



Ein cyf/Our ref: PO239

Delyth Jewell MS

Committee Chair, Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International
Relations Committee

11 September 2024

Dear Delyth

Thank you for your letter of 17 July regarding the closure of Junior Conservatoire at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (RWCMD).

As mentioned previously, I had a constructive discussion with the College Principal regarding the College's commitment to youth music services. Going forward, it was agreed that we will continue to engage on this issue, and I note that on 19 July RWCMD communicated the outcome of Young RWCMD, and made a public announcement on its website: [Outcome of Young RWCMD consultation](#)

I understand the College is looking seriously at how provision can be shaped to meet the changing needs of Wales, to invest in talent and provide national and inclusive services. The need to look at a national approach and inclusive provision was also a theme of my meeting with the College Principal.

Turning to the specific questions raised by the Committee:

What assessment has the Welsh Government made about the impact of the closure of Young RWCMD on the higher-level provision of music and drama training available to learners in Wales? We would be grateful if this could include how the College is considering how to align activity with the National Plan for Music Education, and whether this would deliver access to the higher level of training and education that young people currently access at the College

Since this was a proposal from and decision by the College, the Welsh Government was not able to undertake a full assessment of its impact. The impact of the closure will of course be considered as part of future Welsh Government decisions.

The National Music Service was established by the Welsh Government in 2022, to deliver on a Programme for Government commitment for every child and young person from the age of 3 to 16 to benefit from opportunities to engage in and experience music-making activities.

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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.

The Service's work programme, as set out in the [National Plan for Music Education](#), covers a range of strands, including work with key bodies such as the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Arts Council of Wales to support learner progression in music (the link between the National Music Service and the College is strengthened through the role of the Principal of the College as Chair of the National Music Service's Advisory Board).

The overriding focus of the National Music Service's remit is, of necessity, to support music education in schools (through provision such as 'First Experiences' and 'Music Pathways'). It was not the intention, in establishing the National Music Service in 2022, that the Service should provide higher-level provision in music training, of the type offered by music conservatoires. The National Music Service is fully funded by the Welsh Government, via grant to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

Why Wales does not have a grant scheme in place to support young people to attend junior music college or a youth conservatoire, like the Music and Dance Scheme in England.

There has never been a scheme in Wales and there is no funding available for such a scheme in the Welsh Government's current budget.

What is the geographical distribution of students who attend the programme at the College?

In response to an update from the Welsh Government, the College provided fresh data related specifically to its Young Music Services. The latest data set out (provided on 22 July 2024) reflect the final numbers of students attending the College weekly Young RWCMD Music Services. The early data set (provided on 2 July 2024) was extracted early in May at the start of the Summer term.

While there are no significant movements or substantial changes, I thought it would be helpful to present the latest picture to the Committee:

Young Music Services (as of 22 July 2024)

- 57% (59%) of Music students are from the Cardiff area – increases to 69% (72%) when you include Newport and Bridgend
- 15% (14%) from West Wales
- 2% (no change) Rhondda Cynon Taff
- No students from North Wales and no students from Powys – (1 student from North Wales in earlier dataset)

*Information in brackets relate to earlier data provided by the College on 2 July 2024.

Young Drama Services (as of 2 July 2024)

- 66% from Cardiff area – increases to 79% when you include Newport and Bridgend
- 11% from Rhondda Cynon Taff
- 7% from West Wales
- 1% Mid Wales
- None in the North of Wales

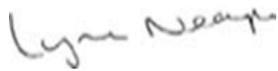
What discussions have taken place with the Higher Education Funding Council (or Medr) to allocate funding to support a junior conservatoire or similar programme?

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is unable to provide funding for the junior conservatoire at RWCMD as the provision is not higher education. The Committee will be aware that HEFCW was dissolved on 31 July 2024 and has been superseded by Medr which has a wider responsibility for tertiary education in Wales.

What discussions have taken place with the Higher Education Funding Council (or Medr) to provide a form of bridging loan, or a time-limited grant to the College while it considers how to make the youth programme sustainable in the long term?

Medr continues to engage with the RWCMD to monitor the impact of the decision to close the junior conservatoire on their higher education provision, and on their commitments to widening access to their degree programmes to students from backgrounds under-represented in Higher Education, as part of Medr's responsibilities across the whole of the tertiary education sector in Wales.

Yours Sincerely,



Lynne Neagle AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education