

Developing Organisational Resilience A Guide for Music Education Hubs

Covid-19 Supplement

April 2020

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Contents

	Page
1. The “Now”	3
There is no “right answer” Business Critical	
2. An Emerging Trend, and Some Issues	6
Expectations The Curriculum Evaluation	
3. We Shall Be Changed?	12
The Future?	
4. The Original “Organisational Resilience” Guide	14
Further Reading	17

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Introduction

As part of its ongoing support for its members, this brief supplement to the “Developing Organisational Resilience” document was commissioned by Music Mark, in April 2020.

In light of the unprecedented challenges to “normal” ways of working, thinking and planning, brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, the brief for this supplement was to:

- Offer some thoughts to music education organisations on dealing with the “now”
- Discuss an emerging trend, and some associated issues
- Set out a few thoughts on the future
- Remind colleagues of the original Organisational Resilience document

This supplement cannot, and will not, pretend to be comprehensive. Instead it can only be a snapshot-response to a brief set in the most fast-paced of changing scenarios and challenges. Its contents are, for the most part, common sense. But its intention is to try to be helpful in these most turbulent of times.

1. The “Now”

The Covid-19 pandemic is not only a major “shock” to society as we know it, but to us as individual human beings and to the family, friendship and professional groups to which we belong.

Just as organisations will respond in different ways, then so too will we as individuals and families and friends. It’s natural. It’s normal.

Whilst our first professional thoughts will naturally be about what we can do for our customers, clients, beneficiaries and our staff, we must first do what we can to secure our own personal well-being and that of our families and immediate friends.

The last few weeks have placed extraordinary pressures on our physical, mental and emotional health; the weeks to come will surely bring similar challenges. Making sure our family and friendship groups are as supported and supportive as is possible, must be the bedrock upon which to build our short, medium, and longer-term professional responses.

And so, even though we are already some weeks into this situation, [our priority must continue to be to look after ourselves](#), and our families. For without that security and well-being in place we cannot function effectively as professionals, or as leaders of organisations.

The current situation is indeterminate. At the time of writing, social media seems to be awash with all sorts of predictions on when “normality” will resume. However, it is perhaps foolish to speculate. Indeed, it may last longer than previously hoped for or imagined, or not.

It might also be unwise to think that, when this situation is finally over, we can revert to the status quo - exactly what we used to do, and in exactly the ways that we used to do them.

For when we do come out of this, we shall have changed: as individuals, as families, as friends, as music education organisations and, perhaps even as a society.

I take my hat off to you all

As we work our way through these unstable and anxious times, we are all no doubt engaged in different ways of working, of new ways of working, and “live action research”. New modes, new services, new opportunities and new ways of engaging young people are being trialled all over the country. In the fast pace at which things appear to be developing, I take my hat off to you all, in awe and wonder, for all you are doing.

Here is a friendly word of advice. Now is not the time to burn the candle at both ends. The light might appear to be twice as bright, but it will inevitably only last half as long. Burn-out creeps up whilst you’re not looking.

We also may be tempted by other flashes of brilliance; but those that cannot ever be sustained, that radiate a false hope, and then crash into oblivion should be well-avoided. (Arguably they have a place in Research and Development programmes in “normal times” – but their effects in these crazy times might be unsafe.)

Give yourselves time and space to rest and reflect, physically as well as mentally. The interim solutions that you arrive at for your customers, clients and beneficiaries can never be perfect. Accept that you can only do your imperfect best. That’s a truism for all times!

Be kind to yourselves, and to others. Kindness is probably more important than creativity in this anxious period. Above all, forgive yourselves, and others.

However, now is also the time to consider how we are changing – changing right now – and in what ways we might change in the future, as individuals, families, customers, clients, beneficiaries and staff. And to prepare for those changes in the ways that we might organise and provide music education. More of that later in this supplement.

There is no “right” answer

It is rare for there to be a single “right” answer to issues or challenges in any circumstances. Context is always king and queen, and this is particularly true for music education now. Organisations will respond in different ways depending on the prevailing circumstances and their local constitution, geography, staffing establishment, nature of contracts and communications with schools and/or parents, availability of resources. No two organisations are identical, nor will be their responses.

Some organisations are seeking to move some teaching and learning provision, such as lessons, on-line. Others are developing resources that young people can access online from home. Some are providing emailed resources and follow-up; others are developing telephone support for parents and carers and their young people. Some are providing a mix of these.

Just because a neighbouring music education organisation is doing it in one particular way, doesn't mean that every organisation is in the same zone of infrastructure or preparedness, or capacity to deliver in that way. It's best to find the ways that suit your organisation at the current time, whilst keeping a close eye on developments elsewhere, and sharing your successes as well as failures!

