

Sheffield City of MUSIC



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DRAFT



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aims of the report

This report provides an evidence-based overview of the music infrastructure and communities of musical practice that together constitute Sheffield's music scene. It is addressed to two audiences with related but distinct interests. For institutions and decision-makers in the city, it is intended to make the case for sustained, strategic engagement with the sector, and to provide the evidence base on which that engagement can be grounded. For musicians and music organisations, it is intended to extend understanding of the wider ecosystem and support more informed business planning, partnership development and funding activity.

Sheffield's cultural ambition is captured in the Elevate mission of the city's Culture Strategy: to dream big and celebrate loudly, and to bring the world to Sheffield and Sheffield to the world. The music sector is, in many respects, the clearest expression of that ambition already in practice.

The Investment Ask

Sheffield has much to gain from taking its music sector seriously. This report advances the potential benefits of establishing a Music Office – a dedicated body with sustained public funding, clear mandate and operational independence to act on behalf of the whole sector.

This report builds its case systematically toward a single central recommendation: the creation of a Sheffield Music Office – a dedicated, publicly funded body with the mandate and independence to act on behalf of the whole sector. The evidence assembled in the chapters that follow is designed to demonstrate both why that investment is warranted and what it would make possible.

The case for that investment relies on evidence. This report details an ecosystem of extraordinary depth and longevity; a sector that generates economic value across multiple revenue streams; communities of musical practice that have sustained themselves across two centuries through economic upheaval, technological disruption and shifting cultural fashions. The report also describes how the conditions enabling this are under pressure and in need of active support.

Three arguments run through everything that follows.

The first is that Sheffield music has proven conservational capability. The carol-singing traditions that were driven underground in the 1830s are still performed in pubs in the north and west of the city. The brass band founded in 1900 was celebrating 125 years and competing at national championship level in 2025. The recording studio commissioned by Sheffield City Council in 1986 is still in active use. This is evidence of an ecosystem with a regenerative logic that successive generations have inherited and renewed. Articulating that logic, and advocating for the protection of the conditions that sustain it, is the central goal of this report.

The second argument is that this regeneration is intergenerational. Each cycle of Sheffield's musical life depends on the next generation of musicians finding their way in – through school music programmes, through community choirs and club nights, through informal music-making in venues and parks and bedrooms, through the kind of extra-institutional music where the musicians themselves set the rules unsupervised. If the conditions for that entry are eroded – by closed venues, by priced-out rehearsal space, by underfunded music education, by the disappearance of the informal infrastructure – the regenerative cycle breaks. This report argues that there is currently a case for further intervention to ensure young people from every part of the city can participate in music in every form. This is the fundamental precondition for everything else.

The third argument is about why the present moment demands a response. Each successive wave of music technology has created new entry points for young musicians – new forms of skill, practice and creative identity that sustained the next

generation of Sheffield's musical life. Artificial Intelligence may not simply continue this trend. The skill-acquisition pathway that has sustained musical participation for generations – centred on the practices, communities and different ways of learning and knowing that make music personally and culturally meaningful – must be secured. In addition, the value AI generates from music presently flows overwhelmingly to platform owners rather than to the musicians, communities and cities whose creative cultures it draws upon. Sheffield therefore stands at a structural inflection point. Infrastructure to support IP literacy, equip artists to engage with AI on their own terms, and maintain the conditions for young people to develop musical skill is essential. Alongside its educators, Sheffield has outstanding music managers and ambitious new companies already demonstrating what is possible in this environment. They must be given solid reasons to stay in Sheffield. A Sheffield Music Office would support them to shape the terms on which new technology enters our musical life.

Why Music Matters

The creative industries are among the most strategically significant sectors in the UK economy, contributing over £120 billion annually, projecting soft power globally, and generating the world's largest net surplus of creative goods and services. They are also the fastest-growing segment of the global economy. Within that picture, music and creative audio acts as connective tissue: a freelance, project-based workforce that moves fluidly across the entire creative ecosystem, composing for film and television, producing for advertising, scoring for games, performing across live and recorded formats. This makes music both an industry in its own right and an agile labour force that the wider creative economy depends upon.

Music education provides one of the clearest pathways through which young people develop a sense of belonging, purpose and agency, particularly those for whom conventional academic routes feel inaccessible. Amateur participatory music-making reduces social isolation, supports mental health, builds cross-community relationships, and provides structure and purpose for people at risk of marginalisation. In a city where the evidence shows that some people die younger, experience worse health outcomes, and face compounding disadvantage, music can help us to address several of these determinants simultaneously.

Sheffield's music sector is therefore not a single-issue policy concern. It can help us support young people to build futures here; it anchors the neighbourhoods people want to live in; it builds community resilience and supports health and wellbeing; it drives the creative economy; and it generates the international reputation and visitor economy that grows the city. In these ways, music is vital infrastructure for regeneration and development in line with the City Goals.

What the Audit Found

The Sheffield Music Sector Audit identified 1,478 distinct entities across the city's music sector. 597 registered organisations span 27 sub-categories of activity across nine primary areas of the music sector: live music, recording, retail, publishing and sync, music creation and performance, education, management and representation, music and health, and emerging technology.

Sheffield has 123 venues for music – from the **Utilita Arena** to pub stages, churches and community rooms. It has 30

recording studios, 25 festivals and events, 53 music education providers, and a small but growing number of music and health organisations.

The 562 specific freelance individuals identified by the audit include 245 music teachers, 130 solo artists and DJs, 85 freelance musicians, 56 composers, and 45 producers and mixing engineers. The 230 featured artist brands include 194 original bands that were observed to be active in the city during the audit period.

The Sheffield Music Sector Audit indicates approximately 2,100 full-time equivalent roles in the city's music sector. This is a mid-range estimate that includes both employed workers in registered organisations and the substantial freelance and self-employed workforce. This represents approximately 377 music-sector FTE roles per 100,000 inhabitants. Because much of this workforce operates on a portfolio basis – combining teaching, performance, production and other activities perhaps outside music – the actual number of individuals for whom music represents a meaningful part of their working life is considerably higher than the FTE figure suggests.

Sheffield Music Sector – At A Glance

1,478

Distinct entities in the Sheffield Music Register

597

Registered organisations

562

Named freelance individuals

123

Music venues – from stadiums to pub stage

40

SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) codes spanning the sector

1.85bn

Aggregate quarterly Spotify streams from 55 Sheffield artists

100m+

Combined global fanbase of Sheffield artists

~2100

FTE – provisional mid-range estimate of employment in the sector

Strategic Priorities

Cities around the world are investing in music as foundational infrastructure, embedding it within wider development and regeneration strategies. Sheffield's music scene – its venues, communities, institutions, and creative talent – represents exactly the kind of asset that other cities are actively trying to build. The recommendations set out in Chapter 7 reflect recent House of Commons Culture Media and Sport select committee findings and are designed to ensure that Sheffield acts to secure the conditions for the sector to flourish.

A Sheffield Music Office would be a vehicle through which the following overarching strategic priorities are pursued:

- Establish a stable, specialised, publicised point of contact for the local music sector.
- Protect and develop the infrastructure for young people's participation – across both formal music education and extra-institutional music-making with attention to community settings.
- Invest in the management and business infrastructure that allows Sheffield's creative talent to build sustainable careers in the city.
- Intentionally connect Sheffield's music sector with regional, national and international networks for music.
- Pursue UNESCO City of Music status to provide a framework encompassing each of these strategic objectives.

Sheffield's longlisting for UK City of Culture 2029, announced in March 2026, provides important context for the investments proposed in this report. Music is central to Sheffield's cultural identity and to its bid for the designation. The evidence assembled here makes that case in detail. A Sheffield Music Office, established now, would be well placed to develop the music narrative that the City of Culture bid requires and to ensure that whatever the outcome of the competition, the momentum it generates is translated into lasting benefit for the sector.

The strategic priorities set out in this report map closely onto the South Yorkshire Creative and Cultural Investment Framework, approved by the SYMCA Mayoral Combined Authority Board in March 2026. Sheffield's music sector tells this story across all six of the Framework's priorities: building regional pride and telling Sheffield's cultural story internationally; supporting events and live space activation; developing the cultural sector ecosystem and its leadership; investing in the people, skills and talent the sector depends upon; strengthening places and infrastructure; and advancing enterprise, technology and innovation in the audio and creative industries. The recommendations in Chapter 7 should be read as Sheffield's music-specific contribution to the implementation of that regional framework.

INTRODUCTION

A Sector That Doesn't Add Up to One Thing

There is an apparent paradox at the heart of many recent music sector reports. Music-related activity in the UK generates significant and growing economic value and yet the organisations and practitioners who create that value seem increasingly reliant on their ability to make a business case for public support. The explanation is that Sheffield's music sector is not one thing but many things, and that it generates multiple forms of value – social, cultural and economic – that do not reduce to a single metric. Any policy framework that measures only what is easiest to count will systematically underinvest in the parts of the ecosystem that matter most.

Sheffield's music scene reflects this with particular clarity. The city's identity is built, in no small part, on the achievements of its world famous musicians. Yet much of what makes the sector genuinely exceptional is less visible: rooted in place, sustained by networks of mutual support, and not always visible to the institutions whose decisions shape the conditions in which it operates.

The Sheffield music ecosystem is nurtured and sustained by a host of key figures who are very often engaged primarily in community development work of some kind. This reflects something important about how Sheffield's musical life has always been sustained. Much of the city's music infrastructure and calendar of events emerges from community action and civic participation. As ever, the job of institutions is not to lead this kind of effort but to create conditions favourable to it.

Institutional and Extra-Institutional Music

A distinction that runs through this report, and that is central to its investment argument, is the difference between institutional and extra-institutional settings for music. Institutional settings facilitate music within organised frameworks – schools, conservatoires, funded ensembles, registered organisations – where many of the rules are set externally: by funders, by curricula, by professional norms. Extra-institutional settings support music as play – the jam session, the bedroom recording, the open mic night – where the participants feel that they themselves set the rules, unsupervised and un beholden to external authority.

Between these two poles lies a continuum of hybrid and community music settings – the community choir, the folk ensemble, the youth music group – where formal and informal modes of participation meet and reinforce each other. It is in this middle ground that much of Sheffield's most important musical infrastructure sits, and where some of its most distinctive communities of practice have taken root. Community music is the connective tissue that holds the ecosystem together, helping to translate the skills and disciplines developed in formal settings into the self-organised creative life of the city.

These forms each matter. The conditions required for them all to function and interact effectively are distinctive. Sheffield needs a holistic policy framework that is systematically inclusive of the creative ground from which Sheffield's musical life has always drawn its energy.

Methodology

The report was developed in seven stages. It began with scoping meetings with Sheffield City Council representatives to establish the commission's parameters, followed by a literature review to set the policy context. Conversations were then conducted with a cross-section of music sector participants, identified through a preliminary mapping exercise, to explore the opportunities and challenges facing different communities of practice. This informed a systematic sector mapping exercise, the full details of which are set out in Appendix 1. Core data sets were shared with local stakeholders for comment and feedback before recommendations were developed and final reporting completed.

CHAPTER 1

What Makes Sheffield's Music Exceptional?

Conservation as Creative Force

Sheffield's musical life stretches back further than most people realise. The structure of today's ecosystem was forming long before the industrial city we tend to think of as Sheffield's origin story. The 'town waits' – civic musicians paid to perform at meetings of the Town Trust and at the Cutlers' Feast – were active by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the eighteenth century, the town already supported music societies, festivals, instrument makers, composers, publishers and music charities.

