

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-637
Ein cyf/Our ref HL/00152/16

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
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9 February 2016

Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 27 January on behalf of the Petitions Committee seeking my views on the future of art, music and creativity opportunities for young people. I will answer the points raised in the petitioner's correspondence in the order they were presented.

I am committed to delivering creativity across the curriculum as a tool that teachers can use to open the minds and raise the aspirations of learners, now and into the future. In March 2015 the 'Creative Learning through the Arts – an action plan for Wales', a joint programme between the Welsh Government and the Arts Council of Wales, was published. This is a 5-year plan to enhance creative approaches to teaching and learning and encourage greater collaboration between schools and arts and cultural organisations working with creative practitioners. The Welsh Government has committed £10 million over 5 years to match a further £10 million committed by the Arts Council Wales' lottery funding.

Within the Creative Learning Plan are 2 work streams, the Lead Creative Schools Scheme and the All-Wales Arts and Education Programme.

The Lead Creative Schools Programme enables schools to apply to participate in a two-year programme to improve attainment. In this programme trained creative practitioners, many of whom engage learners through musical activities, work alongside teachers to develop a more creative approach to learning. As the programme centres around delivering professional development for teachers, and not just delivering one off sessions to learners, it is intended that a lasting legacy of using arts, music and creativity in education will be created.

The All-Wales Arts and Education Programme will also increase and improve opportunities for young people to have access to a range of art and cultural 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.

More information on the Creative Learning Plan can be found at:

<http://www.artscouncilofwales.org.uk/what-we-do/creative-learning>

On 30 June 2015, I announced my support for the development of a new curriculum in Wales by accepting, in full, the recommendations of Professor Donaldson's Successful Futures report. Professor Donaldson challenges us all to re-think our approach to the curriculum and to focus on 4 purposes of education so that we build a curriculum that supports our children and young people to be: ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical, informed citizens and healthy, confident individuals. These four purposes will be at the heart of our curriculum and will be the starting point for all decisions about teaching and learning.

In Successful futures, Professor Donaldson proposes a broad and balanced curriculum from 3-16 structured in six Areas of Learning and Experience, one of which will be "Expressive Arts". Within this area Professor Donaldson acknowledged the role that the arts, including music, play in providing inspiration and motivation for learners, giving them contact with the creative processes, performances and products of others and stimulating their own experimentation and creativity.

The Arts and Creative Learning Plan will contribute to the development of this area of the new curriculum, as well as encouraging teachers to engage with learners in inspiring and exciting new ways.

A curriculum for Wales – a curriculum for life, which sets out how Professor Donaldson's report will be taken forward was published on 22 October 2015 and is available at the link below:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculum-for-wales-curriculum-for-life/?lang=en>

Pioneer Schools, some of which are working in partnerships, have been appointed to work with Welsh and international experts to design and develop the new national curriculum for Wales. During the first phase of development, the focus will be on designing the structure of the new curriculum, before developing the content of the Areas of Learning and Experience. The aim is that the new curriculum will be available to settings and schools by September 2018 and used to support learning and teaching by September 2021.

In January 2015 I established the Music Services Task and Finish Group to consider the provision of music services and to develop proposals to ensure learners across Wales can continue to access high quality services.

Music Services across Wales are the responsibility of local authorities. There are a number of existing delivery models and variations of approach in place and, acknowledging there is also a number of long standing partnership arrangements, I asked the Task and Finish Group to consider alternative methods of service delivery as well as the potential for greater partnership working.

On 2 July 2015 the Task and Finish Group submitted their report and I subsequently accepted all of the recommendations, except one which related to categorisation of schools. The report and the response to the recommendations can be found at:

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/music-services-task-and-finish-group-report/?lang=en>

The report suggests that whilst the responsibility lies with Local Authorities, authorities should work across boundaries to create a series of music service hubs, thereby reducing the number of standalone services. The report does not prescribe a single model of delivery but refers to current consortia arrangements, hub working, as well as other delivery models such as through charitable trusts or arm's length organisations. I am seeking greater consistency within and across local authority provision and in my response I encourage authorities to work collaboratively to deliver a more consistent offer to learners.

Concerning charges for music tuition and the matter of school funding; in my response to the Task and Finish Group's report I fully agreed that schools and local authorities should be absolutely clear in their communication of charging policies for music tuition. We will encourage local authorities to work in partnership to deliver an open and more consistent offer to ensure that any charges passed on to parents are a fair reflection of the actual costs. Within that offer, I believe the availability of subsidised music tuition for learners facing disadvantage should be a priority for all local authorities.

Protecting resources for frontline schools delivery has been the cornerstone of our approach for major improvements in the education system over the last 5 years. Local authorities have increased their delegation of funding to schools from an average of 75% in 2009-10 to 83% in 2014-15, or 87% if we exclude home to school transport. This represents a significant shift in funding and responsibility for schools. I welcome the efforts made by those schools that have used their school budgets to expand on their existing music services provision over the years. The vision outlined in the Task and Finish Group's report for the role of music services in the music education of our 3 to 19 year olds is one to which I feel we must give our national support as our partners set about implementing the vision locally.

In terms of the local ensembles, a number of actions are being taken to bolster local music services, arising from the recommendations of the music services task group that I have referred to above. One of these actions, which has real potential to protect and develop youth music activity, is to pursue the creation of a national endowment fund for youth music. Clearly this would take time to establish but could, in the longer term, be a more effective way to sustain these services.

I along with the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism established a separate national ensembles task group to investigate ways to place these bodies on a more sustainable financial footing. That group has recently completed its work, see link:

<http://gov.wales/newsroom/cultureandsport/2016/160127-recommendations-to-secure-wales-national-youth-arts-ensembles/?lang=en>

The group has made a number of recommendations including the consideration of a new single structure body to run National Youth Arts Wales (the national ensembles), a full assessment of the potential impacts of higher fees on access to the ensembles by people from deprived and lower income backgrounds' and to develop proposals for bursary schemes to enable young people from deprived and lower income households to participate in the ensembles. Both I and the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism have endorsed these recommendations.

I hope the above reassures the Committee that the Welsh Government is taking a number

of actions to develop sustainable solutions that will ensure that young people can continue to benefit from these important services.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Huw Lewis'.

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