

Musicians'
Union



The National Plan for Music Education

The impact on the workforce

A Musicians' Union report
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In February 2014 the Musicians' Union (MU) published *'Music Education Hubs – the real picture so far'*, which described the impact of the change from Music Services to a Hub structure on the workforce.

The report summarised information collected by the MU since the inception of the Hubs in 2012 and noted detrimental changes in working conditions for teachers as well as concerns over equal access for pupils to music education.

Now, three years on from the launch of National Plan for Music Education, and with a General Election imminent, it is timely to reflect on the effect central and local policies have had on music education in England. Is the National Plan fulfilling its ambitions to end the postcode lottery for children in music education? What price are instrumental teachers paying for funding cuts and what needs to happen next to safeguard our Music Services and Music Education in England?

Firstly we do acknowledge the investment that has been made by the current Government into Music Education in England. Secondly we acknowledge some Hubs are endeavoring to do their best to support the workforce whilst still having to make very difficult decisions and there are really good examples of Hubs working hard to improve the offer to children and young people in their area. However, these are balanced out with consistent messages we get from MU members that the situation for instrumental teachers is unfortunately getting worse. Therefore after three years of implementing the National Plan we feel it is important to reflect and assess what is actually happening within Music Services and with the teachers who deliver the work.

The MU is well placed to report the impact on instrumental teachers of the Hub concept. Since 2012 we have been involved with consultations involving many Music Services, often representing members facing redundancy, and we have worked closely with the NUT and other unions to try and minimize the cost to teachers by challenging proposals to cut or reduce funding both locally and nationally. We have reported on teacher led start ups, including Milton Keynes and Cornwall, where the MU has played an important role supporting teachers wishing to avoid being

set in competition with each other and we have continued to advise and negotiate to ensure our members are able to continue their careers as instrumental teachers. Our MU Hub Rep scheme now has over 50 Hubs covered across England and it is these members who regularly report accounts of developments within their Hubs therefore providing us with a realistic picture of the generally worsening conditions which are being imposed on the workforce. The body of evidence the MU has collated stands in stark contrast to the skewed picture that selected data collection by the Arts Council offers.

The loss of appropriate and professionally recognised employment conditions for instrumental teachers is tangible and has implications. The imposition on highly qualified teachers of reduced pay along with worsened contractual arrangements and insecurity is now significantly affecting the current workforce. Unfortunately as long as music making is still seen to be happening within schools then the reality is that the decision makers seem to be simply not interested in the working conditions of those teachers delivering the work.

In the new landscape of Arts Council funding where Music Hubs are perversely more dependent than ever on central Government funding, it is understandable that criticism is rare from those involved. Music Hub leaders are challenged by the effort of delivering the National Plan whilst juggling impossible budgets and therefore, in the main, do not look closely at the resulting collapse in what was once a professional field of work.

The resulting silence about the scale of the destruction of music education in England is both dishonest and dangerously misleading. Although, as noted, the Government has invested a significant amount of money into implementing the National Plan we feel it is inaccurate for those involved in music education to infer that everything is going well and that the current level of funding is sufficient to deliver its aspirations comprehensively across the country. In fact we do not know what it really costs to deliver the National Plan because the 123 Hubs still operate in very different ways, paying their instrumental teachers widely different rates of pay and passing on a variety of charges to both parents and schools.

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And what of the Music Education postcode lottery the National Plan sought to end? Reports from our members around the country tell us that it is possibly just as bad if not worse. It is not the intention of this report to unpick the efforts by different Hubs to deliver to all children, and of course, more recently to offer advice and curriculum support to schools as well. However we can reliably say that the quality of first access tuition is highly variable. What Music Hubs consider acceptable, in terms of instruments offered, length of sessions, experience and training of those teaching; how many sessions are offered and at what age children learn, combine to create a level of variability that undermines any real possibility that the postcode lottery has been addressed successfully.