Given the apparently transient nature of musical tastes, what might seem hard to explain, and worth examining, is why so much of this music making is still represented in the city today.

The organisations in the heritage timeline that follows span nearly three centuries. They include a brass band founded in 1900 that is currently a national champion, a carol-singing tradition driven underground in the 1830s that never died, a jazz organisation approaching its sixth decade, a chamber music festival that grew from a string quartet, and a council-commissioned recording studio that is still in use four decades on. Taken together, they represent something more than heritage: they are active, practising communities that have survived economic upheaval, shifting tastes and, often, the disappearance of almost every other institution from their era.

Sheffield's conservational capability – its proven capacity to keep musical traditions alive across generations – is the secret ingredient behind the regenerative creativity that has defined its contribution to global music.

Sheffield does not merely produce music: it gives it life, hands it on, and, in the moment of transmission, transforms it. The electronic originators of the 1980s emerged from a city that had been making, listening and innovating for two hundred years. Arctic Monkeys and Bring Me The Horizon were nurtured within a city that had small venues, practice rooms, recording studios, informal networks and a culture of DIY music-making sustained by generations of civic participation.

This regenerative cycle – conservation enabling innovation, innovation feeding the next generation's sense of what is possible – is the mechanism by which Sheffield keeps producing music that matters. It is also the mechanism that public investment has periodically stepped in to reinforce.

A Note on Published Sources

While numerous publications have focused on the musical heritage of Sheffield, any reader wishing to understand the history in more depth might read: Daniel Dylan Wray's *Groovy, Laidback and Nasty: A History of Independent Music in Sheffield* (2026) and Jamie Taylor's *Studio Electrophonique: The Sheffield Space Age, from the Human League to Pulp* (2025). Both were published as this report was being prepared. Schofield and Wright's *Sonic Heritage, Identity and Music Making in Sheffield* (2021) and Paul Long's academic study of Sheffield music, psychogeography and place identity (2014) provide scholarly foundations. E.D. Mackerness's *Somewhere Further North: A History of Music in Sheffield* (1974) remains a helpful account of the deeper past. See the final reference list for more.

Sheffield's Music Milestones – Heritage Timeline

1750s

Sword Dancing

Perhaps Sheffield's oldest living music tradition, continued today by **Grenoside Sword Dancers** and **Handsworth Morris** – both performing over 250 years on from the earliest records.



1830s

Sheffield Carols

Originally sung in churches accompanied by self-taught artisan musicians, from the 1830s onwards they were driven out across the country by the Oxford Tractarian Movement. The carol singing in pubs around the north and west of the city has been described as one of the most remarkable instances of popular traditional singing in the British Isles.

1853

Woodhouse Prize Band

Founded during the era of brass band promenades in city parks. Still competing today, one of South Yorkshire's most enduring musical institutions.

1864

Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus

Began as Sheffield Amateur Musical Society; formed its current identity through a 1937 merger with Sir Henry Coward's Sheffield Musical Union. Active and performing internationally today.

1900

Unite the Union Brass Band

Founded by Police Inspector William Bestwick; 2025 Yorkshire Regional Champions, celebrating 125 years. Featured in The Full Monty.

1919

Crookes Working Men's Club

A cornerstone of Sheffield's club circuit – the network of working men's clubs that built live music and variety performance infrastructure across 20th-century Britain.

1927

Music Dept, University of Sheffield

Formal music education in Sheffield dates to the 19th century; the University of Sheffield established its department in 1927, now part of the School of Languages, Arts & Societies.

1932

Sheffield City Hall

The Grade II-listed Barkers Pool concert hall remains one of Sheffield's most important live music venues, hosting orchestral performances, comedy and major popular artists.

1950

Sheffield Chamber Orchestra

A long-running amateur orchestra providing accessible orchestral music-making to players and audiences across the city, sustaining the classical tradition outside professional institutions.

1964

City of Sheffield Youth Orchestra

One of England's leading youth orchestras, providing high-quality orchestral training to young musicians from across South Yorkshire since 1964.

1970

Sheffield Music Service

Sheffield's city-wide music education service. Since 2024 operating as part of the South Yorkshire Music Hub, delivering whole-class teaching, youth ensembles, choirs and individual tuition to tens of thousands of young people.

1971

Crucible Theatre

Before becoming home to Music in the Round and Saturday folk sessions, the Crucible hosted Meatwhistle Youth Theatre – credited with nurturing Sheffield's electro-pop pioneers of the 1980s.

Sheffield Jazz

One of the UK's most active jazz promoters, running a year-round programme of concerts and an annual summer festival that attracts internationally celebrated performers.

1978

Record Collector

South Yorkshire's largest independent vinyl and CD store, with over 50,000 records on Fulwood Road in Broomhill. Named one of the UK's top five record shops.

1984

Music In The Round

Founded by the Lindsay Quartet, now one of England's most acclaimed chamber music festivals – based in the Crucible's intimate studio theatre, presenting artists of international standing.

1986

Red Tape Studios

Established following the Council's 1984 Municipal Recording Project report – a direct policy intervention. Currently used by **Sheffield Music Hub** and **Sheffield Music School** (TRACKS).

SADACCA

Hosted the first **Music in the Sun** festival organised by Austin Grant in 1989. Remains an active cultural and community anchor on The Wicker.

1991

Sheffield Arena (Utilita Arena)

The 13,600-capacity arena is one of the UK's busiest large live music venues – hosting everything from arena rock to classical concerts.

1994

Brown McLeod

Sheffield-based specialist music industry consultancy. Reflects Sheffield's strength in high-value, business-to-business creative services.

1997

Corporation

Sheffield rock and metal's foundational club venue. Continues a heavy music tradition stretching back to the 1970s Wapentake.

Yellow Arch Studios

Recording studio and creative workspace in Neepsend; one of Sheffield's most active independent production facilities and a catalyst in the careers of some of the world's most successful popular musicians.

1998

The Tuesday Club

The longest-running underground electronic dance night in Sheffield – joining a vital thread in the city's tradition of grassroots culture, from Jive Turkey through Gatecrasher to Hope Works.

2004

Richtone Music

The UK's premier second-hand music instrument dealership and showroom.

2009

Tramlines Festival

Launched as a free, city-wide festival across dozens of Sheffield venues with an estimated 140,000 at its first edition. Now a major ticketed outdoor festival at Hillsborough Park.

While no timeline can be complete or exhaustive, this is offered to outline an argument: it documents the cumulative depth of Sheffield's musical inheritance – its most resilient assets. It also raises important questions: what other institutions might the city benefit from, and what would it take for organisations founded today to still be active in 2050, 2075, 2100? What are the conditions that make that kind of survival possible and who is responsible for creating them? A Sheffield Music Office is one direct answer to those questions: a body whose explicit mandate includes advocating for and protecting the conditions on which the next generation of Sheffield's musical life depends, ensuring that organisations founded today have the support they need to thrive.

1830

1840

1850

1860

1870

1880

1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

CHAPTER 2

Mapping the Ecosystem

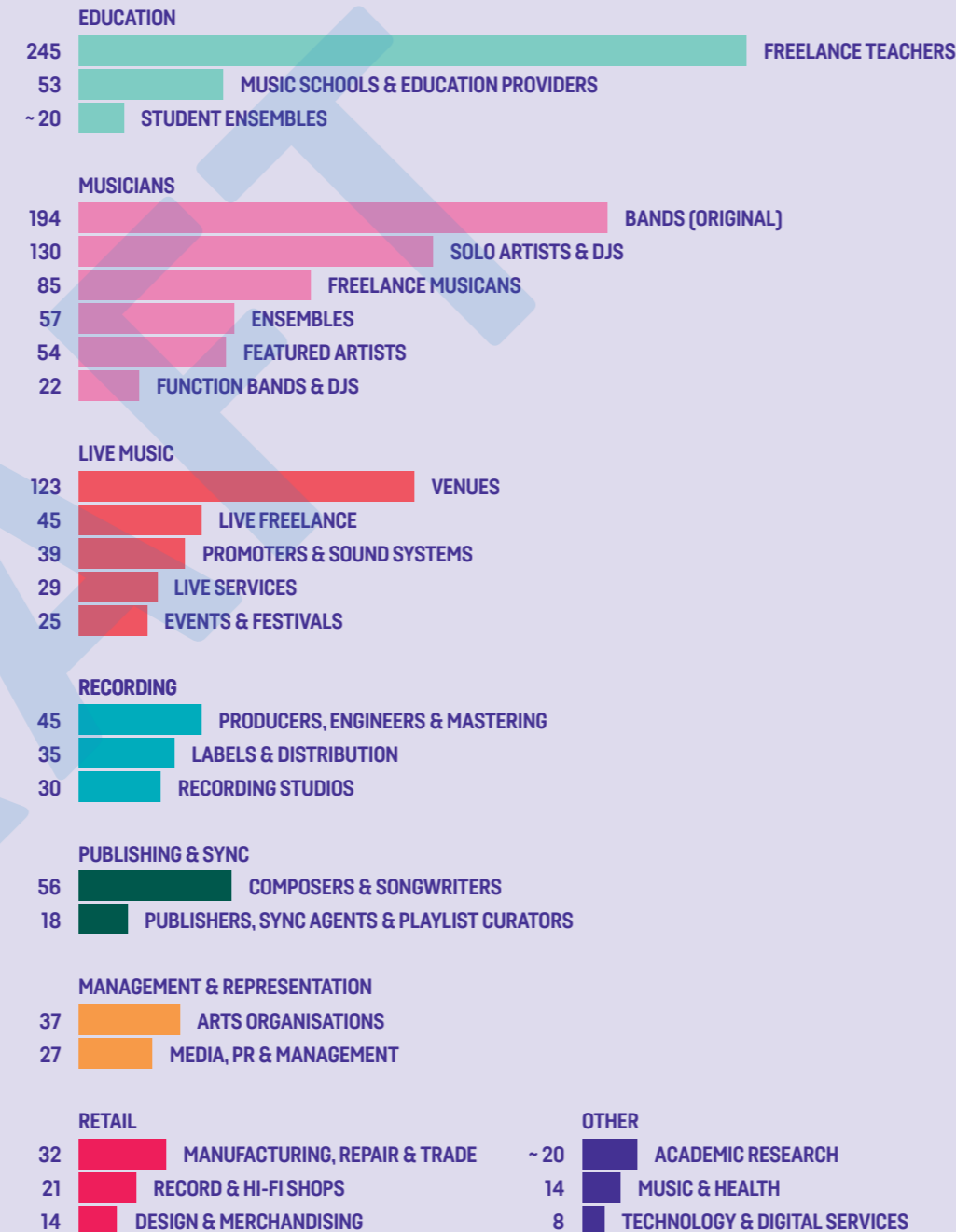
The Sheffield Music Register

The Sheffield Music Register identified **1,478** distinct entities across the music sector.

