



INFLUENCING
SUPPORTING &
CONNECTING

All Party Parliamentary Group on Music Education (APPG) forum

Speech by Bridget Whyte

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At the Music Mark Annual Conference last year we focused on Youth Voice and were privileged to have some young people from Lancashire presenting their Manifesto. One of them, Ciaran, summed up their thoughts: ‘We strongly believe that music should be available to everyone and that the government does not value music education the same way they do science, technology, engineering and maths.’.

To provide that equitable access to music opportunities, Music Mark is calling on the government demonstrate it does value music education by an investment of *at least* £100m a year and for that investment to be over a *sustained* 5-year period.

A couple of weeks ago I met with a Post Doctoral Student from the Institute of Education. She wanted to find out more about the embryonic work I did back in late 2012 on a Policy Trajectory Study. I’m not an academic, but discussions with Professor Graham Welch at the Institute of Education sparked an interest in pulling together some of the data and reports I had amassed in my work with the Music Manifesto, the DfE, Arts Council and others. My aim was to look at how a statement back in 1998 by the then Secretary of State for Education resulted in the creation of Music Education Hubs in 2012.

Reviewing my research, I reflected that David Blunkett’s statement that ‘every child should have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument’ in 1998 wasn’t actually when Whole Class Instrumental Learning was ‘invented’. It was, however, the point when the Standards Fund, money was given to each local authority to sustain and develop music services, and for some that was the beginning of partnership working.

I was the administrator for Surrey Arts at that time and I remember the letter coming in and the excitement that there was not only money to support the ‘bread and butter’ work of the Music Service, but also funding for development projects. For Surrey that meant a partnership with other music services and youth music organisations in the South East on a Rock and Pop project which became Rhythmix.

At that time – 20 years ago - the funding was aimed at helping music services to consider how they ensured ‘every child *had the opportunity* to learn a musical instrument’. It wasn’t a call for Whole Class learning – that ‘every child *must* learn a musical instrument’. In fact that didn’t come until later – with pilots in 2003 and rollout in, I think, 2005/6.

The first time the word ‘Hub’ was mentioned in connection with Music Education didn’t happen until October 2006 and the publication of the Music Manifesto Report No.2 – Every Child’s Music Matters. That’s 8 years after David Blunkett’s comment. Within the Executive Summary the report said:

Children and young people do not care who provides the chance to make music, they just want that chance..... Schools and music providers need to connect their music provision more meaningfully with young people’s own interests, passions and motivations. To do that effectively we need coordination and collaboration between all music providers.... We believe the best way to provide that coordination is through the development of collaborative music education hubs.

It however took another 6 years, a review and national plan later before Hubs were born in 2012.

As we start Yr8 of Music Education Hubs, there is so much to celebrate. More children and young people do have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, to sing, to play in ensembles, to access progression routes and to listen to and participate in great performance opportunities.

But, and I know you were waiting for a ‘but’, all this amazing work comes at a price, and although the Department for Education have constantly provided a Music Education Grant through the various colours of government, and clearly stated their commitment to music in and beyond the classroom, over the years the ability of the 133 Music Services, and more recently the partnerships (including Music Services), who make up the 120 Music Education Hubs to deliver Mr Blunkett’s aspiration (and the subsequent aspirations of the Music Manifesto, Darren Henley’s Music Education Review and the Government’s National Plan for Music Education) has become harder and harder.

The 1998 the Standards Fund allocation was £40m. In subsequent years that amount increased significantly – I expect due to the impact and value of the programmes of work being developed.

5 years later the amount was £61m – an increase of just over 50%.

And by 2007 it was £82.5m – another 30% increase.

The Music Education Grant funding then stayed static – although the DfE provided additional money to support the purchase of musical instruments linked to the delivery of the now national programme of Wider Opportunities as it was called – Whole Class Ensemble Teaching as it’s more commonly known now. There was also funding for a National Singing Programme (Sing Up), three In Harmony Projects, 10 Music Partnership projects, funding for National Youth Music Organisations and ongoing support through the Music and Dance Scheme for Choir Schools, conservatoire junior departments and Centres for Advanced Training. Indeed the total funding for a three year period

from 2008 to 2011 announced as part of the launch of Sing Up in a primary school in South East London on the 21st November 2007 was £332m.