Financial cuts arising from Local and National policies

Where once Local Authorities funded their Music Services and Government funding (Music Standards Fund) was regarded as a top up in areas where, for political reasons, local funding was absent or low, the situation is now almost entirely reversed. Heads of Music Services (de facto Hub Leaders) have widely reported that with the advent of the National Plan and the confirmation of three year Government funding, their Local Authorities increasingly see no need to provide Music Services with continued local funding. So a stream of central funding, which originally began as a stop gap, has now become the main source of public funding resulting in Music Services being more vulnerable than ever to policy change.

The rebalancing of funding for Music Hubs on a per head basis has resulted in cuts of up to 50% for Music Services not previously supported by Local Authorities. For other areas more reliant on Local Authority investment, the impact has been greater still with some areas losing up to 70% of their income and of course cuts on this scale inevitably lead to job losses. We see Music Services who lose Local Authority funding being forced into making teaching posts redundant whilst also discontinuing the use of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) pay and conditions. Music Service restructures vary but one thing is always certain - that teachers' terms and conditions are

reduced, often along with rates of pay, and increasingly teachers are contracted as self employed freelance teachers, put on zero hours contracts on instructor or unqualified teachers pay scales or simply left to find work independently. Our members report that this can result in them losing up to half of their previous income, which of course makes their career choice unsustainable, yet we often see in these restructures the management team being protected from both job losses and pay cuts.

The consequence of these changes is that instrumental teaching is being downgraded and the professionalism of the workforce undermined. What has always been a neglected and overlooked profession, which suffered disproportionately from isolation, is now deeply fragmented, underpaid, casualised and in the spirit of the times, increasingly working in competition with one another.

It is difficult to be precise on the number of jobs lost since the last time the then Music Service umbrella body, The Federation of Music Services (now Music Mark) stated that there was a workforce of approximately 12,000 instrumental teachers in 2009. Although this included both full and part time roles it nevertheless showed that teaching for Music Services represented a significant proportion of work for musicians who teach. Between 2012 and 2015 the MU has represented members facing redundancy in over 70 music services and even with a conservative estimate we believe that between a quarter and a third of the workforce have lost their jobs.

During the summer of 2014 the MU participated in three National meetings with Music Hub Leaders as part of a series of Music Education Council events. Some Hub leaders expressed great concern over losing professionally trained and experienced teachers as well as reporting that they were reluctant in investing time and money training young recently graduated teachers only to see them leave after two or three years, disillusioned by the poor pay and limited opportunities for career progression.

This mirrors what our members are telling us in that it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain an income as an instrumental teacher working for a Music Service. We see experienced teachers leaving the profession to work privately or outside

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of the Hub only to be replaced by a less skilled workforce. There is no incentive for Hubs to invest in a worker whose loyalty to the organisation is by definition limited and similarly there is no incentive for experienced teachers who can generate independent work to work for a third party where pay has collapsed and the security of employed work is becoming less likely. Thus, the demise of Music Services continues as experienced teachers leave.

Shifting priorities

The MU has noted the tendency for Music Services to reorganise their work around the priorities of the National Plan for Music Education. Given their diminished resources, Music Services are increasingly ridding themselves of instrumental teachers and then retaining just a small core of 'employed' music teachers whose role is to deliver the 'first access programme' otherwise known as Wider Opportunities.

Issues we see arise from this trend are:

- Insuperable pressure on the remaining teachers to deliver wider opportunities across an area.
- Loss of the skills of experienced tutors
- Less staff loyalty
- Successful progression routes being diminished.
- Lower hourly pay attracting less qualified or lower caliber freelance tutors.
- Loss of teaching team making it hard to maintain levels of service regarding quality.

Music Hub Leaders, attempting to reconcile their new workforce of independent contractors and casualised workers with the reality of what the work involves are increasingly trying to exercise control which is not proportional.