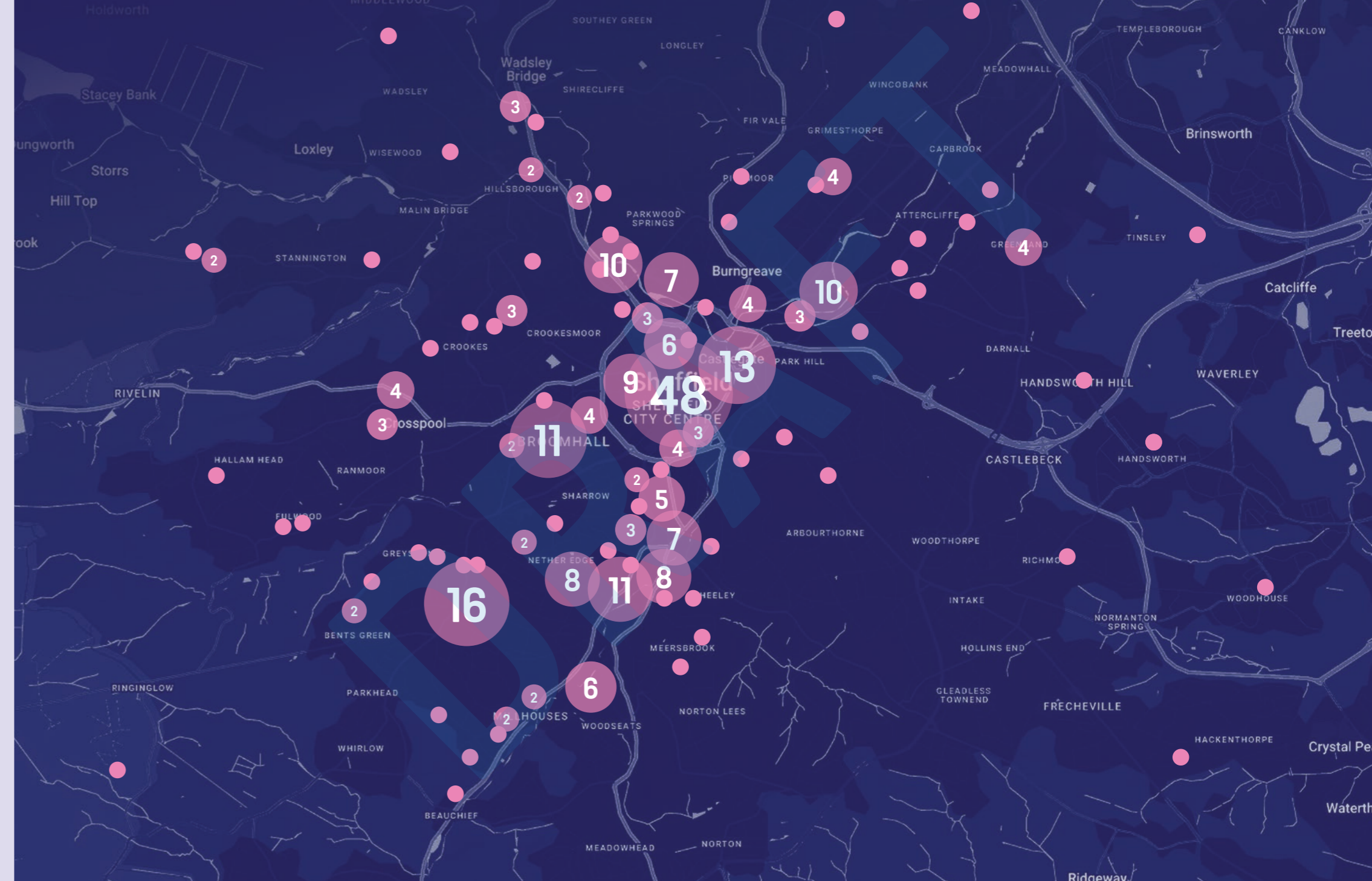
These comprise **597** registered organisations, **562** named individuals working on a self-employed or freelance basis, **248** featured artist brands, and a further **71** organisations and trading names identified but not yet matched to a registered entity or named individual.

Few cities of comparable size anywhere in the world have a music scene that can point to an equivalent combination of depth, diversity and international cultural impact. These numbers begin to explain why.

A Sector Across Nine Revenue Streams 1,428 TOTAL



Geospatial heat map – music infrastructure distribution across Sheffield postcodes



The Live Music Infrastructure

Venues are the largest single registered category, with 123 identified: one stadium, one arena, ten outdoor spaces, twelve large indoor venues, eleven medium-capacity spaces, sixty-nine small venues, sixteen churches with active music programming, and four community centres.

This network is the physical foundation of the live music ecosystem. It is where artists develop, where audiences are built, and where the social and economic value of live music is generated. Behind the venues sits a substantial production and support infrastructure: thirty recording studios, twenty-nine live services companies, thirty-nine promoters and sound systems, and twenty-five festivals and events.

Sheffield's festival landscape ranges from **Tramlines** (capacity 40,000 at Hillsborough Park) to **No Bounds Festival** – a flagship of the city's electronic music scene – and **Sensoria**, which has pioneered connections between music, film and digital creativity. The grassroots venue circuit includes a distinctive cluster of independent spaces: **Sidney & Matilda** on Howard Street, **Cafe #9** in Nether Edge, and **Mary Street Live** all represent the kind of artist-centred infrastructure on which the wider ecosystem depends.

Recording, Production and Creative Technology

Sheffield's thirty recording studios range from professional multi-room facilities – such as **Yellow Arch Studios** and **Studio Tecna** – to project studios and home recording operations. The city's history of producing record labels and distribution operations includes Warp Records, whose roster and back catalogue have helped define the global electronic music canon. **Hudson Records** is a more recent arrival and provides a reminder of the central role Sheffield plays in the UK folk scene. **Hyperactive World** is home to a growing roster of dance music artists.

Tickets for Good represents a newer generation of creative technology enterprises working at the intersection of live events and social impact. It is part of an emerging ecosystem that connects Sheffield's deep music heritage, tech start-ups and prominent regional artists such as YungBlud.

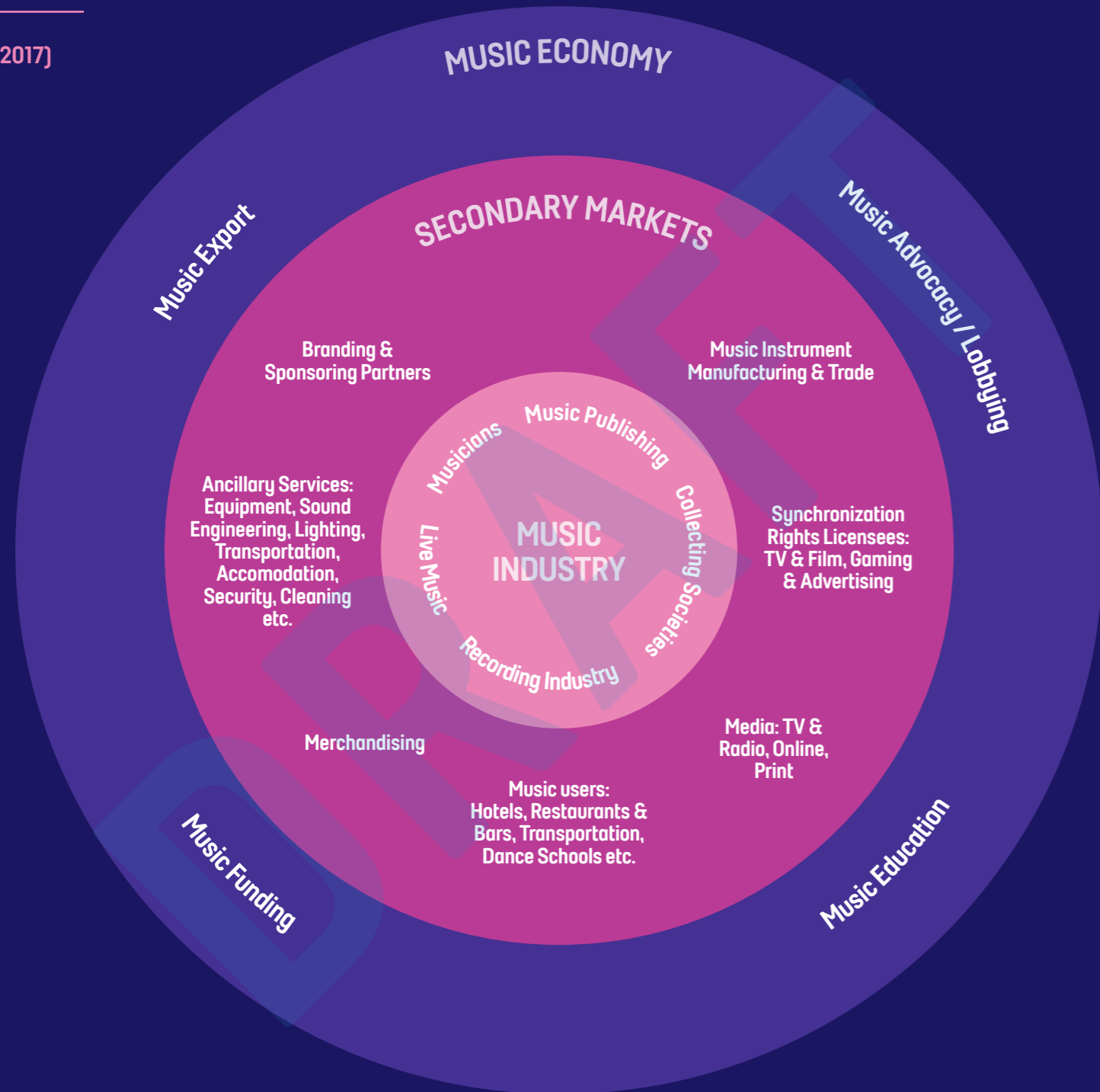
The Freelance and Independent Workforce

The 562 freelance individuals identified in the audit represent only those whose details are publicly available. The actual freelance workforce is certainly considerably larger. The 245 identified music teachers alone – working across home tuition, community music settings, schools and colleges – represent a significant body of practitioner knowledge and educational capacity that sits almost entirely outside the formal organisational structures that policy typically engages with.

The 85 freelance musicians, 56 composers and 45 producers and mixing engineers documented in the Register work across every part of the sector, often combining multiple income streams. Their economic contribution is substantially underestimated by any methodology that focuses on registered organisations.

That a sector of this scale, diversity and complexity currently has no dedicated coordinating body is one of this report's central findings. The Sheffield Music Register makes the case for a Music Office visible in data: it maps a sector whose value and complexity justify the investment, and whose coordination needs cannot be met by any of the individual organisations operating within it.





CHAPTER 3

The Sheffield Music Economy

A Sector That Spans Forty Industries

Music's economic reach extends considerably further than the SIC codes associated with arts and entertainment. The audit found activity relevant to the music sector distributed across 40 different SIC classifications, spanning manufacturing, wholesale and retail, hospitality, information and communication, professional services, education, and human health and social work.

This breadth matters for how the value of the sector is measured and communicated. A policy framework that looks only at Section R Division 90 SIC codes (e.g. performing arts and support activities) will miss the music teachers whose businesses are classified under education, the recording engineers whose studios are classified under information and communication, the instrument manufacturers whose output is classified under manufacturing, and the health practitioners whose work is classified under social care. The Sheffield music economy is a genuine cross-sector phenomenon.

Employment

Based on a process of cross referencing with the findings of other studies (Sheffield Cultural Audit 2024, This is Music 2024, BRES), this audit estimates approximately 2,100 FTE roles in the Sheffield music sector. This provisional figure suggests

Sheffield may be ahead of cities with larger and better-funded music sectors in terms of music employment density, and reflects the depth of the city's practitioner base relative to its population.

