

Creative United Press Release - For immediate release

*Inclusive and Accessible Music Making*  
**Creative United and partners launch the first Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments**



Creative United has today launched the first edition of its *Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments*, distributed in partnership with the Musicians' Union and Normans Musical Instruments.

Compiled over the last 12 months, the guide includes details of more than 80 products, from batons and bows to one-handed clarinets and saxophones, that have been specially designed to make learning and playing musical instruments of all kinds as accessible as possible for disabled players of all ages.

The guide has been created in response to research undertaken by the **Take it away Consortium** (a partnership between Creative United, Drake Music, Music for Youth, The OHMI Trust, Open Up Music and Youth Music) in 2018, which identified that a significant barrier to participation in music for disabled children was a lack of access to, and knowledge about the existence of adaptive musical instruments and assistive equipment.

The research findings showed that **59%** of the music retailers said they were **not aware of any specialist products or adapted instruments**. **Only 54%** of music educators and **less than 25%** of parents with disabled children agreed with the statement **"I know how and where to source an adapted musical instrument"**.

The publication of the guide aims to directly address this issue by raising awareness of the extraordinary range of adaptive instruments that are currently available, with the hope that this will inspire and encourage many more disabled people to be confident of their ability to learn and play music.

The 37-page document collates a range of musical instruments, from prototypes and bespoke to commercially available, and common accessories. The aim of the guide is to provide a central resource that can be referred to as guidance and ideas for all - individuals, parents, teachers, schools and retailers. The guide is not intended to be an exhaustive list, as new products and prototypes are constantly being developed and launched.

The guide also highlights that some of the instruments have been developed as bespoke solutions and are not yet commercially available, a question that Creative United and their partners will seek to address in the year ahead through the 'IAMM Hackathon' project to be launched next month.

The *Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments* is a key output of the work of the Consortium, and an important step towards addressing their objectives.

**Mary-Alice Stack, Chief Executive of Creative United said:**

*"We're extremely pleased to be publishing this Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments as an essential resource for anyone working in the musical instrument retail sector, as well as for professional musicians and the parents and teachers of disabled children.*

*Not knowing what is available in terms of accessible equipment and accessories is a fundamental issue that is sadly preventing many disabled children from engaging fully in music education, inhibiting their potential to develop as musicians.*

*This is something we are determined to change through the distribution of this Guide in partnership with the Musicians' Union, Normans Musical Instruments and other industry partners including our Take it away member retailers and the Music Industries Association."*

**Horace Trubridge, General Secretary of the Musician's Union (MU) said:**

*"The MU is proud to support the Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments. Having an impairment should not be a barrier to learning an instrument and for too long disabled musicians have struggled to find instruments that work for them. The MU believes this guide will remove one of the barriers disabled musicians face and encourage the production and wider use of more adaptive instruments"*

**Andy McKeown, Director of Normans Musical Instruments said:**

*"Normans Musical Instruments are proud to be supporting the Guide to Buying Adapted Musical Instruments. We have a team full of passionate musicians who understand the importance of music*

*and how, as an inclusive subject, it can be used to enhance creative, social, mental and physical activity. We all value the guide as one of the most positive and inspiring resources to develop and stimulate learners of all ages.*

*The Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments, published by Creative United, showcases a wide range of instruments and accessories that are available to disabled musicians. It showcases what choices are out there and how it is possible to access a suitable instrument to begin or develop their musical journey. This is a particularly challenging area and, as instrument suppliers, we know better than most how the design and manufacture of adapted instruments needs to be given more exposure.*

*It's very exciting to see this first edition being released, which we hope will encourage more disabled children and adults to learn a musical instrument."*

The full Guide to Buying Adaptive Musical Instruments can be found here:  
[www.takeitaway.org.uk/adaptive-musical-instrument-guide](http://www.takeitaway.org.uk/adaptive-musical-instrument-guide)

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS

Creative United's Guide to Buying Adaptive Instruments has been produced as a counterpart to Music for All's guide to Buying a Musical Instrument which can be accessed here:  
[www.mia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Buying-a-Musical-Instrument-Making-the-Right-Choice.pdf](http://www.mia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Buying-a-Musical-Instrument-Making-the-Right-Choice.pdf)

Music for All is the charity of the Music Industries Association (MIA).  
[www.musicforall.org.uk](http://www.musicforall.org.uk)      [www.mia.org.uk](http://www.mia.org.uk)