We see Music Hubs expecting self-employed instrumental teachers to adopt School/Hub/Music Service policies and accept the hours and rates offered with no provision for preparation and administration. These teachers are regularly expected to provide their own insurances and DBS checks as well as pension/holiday/paternity/sickness provision yet rates for those transferring

from employed to self-employed status are often the same or less. Music Hubs, anxious that providing payments for the self employed to attend Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will result in employment status claims, are beginning to expect teachers to attend training at their own expense in order to keep work. This situation can also be found with whole class teaching of instruments (Wider Opportunities or First Access) where we frequently hear from young or inexperienced teachers who are obliged to take on the work with little or no training or support and who subsequently struggle with the delivery therefore becoming quickly disillusioned with Music Service work.

These dilemmas expose the myth that teaching can be safely subcontracted. Music Service provision is already bedeviled with issues over communication. The classic issue of whether a teacher is paid or not when they turn up expecting to teach, only to find the school has not told them the children are unavailable due to exams, sports day etc is now weighted even more firmly against the teacher who has limited recourse in these situations. Such disputes erode good will, that intangible yet essential ingredient to successful provision. Morale amongst instrumental teachers working for many Music Services is extremely low as we see unrealistic attempts to control teachers working in very challenging circumstances whilst giving them none of the benefits and security of employed work.

Examples of such control include unrealistic expectations of the activities of independent teachers and worryingly, their students. We have come across Local Authorities publishing lists of 'licensed' or 'accredited' teachers with no information being available for 'non' accredited teachers on how to access the scheme. We have also seen instances where only children learning with 'licensed' teachers are able to access discounted instrument hire or access to the Assisted Purchase Scheme therefore excluding some of their pupils who are legitimately entitled.

Another worrying trend is the introduction of schemes to observe instrumental teachers where a judgment is made as to whether their teaching is of a suitable quality or not. We have many concerns about the fairness and practical application of such schemes and although we

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can understand the aspiration of quality control by the Music Hub we continue to make a stand about the introduction of such spurious schemes imposed on teachers who are often self-employed with no connection to the Music Service. Although most Music Hubs do not charge for these schemes we have already seen instances of the proposal of introduction of fees for the teacher resulting in the passing of the cost of quality assurance on to teachers.

These examples illustrate how some Music Hubs are passing both responsibility and liability to the teachers, many of whom derive no benefits from working for the Hub. Children and young people deserve teachers who are well trained, motivated, resourced and treated with the professional respect that they deserve and we sympathise with those teachers who feel aggrieved by the changes to their status yet are still expected to behave like they still have all the benefits of employment.

It is the belief of the MU that there is an urgent need for these issues which are adversely affecting the workforce to be addressed. Work needs to be done to establish a pay scale that reflects the skills required and the demands made on teachers as well as encouraging professional development by rewarding teachers appropriately for the responsibilities placed on them. This will not only provide a fair and consistent structure for the profession but also allow a much more accurate provision for funding based not only on the financial outlay but also the skills and roles covered. Furthermore it will facilitate the development and experience of staff within those roles and in turn provide a more stable and professional workforce.

There also needs to be an open and honest discussion to look at different models of Music Service which ensure the continuation of an organised workforce, such as co-operatives, which can be a viable alternative to the current system which is unsustainable in its present form.

If issues to do with the workforce are not addressed the variability which drove the creation of the National Plan in the first place will simply become more widespread. There are many talented and experienced teachers leaving music services to work privately or even leaving the profession entirely and if we are to continue

to enhance and encourage the next generation of young people through music we need to ensure there is a skilled and professional workforce to deliver it.

In conclusion the MU recommends an exploration of the following:

- **A pay scale for instrumental teachers** based on skills, role and experience which is suitable for national adoption.
- **Different models considered for Music Services** which allows the continuation of an organised workforce.
- **A commitment from Government** that funding for the expected Music Education provision is fit for purpose and is based on what is needed to ensure the remuneration of a professionally trained workforce.

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