This audit provides the evidential foundation; the recommended next step – set out in Chapter 7 – is a dedicated economic impact study that would establish a definitive GVA figure for the sector and complete the investment case. Such a study would produce the headline economic impact figure needed for the city's bids to Arts Council England, government infrastructure programmes and corporate partners; enable direct comparison with peer cities; and provide a robust baseline against which the impact of future interventions can be measured.

Revenue Streams and Income Diversification

The economic analysis documents 27 distinct revenue sub-categories across nine primary areas of activity. The picture is one of significant income diversification: Sheffield's music sector generates revenue from live performance, recorded music, physical and digital retail, publishing and synchronisation, education, B2B services, and emerging health and technology applications.

This diversification is both a strength and a challenge. It means the sector is resilient against single-point failure – a collapse in live music revenues, for instance, does not necessarily

immediately damage the education, recording or health strands of the sector. But it also means that many practitioners are managing multiple income streams simultaneously, with the associated complexity and precarity that implies.

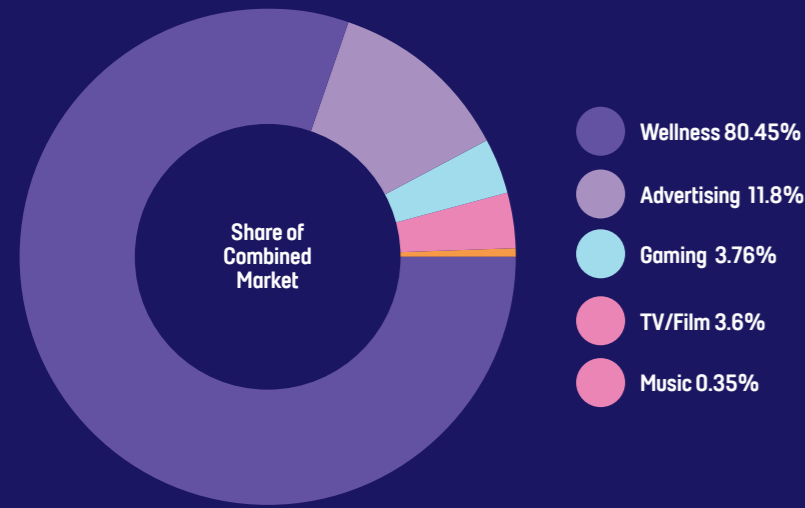
The Accelerate mission in Sheffield's Culture Strategy calls on the local creative industries not merely to grow, but to make more of a difference to people's lives.

Music underpins substantial economic activity that sits outside the sector's own classification. Background music shapes the retail, hospitality, fitness and workplace environments in which much of daily economic life takes place. Music-based wellbeing applications are a growing segment of consumer markets. Therapeutic and clinical uses of music are attracting increasing research investment and NHS attention.

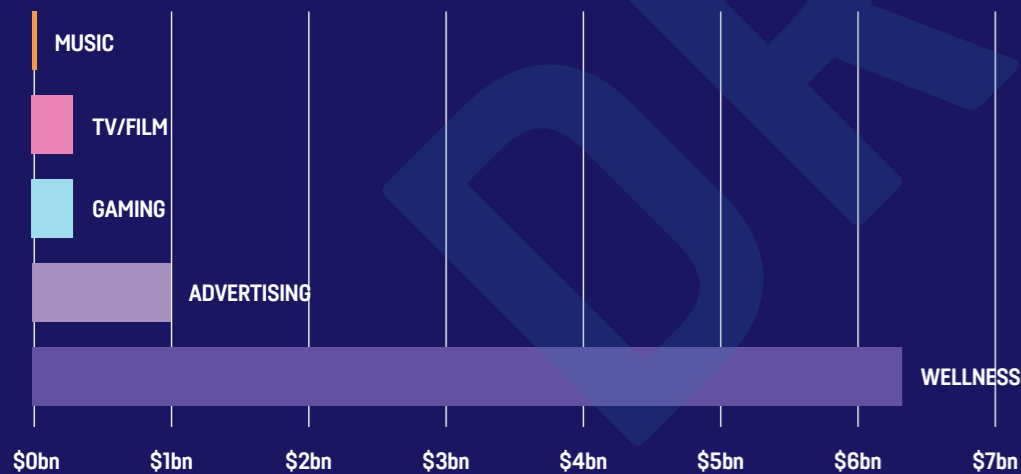
These applications are currently peripheral to how Sheffield accounts for its musical economy. They need not remain so. As the boundary between music, wellness and digital experience continues to blur – driven by immersive audio technology, social prescribing frameworks and a growing evidence base for music's health benefits – Sheffield's combination of creative audio expertise, health innovation infrastructure and academic research capacity positions it well to engage with the opportunities this creates. This convergence sits squarely

The Wellness Opportunity in Context

The global wellness industry was valued at \$6,320 billion in 2024 – larger than music, gaming, TV/film and advertising combined. Music has historically engaged with this market only at its margins. That may be about to change.



Global Market Size, 2024 (USD billions)



within the South Yorkshire Creative and Cultural Investment Framework's "Enterprise, technology, and innovation" priority, which actively supports CreaTech development across the region. Chapter 4 returns to this theme in more detail.

Sheffield's position at the intersection of music technology and health innovation creates a specific economic opportunity within this broader wellness market. Immersive audio, binaural sound and spatially-aware music applications are generating new clinical and therapeutic tools whose development requires precisely the combination of creative audio expertise, academic research capacity and technology infrastructure that Sheffield can offer. The chapter that follows explores this opportunity in terms of the social and health benefits of musical participation; Chapter 5 addresses the technological dimensions of audio innovation. Both arguments point in the same direction: music's engagement with health and wellbeing is positioned to become more central to Sheffield's economic story.

Sheffield's Position in the UK Music Economy

The UK is one of only three net exporters of music in the world. Within that context, Sheffield occupies a specific and distinctive niche: exceptionally strong in live music, in audio engineering and production, in music education, and in the cross-sector innovation which is beginning to connect music with health and digital technology in new ways. It is less developed than Manchester or London in terms of management, publishing and sync licensing infrastructure – a gap this report identifies as a strategic priority.

Sheffield's comparative strengths in music employment intensity and in grassroots venue provision are particularly significant. They demonstrate a sector that has depth: one in which musical participation is embedded across the population.

Sheffield's position as a music city of genuine international standing, combined with its structural gap in management, business development and sync infrastructure, means that the sector's full economic potential is currently unrealised. The coordination, advocacy, IP support and business development that a Music Office would provide are the practical interventions through which that gap begins to close.



CHAPTER 4

Music, People and Health

The Intergenerational Argument

The regenerative cycle described in Chapter 1 – conservation enabling innovation, innovation feeding the next generation's sense of the possible depends on conditions that must be actively maintained. The most important of those conditions is that young people from across the city must be able to participate.

This participation takes different forms, and all matter. Institutional music – the school orchestra, the Music Hub ensemble, the youth choir, the FE or HE course – provides structured access, professional tuition and the acquisition of skills and knowledge that have accumulated within musical traditions, sometimes over centuries. Extra-institutional music – the bedroom recording, the open mic, the jam session in a rehearsal room, the band that forms because two teenagers happen to both share similar musical tastes and aspirations – provides something equally vital: music as play, music on the musician's own terms, music where the rules are set from inside rather than imposed from outside. This is a continuum rather than a binary – with community infrastructure often acting as a bridge to help facilitate people's access to a full range of settings and contexts for music.

The conditions for young people's musical participation – in institutional and extra-institutional settings – are the precondition for everything else Sheffield's music sector achieves.

Sheffield currently has strong institutional provision. **Sheffield Music Hub** and the South Yorkshire Music Hub deliver whole-class instrumental teaching, youth ensembles, choirs and individual tuition to tens of thousands of young people across the city. **Sheffield Music Academy** provides specialist provision for young musicians who show outstanding ability and potential. Primary and secondary schools and colleges deliver music in the curriculum up to GCSE and, in some cases, level 3. The **University of Sheffield** and the private sector **Waterbear College of Music** support degree and postgraduate level study.

But institutional provision is not evenly distributed, and access is not guaranteed. The audit found significant variation in music education provision across Sheffield's schools, with pupils in lower-income areas less likely to have access. Music education providers are significantly concentrated in the city centre and leafy inner suburbs; the outer estates and peripheral communities are less well served. These are important equity concerns. They are also a mechanism by which the intergenerational pipeline is constrained. Addressing these equity gaps is a priority that aligns directly with the South Yorkshire Creative and Cultural Investment Framework's

"People, skills, and talent" strand, which commits to ensuring that every child in the region has access to high-quality creative experiences.

There is evidence that this picture is changing. The **Harmony Works** project based at Canada House will play a particular role in addressing issues of access. The quality and reach of its partners organisations' programmes represent genuine civic investment in young people's musical participation. That investment should continue to be recognised and supported. It should also be purposefully extended, ensuring other organisations in the city can access the resources they need to ensure that the continuum of institutional, community and extra-institutional settings are represented in different areas of the city and are reflective of the many distinctive communities of musical practice.

The Extra-Institutional Dimension

The extra-institutional dimension of Sheffield's musical life is harder to map and easier to overlook. It shows up in the audit as the 194 original bands observed as active during the recording period, the 130 solo artists and DJs, the sixty-nine small venues that provide affordable space for that activity, and the thirty promoters and sound systems that give it an audience. But the informal infrastructure – the network of basement rehearsal rooms, the open mic nights, the DIY recording operations – is largely invisible in the formal data.



It is in this extra-institutional space that Sheffield has historically produced its most significant creative innovations. The electronic music scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s was not primarily a product of institutional support; it was a product of young people, many from working-class backgrounds, in a de-industrialising city finding access to affordable synthesisers and cheap rehearsal space, and making something extraordinary on their own terms. Arctic Monkeys' emergence in the early 2000s followed a similar logic: DIY recordings, small venues, a self-organising fan base that preceded any institutional recognition.

The lesson is not that institutions are irrelevant to innovation – institutions have often been instrumental in creating the conditions that enabled Sheffield's creative explosions. It is that the relationship between institutional support and extra-institutional creative freedom needs careful consideration. Over-institutionalisation can constrain and stifle the thing it is trying to support. The policy goal should be to maintain and extend the conditions – affordable space, accessible venues, light-touch support – in which extra-institutional music-making can flourish on its own terms.

There are numerous contemporary examples in Sheffield of organisations that bridge the institutional and extra-institutional. **Slambarz**, **RiteTrax**, **Pattern & Push**, **Hybrid3**, **TRACKS**, **Spring Tank** and others provide structured pathways into music production, performance and entrepreneurship for young people who are underserved by institutional provision, while maintaining the authenticity and self-direction that makes those pathways meaningful. Their function is vital, their effectiveness is often founded on the reputation and energy of key individuals, their hybrid positioning is key. The sector as a whole has a collective interest in their ability to develop sustainable business models to support their work.

The relationship runs in both directions. Sheffield's institutional settings – its schools, colleges, universities, and formal music education providers – stand to benefit materially from clearer and more deliberate integration with this extra-institutional

world. Access to a broader pool of freelance practitioners, session musicians, producers and music entrepreneurs would enrich institutional curricula, bring live industry experience into formal learning environments, and create employment pathways that neither sector can fully provide alone. At present, that integration is largely ad hoc, dependent on individual relationships rather than systemic connection. A Sheffield Music Office, maintaining a living register of the sector's freelance workforce and brokering relationships between institutional and extra-institutional providers, would be well-placed to change that to mutual benefit.

