while raising a concern or making a formal complaint may help with addressing the situation, it is unlikely to lead to any change in the culture that enabled the behaviour to occur. You may wish to – with others – take steps towards an open discussion of the culture at your institution or in your department.

Changing cultures

For musicians at all levels, your concerns may be not only about the behaviour of a specific person, but also about the culture of your institution or the wider musical culture that enables problematic behaviour. Your concerns might not meet the threshold for taking action relating to bullying, harassment, discrimination, or abuse.

You may need to find ways to open up discussions within your school/college/education institution as a first step towards changing the culture of music education.

- You may wish to ask staff responsible for teaching and learning to open up discussions with teachers and students about enhancing 'learner' and 'musical' voice. This may help to encourage a more empowering culture. If you're in higher education, your students' union may be able to support you with this.
  - Don't underestimate how powerful a safe space to discuss concerns can be.
  - It may be helpful to bring in an external organisation or facilitator to help set up a safer space for these discussions.
- The MU, along with the ISM, have created a Code of Practice to help eradicate bullying, harassment and discrimination in the music sector. **You may wish to try and get your school/college/organisation to sign up to the Code of Practice.**

    - To date, only two out of the UK's nine music conservatoires have publicly backed the Code – the Royal Academy of Music and Leeds Conservatoire. Universities that teach music and have signed the code include: University of Huddersfield, University of Bangor, University of Manchester and University of Aberdeen.
- If you're in a school, college, hub, or higher education institution, there should be existing structures for student/pupil representation, such as a student rep, and you may be able to use these to propose changes.
- If you feel like these steps are too daunting, then start by just talking to other students informally about how they feel, or setting up a reading group where you read something from the 'resources and further reading list' below and discuss ideas. This counts as a first step towards making change.

Section 4: Sources of support and advice

The Musicians' Union Safe Space scheme provides an opportunity for musicians and anyone working in the music industry, including people in higher education, to share instances of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual abuse in the music industry and music education: *theMU.org/safespace*

- NSPCC helpline (for any concerns from or about a child) *nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/nspcc-helpline*
- GALOP helpline: helpline is for LGBT+ people experiencing abuse or violence, such as hate crime, domestic abuse, sexual violence, so-called "conversion therapy" or any other kind of abuse. *galop.org.uk/get-help/helpline*
- Rights of Women sexual harassment helpline (for all adults, including students in higher education) *rightsofwomen.org.uk/get-advice/sexual-harassment-at-work-law*
- Rape Crisis England and Wales: A free phone and online chat service for anyone aged 16+ in England and Wales who has been affected by rape, child sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment or any other form of sexual violence. *rapecrisis.org.uk/get-help/want-to-talk*
- Rape Crisis Scotland: Phone, email and webchat support to support people of all genders living in Scotland aged 13+ who have been affected by sexual violence. *rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/help-helpline*

Section 5: Resources and further reading

Becko L and Coomb L (2022) *Youth Voice and Participation in Music Education Hubs Toolkit by Sound Connections*. 7 March. Sound Connections. Available at: issuu.com/soundconnections/docs/youth_voice_and_participation_in_hubs_toolkit_2021

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