

Kirsty Williams MS  
Minister for Education  
Welsh Government

Dyddiad | Date: 9 October 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **Music Education**

Dear Kirsty,

At the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee meeting on 1 October, Members considered the letter to you regarding music education sent jointly by Tŷ Cerdd, Music Mark, Anthem and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

The letter sets out concerns that ‘music service provision has been eroded over many years’ which means that ‘there is significant inequity of access to musical learning across Wales’.

The signatories to the letter are calling for a national plan for music education and further interim funding, both of which they say were recommended by the stakeholder group you established in response to the Committee’s report on music education – ‘Hitting the Right Note’. Please can you set out what actions you have taken in response to the recommendations of the stakeholder group you set up two years ago? Can you also provide an update on the delivery of the recommendations in ‘Hitting the Right Note’ which you accepted? I have attached them as an Annex to this letter.

The authors of the letter are advocating a similar structure in Wales to the ‘Music Hubs’ in England, which they say ‘achieve considerable impact with this modest funding through partnership working’. Please can you tell us if you have considered this delivery model? If so, please can you set out why you decided not to pursue something similar in Wales?

I note that on 15 September 2020, the Welsh Government published **Rehearsing, performing and taking part in the performing arts: guidance for a phased return**. Section 3.22 of the guidance provides information on teaching music. However, the guidance is described as ‘a framework for decision-making rather than a set of rules to follow.’ The guidance only applies to ‘activities permitted by government regulations’ and states that ‘resuming activity can only be possible within the context of the COVID-19 regulations that apply at the time.’



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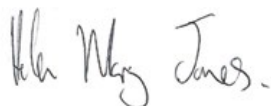
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The letter, which was written the week after the guidance was issued, states 'it is essential that clear guidance is produced to clarify how music education can resume in Wales during the ongoing pandemic'. It appears that stakeholders would value greater detail on what activities are permitted in schools and homes. Please can you let us know if you are planning on issuing clear and specific guidance for the delivery of music education in schools and homes?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Mary Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

**Helen Mary Jones**

Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee



Kirsty Williams AS/MS  
Y Gweinidog Addysg  
Minister for Education



Llywodraeth Cymru  
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Helen Mary Jones MS  
Chair  
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3 November 2020

Dear Helen

Thank you for your letter of 9 October raising a number of issues regarding music education, particularly in the context of a recent joint letter from Tŷ Cerdd, Music Mark, Anthem and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

I would like to emphasise at the outset that I am absolutely committed to supporting music education and to enabling schools to continue to offer such provision, which is an important and enriching part of our culture and heritage. I also recognise the important position of music both within the current curriculum and the new Curriculum for Wales, to be introduced from 2022. The guidance for the new curriculum sets out the importance of delivering a broad and balanced education, highlighting our commitment to ensuring that learners access a wide range of experiences within schools, including music and the Arts.

I am aware that there is a range of highly complex issues relating to music education and music services. My officials had commenced work on assessing these areas, in the context of the Committee's 'Hitting the Right Note' report, the subsequent Music Services Feasibility Study report which I commissioned, and the Music Services Stakeholder Consultation Group that was set up following publication of the study report. I have included an update on the position on relevant recommendations of the 'Hitting the Right Note' report, at Annex 1 to this letter.

I am sure you will appreciate that the education response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been the priority for my Department over recent months and work linked to the Stakeholder Group was therefore paused for a period. However, my officials plan to reconvene a meeting of the Group in the coming months to review the way forward on this important area of work. This will include consideration of the feasibility study report's strong theme of introducing a National Plan for Music Education, with the aim of providing a framework to set out quality standards, progression routes and equality of provision. If such a national

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

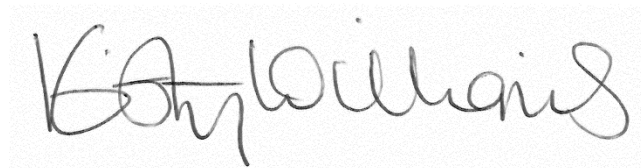
plan were to be introduced, it would need to work in parallel with the requirements of the new curriculum.

On the issue you raise about the Music Hubs in England, the feasibility study report looked at this area and while noting that this approach has some benefits, it also highlighted a number of issues. These included the conflict of interest in the continuing role of local authorities which operate and run hubs while also commissioning services from themselves as well as from alternative suppliers. Other issues included the level of engagement and support for continuity in learning and teaching, which is essential in creating equitable pathways for the progression of particularly talented learners.

Turning to your point on music education within the ongoing COVID-19 situation, we have updated our [operational guidance for schools](#). The learning guidance makes clear the importance of a broad and balanced curriculum throughout this period. However, I fully appreciate the issue you raise about the need for clarity regarding music activities in the context of the pandemic and my officials are developing further guidance documentation such as Frequently Asked Questions which will include specific reference to the teaching of music, among several other subject areas. I should also note that school music services have restarted in some areas following the temporary withdrawal due to Covid-19. For example, Cardiff Council has been working closely with Cardiff County and Vale of Glamorgan Music Service to make preparations for the safe return of music tuition in schools. A number of health and safety measures are now in place in line with Welsh Government guidance to keep children, tutors and schools safe, while minimising the risk of Covid-19 spread. These measures include adapting the way lessons are delivered, new guidance for tutors and putting social distancing and hygiene processes in place.