Music, Wellbeing and the Emerging Health Paradigm

The full implications of participation in music for public health and wellbeing are becoming more fully understood. What was once regarded as a peripheral concern – music as an add-on to clinical healthcare – is increasingly recognised as part of a substantive evidence base with implications for NHS commissioning, social care delivery and public health strategy.

Sheffield is already at the forefront of this emerging paradigm. University of Sheffield is working with music and dementia organisations to deliver pioneering music-based interventions for people with dementia and their carers, building an evidence base that has attracted national recognition and contributed to the broader case for social prescribing. This work demonstrates the clinical and social value of music-based interventions and the strength of combining music and technology for healthcare applications.

The audit identified fourteen music and health organisations in the Sheffield Music Register, but this figure almost certainly understates the true extent of music's role in Sheffield's health and social care ecology. Community choirs, brass bands, folk sessions and informal music-making groups all generate wellbeing benefits for their participants – benefits that are not typically captured in SIC code data or sector reports, but that

represent a significant and largely uncounted public health contribution. Many of these groups extend their reach far beyond their own membership – visiting hospices and care homes, performing at fundraising events, participating in civic ceremonial life – generating social value that is entirely invisible in standard sector accounting.

Music is increasingly recognised as an important part of Sheffield's health and social care infrastructure – and it should be invested in accordingly.

The national conversation about social prescribing – the practice of connecting people to community activities and support as a component of primary care – creates a specific opportunity for Sheffield to demonstrate what music-based social prescribing looks like at city scale. The Music Office recommended in Chapter 7 should have a specific mandate to develop Sheffield's music and health offer in partnership with the NHS, Sheffield City Council's public health directorate, and the city's academic institutions.

Sheffield's institutional music organisations – its orchestras, choirs, education providers and funded ensembles – achieve a great deal with relatively modest public subsidy. Arts Council England investment data consistently shows that Sheffield receives lower per capita National Portfolio Organisation funding than comparator cities including Leeds and Manchester, both of which benefit from anchor institutions – Opera North, the Hallé – with long-established funding relationships at national level. Closing that gap is an explicit objective of Sheffield's Culture Strategy and should be a priority for the music sector as part of its engagement with that strategy. Reinforced institutional base – better resourced ensembles, a more secure music education offer, better-funded community music organisations – would not only benefit those

organisations directly. It would strengthen the connective infrastructure that sustains Sheffield's wider musical ecosystem, and make a more compelling case for the city as a destination for cultural investment.

Community Participation and the Voluntary Sector

The voluntary and community music sector is one of Sheffield's most significant and least visible assets. The ensembles documented in the Sheffield Music Register – choirs, orchestras, brass bands, chamber groups, folk and traditional ensembles – collectively involve several thousand adult participants.

Sheffield Community Choir exemplifies what an accessible, well-organised community music organisation can achieve: building participation, creating belonging, and generating the kind of sustained social value that health services, housing associations and local authorities are increasingly willing to commission and fund. **Concerteenies**, working with very young children and their families, demonstrates the reach of music participation right into the early years – the developmental stage at which musical engagement has the strongest and most lasting impact on cognitive and social outcomes. **Under The Stars** collaborates with local artists, musicians, venues, schools, community groups and arts organisations to empower and enable people with learning disabilities by developing their individual talent, skills, confidence and independence.

The audit also captures the breadth of Sheffield's grassroots music-making across genres and communities: from the Sheffield Carols tradition in pub sessions around the north and west of the city, to the active programme at **SADACCA** on The Wicker, to the folk sessions in the city's pubs, to the brass band competitions at which Sheffield bands compete nationally. These are the living substrate on which the conservational capability described in Chapter 1 depends.

Case study: Folk Factory Youth

Folk Factory Youth, run by Soundpost, is a secondary-aged music and dance ensemble meeting weekly in Hillsborough. Young people aged 11 to 18 learn folk tunes and songs by ear – from any instrument – and a range of traditional dance forms including rapper sword, longsword, clog and northwest morris. No grades are required. Bursaries are available for those in financial difficulty.

What makes Folk Factory Youth a useful illustration of how Sheffield's musical ecosystem works is its structural position within a wider intergenerational programme. Soundpost runs parallel groups for early years (Little Violins), juniors (primary age), and seniors in its youth program, and also runs a program for tunes, songs and clog dance for adults – meaning a young person who arrives at Folk Factory at eleven can follow a continuous thread of participation into adult musical life, while an older member's presence in the same organisation keeps the tradition alive for the next generation. This is precisely the kind of self-sustaining intergenerational pipeline that Chapter 1 of this report describes as Sheffield's 'conservational capability' – and it is being delivered here by a community music organisation running on modest resources with deep roots in the city.

Notably, young people who come through Folk Factory Youth frequently go on to organise their own informal sessions, jams, ceilidhs and amateur/professional bands – making the transition from the community music setting into self-directed, extra-institutional activity that the organisation itself actively encourages. The organisation exemplifies the continuum this report describes: a structured, supported offer that actively cultivates the conditions for independent musical life.

This approach is not unique, will resonate with other community music organisations in the city and might be scaled through further emulation.

Contact: soundpost.org.uk

CHAPTER 5

Sheffield in a Changing Industry

The Structural Transformation of the Music Industry

The functions of the global music industry have fundamentally changed over the past two decades. Streaming has replaced physical and download sales as the primary source of recorded music revenue, and the revenue flows that streaming generates are distributed very differently from those of the CD era.

One of the major consequences of this change has been the shift in the advantage of UK based artists relative to those based in other countries. Global participation has increased and, with it, competition for the attention of online audiences.

For a city like Sheffield, whose music sector is characterised not only by its superstar artists but by a much greater depth and breadth, this structural change creates specific challenges. The business models on which Sheffield's music infrastructure was built in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s – local venue circuit, label deal, tour income, physical sales – no longer function in the same way. New models are needed, involving tech-adoption, and the transition to them is incomplete and unevenly distributed.

The most recent and arguably most disruptive wave of structural change is still unfolding. Artificial intelligence is now capable of generating commercial-quality music at scale – functional tracks for sync, background music for retail and hospitality, adaptive scores for games and interactive media – at a fraction of the cost of commissioning human composers and producers. The implications for the mid-tier of the music economy may be significant. Sync placements, session work, jingle production and functional composition – bread-and-butter revenue streams that have helped to sustain many professional musicians – are among the areas most exposed to AI-driven competition.

For Sheffield, this cuts in two directions. The risk is real: composers, producers and session musicians who have built sustainable portfolios partly on functional work will likely face increased competition and downward pressure on rates. There is also a structural concern that goes beyond individual income. Previous technological transitions in music – from acoustic to electric, from physical to digital, from studio to laptop – each created new entry points for young musicians, generating new forms of skill and creative practice. AI-assisted music production could instead bypass the skill-acquisition process

entirely, offering the appearance of creative output without the musical learning and community participation that gives it meaning. If that is the direction of travel, the pipeline through which Sheffield has always renewed its musical life is at risk.

The opportunity, however, is equally real. The same AI tools that pose risks to some revenue streams are driving music technology development in ways that recall earlier moments of creative disruption. Platforms such as Loveable and tools such as Claude Code now allow musicians and music organisations to build software products, audience tools, and interactive experiences without specialist coding expertise. This opens new possibilities for artist-led innovation in ticketing, fan engagement, music education, and health applications – areas where Sheffield already has distinctive strengths. For a city with Sheffield's depth of creative, academic and technology infrastructure, the question is how best it can shape the terms of that engagement: protecting existing revenue streams where possible, developing new ones where not, and ensuring that the skills and creative identities of Sheffield's musicians remain central to whatever comes next. Managing this transition well requires exactly the kind of coordination, IP literacy, rights management support and strategic business advice that a Sheffield Music Office would be well placed to provide.



The Management and IP Gap

The audit identified a structural imbalance that mirrors a finding of the Liverpool City Region music economy report: an undersupply of professional music management, booking agency and business development capacity relative to the strength of the creative talent base. Artists seeking professional management, label deals or licensing opportunities currently often look outside Sheffield to find it. The audit data makes this visible. Given the dominant role of digital services in the music industry value chain it is especially striking how few music platforms have a base in the city. This represents a leakage of value that disadvantages Sheffield musicians and limits the sector's long-term economic contribution.

There are signs of positive change. Startups such as **Tickets for Good**, merch companies such as **Breed Media**, and artist development platform **Kycker** represent new possibilities. In the wider South Yorkshire region, bands such as The Reytons are demonstrating how an independent model can work. In Sheffield, companies such as Hyperactive World represent a new generation of music business enterprises demonstrating what professional artist development looks like on Sheffield's terms. Its presence here is evidence both of the talent base that exists and of the commercial opportunity for well-resourced management companies willing to build outside London. That said, it is also important to note that, in the context of growing global competition, Sheffield's proximity to the music industry and other investors centred in London and, increasingly, in the North-West continues to confer a valuable strategic advantage.

The challenge is to create conditions in which more organisations like **Hyperactive World** can establish and grow in Sheffield – rather than relocating as they scale. This requires affordable professional workspace, peer networks

and mentorship, access to legal and strategic expertise, and sufficient density of talent to make Sheffield a viable base for national and international operations. It also requires recognition of and respect for the contribution that they are making to the city.

Sheffield has talented music managers in the city who are demonstrating their ability to support talent development and music exports. They must be given a good reason to stay.

The business development gap extends beyond management and booking. Brand alignment – the strategic association between musicians or music organisations and commercial partners – has become an increasingly significant revenue stream for artists navigating the post-streaming economy. Partnerships with consumer brands, commercial licensing of artist identity, live event sponsorship and co-branded creative projects can each contribute meaningfully to income diversification where they are well managed. They can also, handled poorly, damage the relationship between an artist and their audience. Pursuing brand partnerships effectively requires exactly the kind of commercial acumen, network access and strategic judgement that professional management provides – and that is currently in short supply in Sheffield relative to the size and quality of the city's artist base. Building this capability locally is part of the same investment argument as building management capacity more broadly.

Sync, licensing and the IP Economy

Synchronisation licensing – the use of music in film, television, advertising, games and other audio-visual contexts – is one of the significant revenue streams in the contemporary music economy, and one where Sheffield has scope to develop further. The city's composers, publishers and sync agents represent a foundation, and **Sensoria Festival** has built active relationships with the film, music and digital industries that provide an existing bridge to sync markets. Internationally, the growth of content production across streaming platforms and interactive media continues to generate demand for music placement.

Building on this foundation is a worthwhile priority. What is needed is not a revolution in the sector's approach but a steady development of rights management literacy among composers and performers, stronger connections to music supervisors in the UK and internationally, and – where commercially viable – the growth of Sheffield-based licensing capacity that can represent the city's compositional output to a wider market. The conditions for this are improving; the audit suggests the sector is not yet fully equipped to capitalise on the opportunity, and targeted support through a Music Office would help close that gap.

Music Technology and the Spatial Audio Opportunity

Sheffield has a deep heritage in audio engineering and music technology – from the city's role in the development of electronic music in the 1970s to its contemporary cluster of recording studios and production facilities. This heritage creates a platform for engagement with the next major transition in the audio technology landscape: spatial and immersive audio.