The change in government in 2010 was the next significant moment for Music Education. Unlike some programmes – such as Find Your Talent – fortunately investment in Music Education, including the Music Education Grant to Music Services didn't get cut. But the new Secretary of State for Education with his colleague in the DCMS wanted to take a closer look at the sector and commissioned Darren Henley to undertake his music education review. This review also said we should have Music Education Hubs:

The government response to the review was the first – and I think still only – National Plan for Music Education.

Of course the Plan outlined how everyone in music education might support children and young people to experience Darren's recommended 'vibrant future for music education', but within it was, finally, the plan to set up Music Education Hubs.

At a time when Mr Gove was reviewing education as a whole and making changes (which we can now see have had significant impact on creative subjects in schools), the sector welcomed the fact that there was still commitment to music education.

However, the devil is in the detail and the funding allocated for the new Music Education Hubs wasn't so welcomed!

- For the first year of Music Education Hubs (2012/13) the allocation was £62.6m – pretty much the same amount of money as 10 years earlier
- It then went down further to just £58.2m by 2014/15, before a desperately needed increase to £75m in 2015/16 – which, except for a very small uplift announced in January following an intervention by Music Mark, has remained static for the past 5 years.

The core and extension roles have remained the same, the aspirations of government that 'every child would learn an instrument, sing, access ensembles and progress' has not altered, but the funding to deliver the Hub core and extension roles is being stretched thinner and thinner.

Of course, since before Music Hubs were created, funding from other sources has been a part of local music education budgets, and this is the case today. However, who is providing that additional funding has significantly changed!

Looking at the Data Return from 2016/17 makes for sober reading.

- In 5 years the Local Authority contribution to Music Hubs as an average has decreased by nearly 40%
- Conversely the contribution by schools and parents to music education is on the increase – each now representing £2m of income more in 2016/17 than in 2012/13, despite school and family budgets are under more pressure themselves which of course has the potential of reinstating the postcode lottery the plan was meant to remove.

And of course a budget isn't just about income it's also about expenditure. And for the organisations that make up each Music Education Hub, their costs are increasing year on year.

- Staff salaries and pension contributions – especially, but not exclusively, where staff are linked to, or are on teachers' Pay and Conditions
- Venue hire – including, as schools are required to be more business like with external organisations using their premises, hire costs to run activities in schools
- Maintenance of the instruments needed to deliver Whole Class Ensemble teaching – many of which are now so old Hubs are worried about how they can continue to deliver this core role without further investment in the purchase of new sets of instruments
- And the need to have a larger fund to support equitable progression, for no child to be told they cannot fulfil their aspirations and/or potential as family disposable income is stretched to its limits.

So, all of this background leads me to the letter we co-wrote to the Secretary of State for Education at the end of August and the open letter in the Times last month.

Back in 2010/11 – nearly 10 years ago – the Music Education Grant allocated to Music Services was £82.5m. According to an inflation calculator on the Bank of England's website, that amount is £103.9m today.

If the government is as committed, as it says it is, in equitable access for all children and young people to a rich, diverse music education with opportunities beyond the national curriculum, it must invest appropriately in the structure it has created to do that.

One last point. As well as the powerful speeches from young people about their musical opportunities and aspirations at our 2018 conference, we also visit schools and talk to pupils about their music education. At a time when we need to find ways to support young people to be more creative, have a sense of wellbeing, enjoy good mental health, and come together as communities, we cannot ignore the fact that musical learning can, and does, do all of this. Music must be part of a broad and balanced curriculum in every school, but children and young people who want – and many do – to expand on that, should, and must have equitable access to the opportunities Music Education Hubs offer.

One young A-level student – Hollie - from Huntingdon school in York put it simply: "I study music as a creative outlet and to exercise my mind in a totally different way"

Music Mark, on behalf of its Membership of Music Hubs, individuals, schools, and other music education organisations, and in partnership with other national bodies such as the ISM, ask one simple question: If government wants a great music education for all children and young people which provides a creative outlet and exercises young minds in a totally different way, will they commit to paying appropriately for it?