We are, of course, continuing to work closely with strategic partners to ensure that schools are able to continue to provide music activities in a safe way and that appropriate support and guidance is provided

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams', written in a cursive style.

**Kirsty Williams AS/MS**  
Y Gweinidog Addysg  
Minister for Education

## **'HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE' REPORT – UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1**

*The Welsh Government should transfer responsibility for the delivery of music services to an arms-length, national body with a distinct regional delivery mechanism and footprint. The national body should be core funded by the Welsh Government and should be made responsible for ensuring that both pupils and staff working within the music education sector, regardless of their location or social background, are afforded equitable opportunities. The Welsh Government should ensure the responsible body is provided with any additional funding necessary in order to maintain equality of access on an all Wales level.*

This recommendation is being considered as part of the forward work of the Music Services Stakeholder Consultation Group. When I met with Committee last January, I expressed my concerns regarding the disadvantages of introducing an additional body into the system. My priority is to ensure that any resource goes directly into services in schools. The Stakeholder Group strongly agreed with this position when it met and was keen that funding support is directed to front line services.

### **Recommendation 3**

*We recommend that the Welsh Government encourages local authorities to review terms and conditions of music service staff to ensure that they are as consistent as possible as a matter of urgency.*

This recommendation was actioned, with a letter sent to local authorities on this issue.

### **Recommendation 4**

*The Committee recommends that, subject to the points made above relating to progression up the Welsh Government's pyramid for music education, the Welsh Government ensures there is adequate funding, support and advice available for those seeking to set up viable, alternative models of music service delivery, provided that any model of support is compliant with the Welsh Government's ethical standpoint relating to the terms and conditions of staff.*

The music services feasibility study was tasked with considering alternative models of music services and identifying the needs and demands for such services. The report considered a number of models, including the co-operative model, private and charitable business. Of note was the high level of job satisfaction and retention for music staff at the co-operative model. Free advice and support are available from Social Business Wales, which is part of the Welsh Government's business support network. This recommendation is being further considered as part of the forward work of the Music Services Stakeholder Consultation Group.

### **Recommendation 7**

*We recommend that the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association jointly consider as a matter of urgency how implementation of the recommendations of the task and finish group report by local authorities in Wales can be accelerated, with a view to*

*reporting to the Committee on progress made within six months of the publication of this report.*

This recommendation was actioned. A [final progress report](#) on the recommendations was published in April 2019.

### **Recommendation 9**

*We recommend that the Welsh Government significantly increases the funding made available to local authorities for the purchasing of musical instruments and distributes it on a needs basis. This should be done as a matter of urgency and should be aimed at improving the situation in the short term, to cover the period before a national body is fully able to take responsibility for music services.*

This recommendation was actioned. Funding of £1.5m was made available to local authorities in both 2018-19 and 2019-20, an element of which was available for the purchase of instruments. The position on future funding is currently under review, taken into account also considerations on the re-focusing of education funding support in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Recommendation 10**

*We recommend that the Welsh Government remit Estyn to undertake a thematic review of local authority music services focusing on practical steps to ensure consistency of opportunity across Wales.*

This recommendation is being considered as part of the forward work of the Music Services Stakeholder Consultation Group (it has not been possible to include this area within the Estyn remit work, to date, due to the wide range of other areas already incorporated).

### **Recommendation 11**

*We recommend that the Welsh Government promotes the use of Pupil Development Grant funding for music education.*

This recommendation was actioned – the Pupil Development Grant has been promoted, in this context.

### **Recommendation 13**

*We recommend that NYAW puts mechanisms and sufficient funding in place in order to ensure every pupil, who wishes to progress toward excellence, has the resource to do so.*

This recommendation was actioned – NYAW has put in place appropriate mechanisms and received funding of £190,000 from Welsh Government in 2019-20 for support for music ensembles. The general principle of equality of opportunity for all children was also a key theme of the Music Services Feasibility Study report.

### **Recommendation 14**

*We recommend that the Welsh Government introduces ways of monitoring the composition of the national ensembles to ensure that they are as inclusive of all social groups as possible. Any imbalances in their composition should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The data should be reviewed regularly and the appropriate action taken.*

This recommendation was actioned - NYAW monitors the composition of ensembles.

**Recommendation 15**

*We recommend that the Cabinet Secretary takes steps to ensure that there is greater clarity of purpose between the Endowment Fund and NYAW in the charitable funding they are seeking, to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and to encourage collaboration between them.*

This recommendation was actioned. Anthem (the Endowment Fund) and NYAW are complementary and do not represent duplication.

**Recommendation 16**

*We recommend that the Welsh Government monitors the funding available to the Endowment Fund and considers additional injections of capital if necessary.*

This recommendation is being actioned. Welsh Government monitors the funding available for the Endowment Fund.