The global market for spatial audio – encompassing binaural headphone experiences, Dolby Atmos and similar formats, 3D sound environments for gaming and immersive media, and therapeutic audio applications – is growing rapidly. Sheffield's combination of creative audio expertise, academic research capacity at both universities, and connections to global technology companies creates a genuine opportunity to position the city as a leading centre for spatial audio innovation. Developing this opportunity would be consistent with, and a natural beneficiary of, the South Yorkshire Creative and Cultural Investment Framework's commitment to supporting "Places and Infrastructure" that strengthens the region's impact on the national and international stage.

International Profile and Export

Sheffield's music exports – most obviously companies like Warp Records and AWAL, and global artists such as **Arctic Monkeys**, **Bring Me The Horizon** and others – generate international profile that has value well beyond the immediate commercial returns. That profile positions Sheffield in a global conversation about music cities that has economic and investment implications.

Sheffield's music internationally is significantly stronger than its institutional profile suggests. The city is known in Tokyo, Berlin, New York and São Paulo as a place where important music has been made and continues to be made. This is a reputational asset that has not been systematically leveraged for cultural tourism, international student recruitment or inward investment. A Sheffield Music Office, operating through Music City networks and UK Music's international promotion programmes, could convert that reputation into tangible economic benefit.

No Bounds Festival has built a significant international profile as a showcase for Sheffield's electronic and experimental music heritage, attracting artists and audiences from across Europe and beyond. Sensoria has developed international connections in the music, film and digital industries. Festivals such as these represent Sheffield's most visible current export platforms; they deserve institutional support and strategic investment in line with their international ambition.

The value chain and intermediate spending

Music organisations and musicians consume in order to produce. Recording time, rehearsal space, equipment, legal advice, design, marketing, digital tools – these are all purchases that musicians and music organisations make as a normal part of their professional activity. Economists call this intermediate spending: expenditure on goods and services that feed into the production of a final output.

Research on creative ecosystems suggests they are more sustainable and resilient where they can retain more of this intermediate spending within the local economy – where the recording studio, the accountant, the rehearsal room and the equipment supplier are all Sheffield businesses. Value circulates within the cluster, multiplies, and strengthens the whole.

Better coordination within Sheffield's music sector creates two specific opportunities. The first is collective consumption: identifying products and services that many organisations and practitioners all need, and negotiating preferential group rates through collective procurement. The second is market signalling: making visible where local demand for a product or service is sufficient to justify new local provision – pointing to a business case for a new rehearsal facility, a specialist legal service, or a licensing platform that might currently seem marginal to any individual operator but is clearly viable in aggregate.

The Sheffield Music Register – a living, annually updated record of the sector – could become the tool that makes this kind of coordination possible. It is one of the clearest arguments for developing and maintaining it as a public resource.

CHAPTER 6

Challenges and Pressure Points

Financial Pressures and the Grassroots Venue Crisis

Grassroots venues across the UK face sustained pressure from rising operating costs, business rates, noise complaints from new residential development, and competition for the land on which they sit. Sheffield has lost significant venues before and the sector cannot afford to be complacent about losing more. The sixty-nine small venues documented in the audit are not all secure; several face acute financial pressure, and between the audit and publication two have been forced to close.

The structural economics of grassroots live music are challenging. Venues with capacities below 300–400 often struggle to generate the bar revenue needed to cover fixed costs on most nights; they depend on a combination of hirings, community programming, external grants and, increasingly, the precarious goodwill of landlords. When any of these props is removed, viability collapses quickly. While grassroots venues in Sheffield are often vibrant, the sub-sector as a whole has not fully recovered the audience volumes and booking confidence lost during the pandemic, and operating costs have risen sharply since 2021.

Sheffield Independent Venues Alliance (SIVA) has done important work in documenting these pressures and in building collective advocacy (see their 2026 report 'Planning: A Practical Guide'). But it cannot by itself solve the structural problem. What is needed is a combination of planning protection, proactive identification of at-risk venues, and a targeted

support fund directed at the smallest venues that cannot access commercial finance. SIVA's advocacy capacity, currently built almost entirely on volunteer effort, is precisely the kind of sector infrastructure a Sheffield Music Office would be well placed to resource and amplify, helping to translate local evidence into sustained policy influence.

Workforce Challenges and Freelance Precarity

The live music sector in Sheffield, in common with the sector nationally, experienced severe disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. The eighteen months of venue closures and event cancellations between March 2020 and mid-2021 produced the most severe revenue shock the sector had experienced in its recorded history. Research by Price and Toulmin (2021) for the University of Sheffield documented the full scale of that impact on South Yorkshire's arts and cultural workers: freelance income fell by over 55% on average, with musicians and event crew among those most severely affected; more than half of respondents depleted savings to survive; and 50.5% considered leaving the sector entirely. Recovery has been real but uneven: grassroots venues have faced a combination of residual debt, cost inflation and the ongoing challenge of rebuilding audience habits, while recorded music and education strands of the sector proved more resilient.

The music sector in Sheffield, as nationally, is characterised by high rates of self-employment, portfolio careers and what practitioners might describe as 'doing it for the love.' This

creates chronic financial precarity, particularly during periods of income disruption (illness, venue closures, loss of teaching clients). The pandemic exposed the depth of this fragility: large parts of the self-employed music workforce had no access to meaningful income support.

The sector also faces burnout among key practitioners – particularly those who combine creative work with the demanding, underfunded work of running grassroots organisations, venues and community programmes. Several organisations this audit identified are dependent on the sustained personal commitment of one or two individuals whose departure would represent a serious loss of capacity. Building organisational resilience – governance capacity, professional development, succession planning – is a priority that the Sheffield Music Office should address. Support for business model innovation is also a priority.

Workforce diversity remains a challenge. The music sector's self-employment model creates particular barriers for those without financial reserves to sustain a portfolio career during its early years – which in practice means barriers related to class background, family commitments and geography. Gender imbalances persist in the technical and management roles of the sector.

Audience Development and the Information Deficit

Rebuilding audience relationships with Sheffield's live music offer is a structural problem that has been developing for two decades, accelerated and exacerbated by the Covid pandemic.

The information environment in which local music promotion operates has changed beyond recognition. For much of the twentieth century, Sheffield's audiences were reached through a combination of print media, local radio and music press that operated at roughly the right scale for the ecosystem it served. Local radio provided a reliable broadcast channel through which local artists and local events could reach general audiences across the city. Local and regional print journalism, including dedicated music coverage in outlets like the Sheffield Telegraph, Sheffield Star and various independent publications, created a shared information commons in which a gig, a new release or a local artist could become genuinely local news. Physical marketing – the poster on a lamppost, the flyer in a record shop – met people in public space, without requiring them to be already interested.

Today, the independent local media ecosystem needs support. The digital information environment that is monopolised by US tech companies is structurally less favourable to independent music promotion. Social media platforms that once offered organic reach to local audiences now operate as pay-to-play advertising systems, in which visibility must be purchased and in which algorithmic logic rewards scale, consistency and commercial content over the irregular, low-budget activity of a grassroots venue or an independent promoter.

Digital marketing requires skills, time and budget that small operators rarely have in abundance; even where those resources exist, the fragmentation of audience attention across multiple platforms means that no single channel reaches the breadth of local population that local radio or a well-distributed poster run once could.

This results in the present paradox that Sheffield's music sector has perhaps never been more visible globally – with nearly 2 billion quarterly Spotify streams, a 100 million combined global fanbase – and less visible locally. A resident of Sheffield may encounter Sheffield artists through international streaming platforms without knowing that those artists are their neighbours, or that their music is performed live three miles away. The connective tissue between the city's music ecosystem and its general population – the casual information infrastructure through which people became audiences – has thinned in ways that are difficult for individual organisations to address alone.

This problem is compounded by market concentration at the top of the live sector. The dominance of major promoters and ticketing platforms – structures whose scale and reach give them significant advantages in both marketing and venue relationships – has placed independent promoters, local booking agents and grassroots venues under sustained competitive pressure.

Independent music journalism, which historically provided both coverage and credibility for grassroots activity, has contracted alongside the broader local media sector. The combined effect is that the infrastructure for discovering, following and attending independent live music has become harder to navigate for

audiences who are not already embedded in the sector's networks.

Audience development is therefore a coordination challenge that requires collective action: shared marketing platforms and campaigns that pool the limited communications capacity of individual operators; active outreach into communities and areas of the city that are not currently served by the sector's informal networks; and a sustained effort to rebuild the connective tissue between Sheffield's music ecosystem and its general population.

A Sheffield Music Office should take an explicit audience development mandate, working with venues, promoters and digital platforms to build the shared infrastructure – strengthening existing city-wide 'what's on' resources, developing coordinated content of the kind SIVA is beginning to pioneer, establishing stronger relationships with local media. Sheffield's City of Culture 2029 longlisting provides a timely platform for exactly this kind of city-wide audience development work, connecting music to a broader public conversation about what Sheffield's cultural life offers and why it deserves the engagement of the whole city.



CHAPTER 7

The Investment Case – A Sheffield Music Office

The evidence assembled in the preceding chapters points consistently in one direction. Sheffield has an extraordinary music sector: one with a two-hundred-year track record of renewal, a substantial workforce spanning the local economy, a global reputation that its institutional infrastructure has not kept pace with, and a set of structural pressures – on grassroots venues, on the freelance workforce, on young people's access to music-making – that individual organisations cannot address alone. The question this chapter addresses is not whether Sheffield's music sector merits sustained civic investment, but what form that investment should take and what it would make possible

Learning from Comparable Cities

There is now a substantial body of work on the music sector in other core cities across the UK. The strategic, planned activity to which there is commitment in Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and elsewhere is of clear relevance. Sheffield should be mindful of the specific character of the city and the communities of musical practice that have emerged here, and should not assume that models developed elsewhere will transfer without adaptation. But when it comes to policy, there is no need to start from scratch.

One of the consistent lessons from comparable cities is that self-organisation matters. Sustained collaboration relies on clearly perceived alignment of purpose and values. Music activity in Sheffield encompasses a wide range of motivations,

purposes and institutional forms, and experience confirms that inviting people to meetings purely on the basis of their participation in music is unlikely to be productive. Collaboration works where there is explicit coordination around a common opportunity, a shared operational environment, a specific social mission, or a shared commitment to a musical tradition or community. The role of institutional support is to create the conditions in which that kind of alignment can emerge and be sustained – not to direct it from above.

The Case for a Sheffield Music Office

The single most important structural investment that the city can make in its music sector is the creation of a Sheffield Music Office: a dedicated body with a clear mandate, sustained public funding, and the operational independence to act on behalf of the sector as a whole.

The function of a Music Office is to serve the sector by providing the connective infrastructure, the intelligence, the advocacy, and the practical support that allows Sheffield's many communities of musical practice to develop more effectively than they could alone. Liverpool City Region's Music Office, established as part of the Liverpool City Region Music Board's development programme, and Manchester Music City offer the most direct precedent. These are bodies that combine sector development, policy engagement, data stewardship, business support and public communications under a single mandate.