#### Creative United & Take it away

Creative United is an independent Community Interest Company that provides finance-based products and services designed to deliver economic growth and social impact to the arts, creative and cultural sectors. Creative United receives regular funding from Arts Council England as a Sector Support Organisation within its National Portfolio. For further information please visit  
[www.creativeunited.org.uk](http://www.creativeunited.org.uk)

Take it away is a Creative United initiative that gives music-makers the backing they need. With subsidised interest-free loans for musical instruments, equipment, software and tuition, we help to

support musicians at every level. Take it away is funded by Arts Council England and Arts Council of Northern Ireland. For further information please visit [www.takeitaway.org.uk](http://www.takeitaway.org.uk)

### **Musicians' Union (MU)**

The Musicians' Union represents over 30,000 musicians working in all sectors of the music business. As well as negotiating on behalf of its members with all the major employers in the industry, the MU offers a range of services for self-employed professional and student musicians of all ages.

The benefits of membership include £10m public liability cover, £2,000 equipment insurance, contract advice, partnership agreements, careers advice and legal assistance. For more information please visit [www.theMU.org](http://www.theMU.org)

### **Normans Musical Instruments**

Normans is firmly cemented as one of the leading education suppliers of Musical Instruments and Accessories, supporting customers around the world, helping them get the best value instruments and maximising budgets. We pride ourselves on offering an in-depth and personal service, that allows us to create strong working relationships and valued partnerships with a variety of organisations.

[www.normans.co.uk](http://www.normans.co.uk)

## **TAKE IT AWAY CONSORTIUM**

Creative United, Drake Music, Music for Youth, The OHMI Trust, Open Up Music and Youth Music came together in 2018 to form the 'Take it away Consortium'. Working together, the key objectives of the Consortium are to:

- **Improve our collective understanding of the potential demand for adapted and specialist musical instruments** for use by aspiring and professional musicians of all kinds and in particular disabled children and adults across the UK
- **Enable existing prototype adaptations** to be taken further into small-scale batch production for wider distribution and use
- **Enable the development of bespoke new accessible musical instruments** to meet the needs of an individual, and the documentation and sharing of designs in the open source model
- **Explore ways in which we can develop and train a workforce** that has the knowledge and skills to introduce and demonstrate adaptive instruments located in 'centres of music retail excellence' around the UK
- **Provide financial assistance to families and individuals** that need access to these types of instruments by providing a combination of grants and loans to ensure equality of access for all
- **Raise the profile of music making by disabled children and adults**, increasing awareness of the opportunities and sources of support available to enable more people to access music.

### **Drake Music**

Drake Music are leaders in music, disability & technology – breaking down barriers to music for 25 years working with disabled people at every level, from school children to professional musicians. Drake Music work to create opportunities and instruments that make music fully accessible, to increase participation in music-making at all levels and to build a musical culture where disabled and non-disabled musicians can work together as equals.

[www.drakemusic.org](http://www.drakemusic.org)

### **Music for Youth**

Music for Youth is a national youth music organisation who believe in the power of music to transform young people's lives. The organisation run high impact performance-based festivals and events on a large scale all over the UK for c.60,000 young people under 21 each year.

[www.mfy.org.uk](http://www.mfy.org.uk)

### **Open Up Music**

Open Up Music empowers young disabled people by supporting the development of inclusive youth orchestras, making accessible instruments and repertoire available to them. Through its two programmes, [Open Orchestras](#) and [the National Open Youth Orchestra](#), it creates new opportunities for young disabled people to make music.

[www.openupmusic.org](http://www.openupmusic.org)

### **The OHMI Trust**

The OHMI Trust works to remove the barriers to music-making faced by people with physical disabilities. Any deficiency in an upper limb makes nearly all musical instruments unplayable to any reasonable standard. As a result, thousands are excluded from music-making, including most disabled children. The OHMI Trust strives for full, undifferentiated, participation in musical life for disabled people through the creation and provision of adapted musical instruments and enabling apparatus. It also undertakes and commissions research into pedagogic practises, instrument design, and manufacturing methods.

[www.ohmi.org.uk](http://www.ohmi.org.uk)

### **Youth Music**

Youth Music's vision is that one day, all children and young people will be able to have musical lives. Youth Music is a national charity investing in music-making projects which support children and young people aged 0-25 to develop personally and socially as well as musically. They work particularly with those who don't get to make music because of who they are, where they live, or what they're going through.

[www.youthmusic.org.uk](http://www.youthmusic.org.uk)