Governance matters. The Sheffield Music Office should be constituted in a way that gives it credibility with both the Council and the sector: a board that includes experienced sector practitioners, institutional partners (universities, NHS, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority), and independent expertise in finance, law and business development. It should publish an annual account of its work and a regular state-of-the-sector summary drawing on updated register data. Established as a sector-led body within this governance framework, the Sheffield Music Office would serve as a natural delivery vehicle for the South Yorkshire Creative and Cultural Investment Framework's "Cultural Sector Ecosystem and Leadership" priority at city scale, aligning Sheffield's music sector investment directly with the Mayoral Combined Authority's strategic direction for the region's creative and cultural industries.

Funding for the Music Office should be treated as infrastructure investment, not cultural subsidy. The evidence assembled in this report – 1,429 entities, 40 SIC codes, an estimated 2,100 FTE, global streaming revenues generated by Sheffield artists, an emerging music and health technology sector – makes the case that this is a sector of genuine economic as well as cultural significance.

Theory of Change

With a Sheffield Music Office in place, this report anticipates a sequence of changes that flow from sustained, coordinated civic investment. In the short term – within the first two years – the sector gains a stable point of contact, a maintained evidence base, and a credible voice in planning, licensing and funding decisions that currently affect it without its meaningful participation. Artists and organisations gain access to shared IP, legal and business support that most cannot currently afford individually. The management and business development gap begins to close as structured pathways attract and retain talent on the business side of the sector.

In the medium term – years three to five – the intergenerational pipeline is strengthened: music education provision continues to become more equitable, young people from outer estates and underserved communities have additional pathways into both institutional and extra-institutional music-making, and the conditions for Sheffield's next creative generation are actively maintained. The audience development infrastructure improves as shared marketing platforms and coordinated content extend the sector's reach beyond its existing networks. UNESCO City of Music designation becomes an achievable goal, bringing with it international credibility and peer connections that benefit the whole sector.

The counterfactual is also worth stating plainly. Without coordinated civic investment, the trends this report documents are likely to continue: grassroots venues will close under financial pressure without early warning or coordinated response; management talent will leave for cities with better infrastructure; young people in the city's outer estates will have fewer routes into music; and AI will reshape the music economy on terms set by distant technology companies rather than by Sheffield's musicians and communities. The conservational capability that has made Sheffield's music exceptional for two centuries depends on the conditions that sustain it being actively maintained. In the present historical moment, it cannot be assumed that those conditions will sustain themselves.

Tier 1: Shared Civic Commitments

The commitments set out opposite are addressed not to Sheffield City Council alone but to the city and region as a whole. Realising a Sheffield Music Office and the wider programme it would deliver requires active engagement from the sector itself, from the city's universities and anchor institutions, from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, and from Sheffield City Council as a core civic funder. The sector has a particular responsibility here: the Music Office should emerge from a demonstrated collective will within Sheffield's music communities, not be imposed upon them from above. The role of public institutions is to respond to and resource that will, and to ensure that the conditions for the sector to organise and advocate for itself are in place.

Recommendation 1.1 Create a Sheffield Music Office

Sheffield's civic institutions – Sheffield City Council, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, and the city's anchor organisations including the universities – should together commit to secure multi-year core funding for a Sheffield Music Office. The precise governance and funding model should be developed in consultation with the sector itself and calibrated to the specific shape of Sheffield's ecosystem. The cost of a Music Office is modest relative to the value of what it would help protect and develop, and the investment aligns directly with the South Yorkshire Creative and Cultural Investment Framework. A useful model is Manchester Music City Ltd, a standalone company operated by Brighter Sound with support from Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. It operates with two part-time employees and a wider steering group recruited from the local music industries – a lean structure that nonetheless delivers meaningful coordination, advocacy and sector development across a major music city. A similar model could be established in Sheffield, hosted by an existing local non-profit or cultural organisation. In addition to core staffing costs, a modest initial budget of £20,000-£30,000 per year for two to three years might be sufficient to continue refining the action plan set out in this report, cover stakeholder time for governance meetings, and support research missions to comparable cities. This is infrastructure investment of a genuinely modest scale relative to the economic and cultural value of the sector it would serve.

Recommendation 1.2 Commission a full economic mapping study

The Sheffield Music Register provides the foundation layer; what is now needed is a dedicated economic impact assessment that produces a headline GVA figure and full multiplier analysis. This will act as a comprehensive and robust baseline which is invaluable when shaping shared objectives, evaluating progress and diagnosing issues.

Recommendation 1.3 Establish a cross-directorate music sector working group

Music activity in Sheffield generates value across numerous distinct revenue streams and touches the responsibilities of

multiple institutions – from Council directorates (planning, economic development, culture, health, education, licensing and environmental health) to SYMCA and NHS bodies. These institutions should have formal mechanisms for coordinating their decisions as they affect the music sector, ensuring that Sheffield's music-related investment is joined up across the full range of bodies that shape the conditions for the sector's growth.

Recommendation 1.4 Invest in music education access for all young people in the city

In the spirit of Sheffield's Ignite mission, the Council and its partners should develop a Young People's Music Participation Framework – mapping current provision from early years through post-16, identifying gaps in access (particularly across communities under-served by formal music education), and establishing a multi-agency commitment to maintaining continuity of provision. This should be developed in partnership with Sheffield's Higher Education institutions, Music Hub, young people and the freelance teaching workforce.

Recommendation 1.5 Pursue UNESCO City of Music designation

Sheffield has a credible case for UNESCO Creative City of Music designation. Designation is not an end in itself; its value lies in the platform it provides for civic pride, international cultural relationships, and positioning the city in national and global conversations about creative economy investment. Sheffield should initiate a formal designation process and commit the institutional support required to make it credible.

Recommendation 1.6 Engage actively with national policy on income generation and venue protection

Sheffield should engage with UK Music, Music Venue Trust, the British Council and the Musicians' Union on the development of a statutory levy on arena and stadium ticketing to generate a dedicated fund for grassroots venues. The data assembled in this report gives Sheffield a voice in these conversations. It should use it.

Tier 2: Sheffield Music Office – 10 Point Programme

The following actions should form the core of the Sheffield Music Office's programme during its first three years of operation. They are presented as a starting framework, not a fixed mandate: the Office's precise priorities should be developed through consultation with the sector itself.

Recommendation 2.1 Build the representative infrastructure of the sector

Work to support and strengthen existing collaborative initiatives – including Harmony Works and the Sheffield Independent Venues Alliance – and extend representative coverage to the full breadth of communities of practice documented in the Sheffield Music Register. Recording studios, labels, composers, music education providers, music technology businesses, music and health practitioners, and freelance musicians all have interests that deserve representation.

Recommendation 2.2 Deliver a capacity-building programme for the sector

Develop and deliver a sustained programme of professional development, business skills and sector knowledge support. Support in IP registration and rights management, contract literacy, business planning, tax and employment law, and funding applications will improve individual sustainability and collective ecosystem health. Delivery through partnerships with the universities, Sheffield College, the Intellectual Property Office and professional services firms.

Recommendation 2.3 Address the management and IP capture gap

Develop a specific programme to address the undersupply of professional management, booking agency and business development capacity. Support the development of local management and business services capacity through mentoring, networking and structured pathways for music professionals to build careers on the business side of the sector in Sheffield rather than relocating elsewhere.

Recommendation 2.4 Develop the music and health offer

Work with NHS, Creative Health Boards, Sheffield City Council's public health directorate, and the city's academic institutions to develop Sheffield's music and health offer at city scale. Commission a mapping of existing music and health activity. Develop a social prescribing pathway that connects people from all parts of Sheffield to Sheffield's music sector as part of primary care. Explore and support the intersection of music, technology and health innovation.

Recommendation 2.5 Support young people's music participation

Develop programmes that extend musical participation for young people across both institutional and extra-institutional forms. Work with Sheffield Music Hub, TRACKS/Sheffield Music School, Sheffield Music Academy, Concerteenies, Slambarz and others to ensure that the pipeline from early-years participation to professional and community music practice is accessible to young people from every part of the city. Prioritise the outer estates and communities where provision is currently weakest.

Recommendation 2.6 Support the business development of Sheffield's music enterprises

Provide targeted support to organisations demonstrating strong growth potential: artist management companies like Hyperactive World; creative technology enterprises like Tickets for Good; festival organisations like No Bounds, Tramlines and Sensoria; and the recording and production infrastructure at Yellow Arch, and Hybrid 3. Ensure that Sidney & Matilda, Mary Street Live and the grassroots venue ecology receive the recognition and support they deserve as anchor infrastructure.

Recommendation 2.7 Build the audience development infrastructure for Sheffield's live music.

The Sheffield Music Office should develop a dedicated audience development programme, working across venues, promoters and media partners to build shared tools and platforms that pool communications capacity and extend the sector's reach beyond its existing networks. Sheffield's City of Culture 2029 longlisting offers a timely and high-profile platform for this work, connecting music to a broader public conversation about Sheffield's cultural life.

The model for what coordinated audience development can achieve is already being demonstrated in the city. Tickets for Good's Pay It Forward campaign – developed in partnership with Sheffield Independent Venues Alliance and the University of Sheffield – uses a dedicated Ticket Fund to purchase tickets directly from independent venues and distribute them to new

audiences, simultaneously bringing people through the door and removing financial risk for the venues involved. This kind of cross-sector collaboration, combining a social enterprise model with venue support and audience access, is precisely the approach a Music Office should resource, broker and scale. Venues and organisations wishing to participate – either as a grassroots venue or as a fund contributor – can do so directly through Tickets for Good.

Recommendation 2.8
Build corporate partnership and fundraising capacity

Sheffield's music sector is a place-branding asset of genuine value to the businesses and institutions that call the city home. The city's global musical reputation, its grassroots authenticity and its tradition of creative innovation are qualities that commercial partners actively seek to associate with. Developing the infrastructure to connect corporate appetite for cultural association with the investment needs of the music sector is one of the clearest opportunities available to a Sheffield Music Office.

This should operate at two levels. At the artist and organisation level, it means building the business development capacity – skills, relationships and professional support – that allows Sheffield's musicians and music organisations to pursue commercial partnerships, brand alignment opportunities and sponsorship arrangements on terms that work for both parties. Income of this kind is increasingly important to the economics of a professional music career, and there is an opportunity to strengthen the regionally-based offer to Sheffield artists. At the sector level, it means positioning Sheffield's music ecosystem as a coherent proposition for corporate investment – one that can be taken to funders, sponsors and civic partners with a credible evidence base and a clear case for impact. The Culture Collective, Sheffield's strategic body connecting cultural organisations, heritage projects and placemaking initiatives across the city, is a natural partner in

this work. Music's contribution to the city's cultural identity and to its attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest is most persuasively made when it is part of a joined-up cultural offer rather than a series of individual asks. Working with the Culture Collective, a Sheffield Music Office should develop a coordinated approach to corporate partnership that presents music alongside heritage, the visual arts and the built environment as constituent parts of a single, compelling city narrative.

The fundraising infrastructure built through this work – relationships with philanthropic funders, national lottery bodies, corporate sponsors and professional services firms willing to contribute pro bono expertise – should be developed as a shared resource for the sector rather than the competitive advantage of individual organisations.

Recommendation 2.9
Commission and maintain a living evidence base

The Sheffield Music Register should be maintained and developed as a living, annually updated data resource. The Music Office should publish annual sector intelligence that allows trends to be identified early and policy responses calibrated accordingly. It should work with the University of Sheffield on the more substantial economic mapping study recommended in Tier 1.

Recommendation 2.10
Position Sheffield in the national and international music economy

Sheffield should seek membership of the Music Cities Network, the international forum established by Sound Diplomacy for cities committed to maximising the social, cultural and economic contribution of music. Membership is a practical and relatively low-cost step that would signal Sheffield's seriousness as a music city to an international audience, create access to peer learning from comparable cities globally, and establish

a natural pathway toward a formal application for UNESCO Creative City of Music designation. Joining the Network would also give the Sheffield Music Office an immediate platform and a ready-made international peer group, demonstrating credibility with funders, partners and the sector from day one. This recommendation reflects the Elevate mission of Sheffield's Culture Strategy and is achievable within the current financial year.

Sheffield's music sector does not need to be reinvented. It needs to be recognised, resourced and given the infrastructure to be the best version of itself. That is what a Sheffield Music Office would deliver



APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Methodology

The audit which underpins the findings in this report was generated by cross-referencing three categories of data in order to build up a detailed and accurate picture of the current state of the music sector in Sheffield.

- Official data from ONS, DCMS, UK Music and Sheffield City Council relevant to a discussion of the structure and size of the local music sector was collated.
- Data relating to music companies (both limited by shares and by guarantee), registered societies, charities, and also, where relevant, Royal Charter companies, was collected from Companies House and the Charity Register.
- Primary data relating to the Sheffield music industry and sector was gathered from a range of online and physical sources to create an itemised list of organisations and individuals that appear to be active and operating in Sheffield.

This process generated separate datasets of registered organisations, private individuals, and trading names and brands. These lists were then cross-referenced to produce the Sheffield Music Register.

Data sources consulted in the primary mapping exercise included:

Absolute Radio; All About Jazz; Bandcamp; BBC Music; Charity Register; Classical Sheffield; Companies House; Discogs; Ents24; Eventbrite; Exposed Magazine; Facebook; Gig Listing; Global Radio; Google (maps, search); Indie Venue Bible; Instagram; LinkedIn; local authority licensing databases; Music Venue Trust; Now Then; Our Favourite Places; physical promotions; Rate Your Music; Sheffield City Council cultural directory; Sheffield Licensing Database; Sheffield Music Scene; Sheffield Star; Skiddle; Songkick; soundbetter.com; Spotify; UK Music Teachers; Viberate artist stats; Welcome to Sheffield and Yell.com.

The following inclusion criteria was carefully applied to the second and third data sets:

Inclusion Criterion	Method of establishment
Within Sheffield city boundary	Established via published biographical information, location data on social media, and, where applicable, postcode from Companies House, Charities Register or company website.
Evidence of activity in last 12 months	Established via venue listings, DSP releases, social media and blog posts.
Music or musicians core to the organisation's value offer	Established either by presentation and self-description or via reference to economic codes associated with music.

Appendix 2: Sheffield Music Register

A full sector taxonomy and data source inventory is available from the University of Sheffield City & Culture team on request. The Register identifies 597 registered organisations, 563 named freelance individuals, and 230 featured artist brands, across 27 sub-categories and 40 SIC codes.

Appendix 3: Economic Analysis Technical Note

The economic analysis uses the UK Music taxonomy approach. Revenue streams are categorised across nine primary streams and 27 sub-categories.

Appendix 4: Glossary

Agent of Change principle

the planning principle that the party introducing a change to a neighbourhood (e.g. a new residential development) bears the cost of mitigating its impact on existing uses (e.g. noise from a music venue), rather than the other way around.

Communities of musical practice

Networks of individuals engaged in shared musical activity, connected by genre, tradition, geography or social context.

Extra-institutional music

Music-making in informal settings where the musicians themselves set the rules, unsupervised by external authorities or funders.

Institutional music

Music-making within organised frameworks – schools, funded ensembles, registered organisations – where rules are set externally by funders, curricula or professional norms. GVA (Gross Value Added): a measure of the contribution of a sector to GDP.

Social prescribing

The practice of connecting patients to community activities and support –including music participation – as a component of primary healthcare.

Spatial / immersive audio

Audio technology that creates three-dimensional sound environments, including Dolby Atmos, binaural recording and related formats. A growing segment of the music technology market.

Sync (synchronisation licensing)

The licensing of a piece of music for use alongside moving images – in film, television, advertising, video games or online content. The term derives from the synchronisation of audio to a visual track. Sync deals are negotiated between the rights holder (typically the songwriter and/or their publisher) and the party wishing to use the music, and can represent a valuable revenue stream for composers and songwriters.

Appendix 5: Index of organisations mentioned

AWAL
 Breed Media
 Brown McLeod
 Choir With No Name
 City of Sheffield Youth Orchestra
 Concerteenies
 Corporation
 Crookes Social Club
 Crucible Theatre
 Folk Factory
 Grenoside Sword Dancers
 Handsworth Morris
 Harmony Works
 Hudson Records
 Hybrid 3
 Hyperactive World
 Kycker
 Mary Street Live
 Music at University of Sheffield
 Music in the Round
 No Bounds Festival
 Pattern & Push
 Record Collector
 Red Tape Studios
 Richtone Music
 RiteTrax

SADACCA
 Sensoria Festival
 Sheffield Chamber Orchestra
 Sheffield City Hall
 Sheffield Community Choir
 Sheffield Independent Venues Alliance (SIVA)
 Sheffield Music Academy
 Sheffield Music Hub
 Sheffield Music School / TRACKS
 Sheffield Jazz
 Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus
 Sidney & Matilda
 Slambarz
 Soundpost
 Spring Tank
 Studio Tecna
 The Tuesday Club
 Tickets for Good
 Tramlines Festival
 Under The Stars
 Unite the Union Brass Band
 Utilita Arena
 Warp Records
 Waterbear College of Music
 Woodhouse Prize Band
 Yellow Arch Studios

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Appendix 7: Sheffield's Impact on Popular Music

Joe Cocker

Vocalist whose raw, convulsive delivery brought him international acclaim from the late 1960s, culminating in an iconic Woodstock performance and enduring transatlantic success.

Dave Berry

Rhythm and blues singer and television presenter who charted consistently in the mid-1960s British beat era, known for his detached, moody stage presence and a string of distinctive singles.

Roy Bailey

Folk singer and social activist whose career spanned six decades, using traditional and contemporary folk forms to articulate left-wing politics and working-class experience, often collaborating with Tony Benn.

Paul Carrack

Soul-influenced singer, keyboardist and songwriter who lent his voice and musicianship to several generations of pop and rock, including Ace, Squeeze and Mike + The Mechanics, accumulating an unusually consistent catalogue of hits across four decades.

Cabaret Voltaire

Pioneering electronic group whose experiments with tape manipulation, synthesisers and rhythm machines in the late 1970s and 1980s laid groundwork for post-punk and dance music globally.

Def Leppard

Hard rock and heavy metal band formed in the late 1970s whose polished, hook-driven sound helped define mainstream melodic rock in the 1980s, selling over 100 million records worldwide.

Human League

Synth-pop group whose shift from avant-garde electronics to commercial pop songwriting produced some of the most enduring British singles of the early 1980s and influenced the sound of mainstream electronic pop internationally.

Clock DVA

Post-punk group whose work incorporated jazz, electronic noise and dystopian themes, influencing the development of industrial dance through the 1980s and into the 1990s.

ABC

New wave pop group whose debut album *The Lexicon of Love* combined orchestral arrangements with electronic production to critical and commercial acclaim, defining a strain of ironic, emotionally ambitious British pop in 1982.

Heaven 17

Synth-pop group formed from former Human League members, whose politically engaged lyrics and sophisticated electronic arrangements produced a run of influential albums and singles throughout the 1980s.

Chakk

Funk and electronic group active in the mid-1980s whose dense, rhythmically complex sound connected Sheffield's post-punk legacy with emerging dance music, acting as a bridge to the city's later club and rave culture.

Forgemasters

Electronic duo whose 1989 track *Track With No Name* is widely credited as one of the earliest recordings of bleep techno, the Sheffield-originated genre that became a precursor to the UK rave and hardcore continuum.

While this report aims to explore Sheffield music through a less conventional lens, it is important to note that few cities of comparable size can point to such a sustained and musically diverse record of internationally recognised musical output. The artists listed here represent a selective cross-section of Sheffield's popular music heritage from figures who have shaped mainstream global culture to those whose influence on their genres, though less visible to the general public, has been equally profound. They are the tip of a much larger iceberg – visit www.uncommonpeople.co.uk for a more complete picture.

Pulp

Indie art-pop group whose fifteen-year ascent culminated in mid-1990s success, with Jarvis Cocker's observational, class-conscious songwriting and theatrical delivery setting them apart as one of the era's most distinctive acts.

The Black Dog

Electronic and techno group whose work since the early 1990s has engaged with ambient and experimental dance music, forming part of the foundational generation of British techno alongside Warp Records labelmates.

Moloko

Electronic and trip-hop duo whose collaborative dynamic and genre-fluid approach produced a series

of innovative albums across the late 1990s and early 2000s, with *Do You Like My Tight Sweater?* and *Things to Make and Do* gaining lasting critical recognition.

Steve Edwards

House music singer and songwriter whose soulful, gospel-inflected vocals became one of the most sought-after commodities in international dance music.

I Monster

Electronic and sample-based duo whose work drew on psychedelia, lounge and art-pop influences, reaching wider audiences with the 2001 single *Daydream* in *Blue* while maintaining an idiosyncratic and largely underground profile.

65daysofstatic

Post-rock and electronic group whose instrumental compositions combine processed guitar, programmed drums and dense layering, developing a dedicated international following and contributing to the soundtrack of the video game *No Man's Sky*.

Richard Hawley

Singer-songwriter and guitarist whose work draws on 1950s and 1960s pop balladry, country and orchestral pop, earning Mercury Prize nominations and sustained critical acclaim for a series of Sheffield-themed studio albums from the early 2000s onwards.

Arctic Monkeys

Indie rock band whose 2006 debut *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*

became the fastest-selling debut album in UK chart history, with subsequent releases expanding their sonic range from post-punk to glam and art rock.

Reverend and the Makers

Indie rock and alternative dance band led by Jon McClure, whose politically direct songwriting and energetic live reputation has built a loyal following across a series of albums from 2007 onwards.

Bring Me The Horizon

Rock band who began as a deathcore group and progressively absorbed electronic, pop and alternative rock influences, becoming one of the UK's most commercially successful rock exports with a global arena-level fanbase.

Malevolence

Hardcore and heavy metal band whose muscular, groove-driven sound draws on metallic hardcore and 1990s influences, building an international following through relentless touring and a reputation for intense live performance.

Kdot

Bassline MC whose sharp lyricism and authentic voice have made him one of the city's most recognised figures.

Sophie and the Giants

Electro-pop group whose melodic songwriting and energetic live presence have generated international attention.

MC Coco

Successful MC and producer working within UK hip hop and spoken word traditions.

Self Esteem

Arena pop project led by Rebecca Lucy Taylor, whose 2021 album *Prioritise Pleasure* received widespread critical acclaim for its frank exploration of feminism, identity and self-worth, establishing her as one of the UK's most compelling solo voices.

Aziza Jaye

Singer, lyricist and producer raised in Sheffield's sound system culture, whose genre-fluid approach draws on reggae, dancehall, lovers rock, soul and Afrobeat.

TeeDee

DJ and producer working across bassline, house and garage, representing a new generation of the city's music scene with a growing profile.

1960s

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

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