Business Critical

Be clear about what is currently "business-critical" for your organisation. What are the tasks and roles that need undertaking for the "now"? Some will be both urgent and important. The following list is not exhaustive, and to some extent will also depend on your organisation's constitution, financial arrangements, staffing structures and business model, but "business-critical" tasks and roles are likely to include some or all of:

- Securing governance arrangements – this might involve setting up a small team of "governors"/"trustees" to work with you to be the "crisis management team" to deal with urgent decisions; it might mean agreeing a greater range of decisions able to be taken under "chair's action", it might involve greater use of online meeting software, such as Skype, Zoom etc to hold governance meetings, it will certainly involve communications that enable speedier decisions to be taken. It's crucial to keep a transparent and detailed audit trail of decisions taken in these different circumstances
- Re-forecasting the organisation's financial profile, and particularly its cash flow over the next 3-9 months to consider the nature and size of the financial "shocks" that are affecting or will affect your organisation
- As you are more likely to be in control of your expenditure than your income, deciding which lines of expenditure must be maintained, which might be reduced, and which might be frozen temporarily or cut indefinitely
- Securing current funding sources wherever possible, including current contracts with schools, parents and others, through regular communications and contact
- Deciding which services can continue to be provided, which need to be amended, or delivered in different ways, and which services cannot be delivered now - suspended, postponed or even cancelled indefinitely
- Seeking alternative sources of funding, albeit on a temporary, "emergency" basis where possible and/or necessary
- Deciding arrangements for "home-working", and regularly reviewing those arrangements in the light of changing situations, including the appropriateness of ICT and communications provision, and especially discharging Health and Safety responsibilities
- Deciding on the range and number of staff to be "furloughed" and for what period(s) depending on what essential work must be done, continually, or in periods of time
- Where you have a direct relationship with your bank, making contact where necessary, to discuss cash-flow issues
- Ensuring suppliers and creditors are paid, and ensuring payment of outstanding debtors' invoices where possible; or seeking to negotiate payment delays with creditors (note of warning for those who have a direct relationship with HMRC – don't treat them as creditor of last resort)
- Ensuring payroll processes remain robust

If a task or role is not judged to be “business-critical”, at least in the short-term, leaders should be considering whether it should be temporarily suspended or postponed, to free up capacity to deal with the “now”.

Delegation

Some music education organisations have significant leadership teams of people to whom key tasks and roles are delegated. Senior leaders will no doubt be giving thought, especially in the context of “business-critical” work, which streams of work are best dealt with by which member(s) of the team. In those organisations that have far leaner leadership teams, and in some cases just a single person, some thought might be given as to who else, external to the organisation, could support “business-critical” tasks, again to free up in-house capacity.

Depending on local “rules” of engagement of associates or consultants, and indeed the financial position of the organisation in question, it is worth considering what “emergency” provision is needed for the short-medium terms to enable the “business-critical” tasks and roles to be fulfilled successfully. Music Mark can help advise on potential support that may be available, including consultants, possible resources and funding advice.

Furlough

The decision to Furlough some, all or none of an organisation’s employees is a matter for each individual organisation. Although the current provision has been laid out with some detail there remains some confusion especially about the financial circumstances of an organisation in which Furlough might apply, and for how long it might apply. More guidance is expected soon.

The only comment that this author seeks to make in terms of “Furlough” provisions, is to seek advice, and keep seeking advice, from HR/accountancy/legal professionals and others, as the situation develops. The same goes for those colleagues who may be eligible to apply to the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

The MIA has published useful advice from the Directory of Social Change on how to support Furloughed staff: <https://www.mia.org.uk/2020/04/supporting-furloughed-staff/>

“Above all remember they are still your employees even if they are temporarily not working. They still need to feel valued and important.”

2. An Emerging Trend, and Some Issues

The most obvious recent trend is the push to move some teaching and learning on-line where possible, using a range of platforms such Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom and others, to engage young people in one-one lessons and also in groups.

In addition a number of organisations have made online resources available such as those provided for example by [Leicestershire Music Hub](#) and by [Inclusive Music](#) and a great number besides. There are many resources out there and it’s fantastic to see so many good people sharing their assets and resources so willingly for young people to engage in music, especially whilst at home.

There will be many different approaches to modes of delivery, methodology, content, frequency, assessment and so on. Some of these will be governed by local policies, for example in some Local Authorities there might be strict limitations on which hardware and software can be used and under what conditions.

Some will be governed by the availability of suitable broadband speeds and availability of sufficiently capable hardware. Some will be governed by the staffing infrastructure, some by the ICT skills of individual staff, some by the prevailing availability of schemes of work and/or training.

Of course, a key issue will be children and young people's access to the internet whilst at home, and the availability of the appropriate software and musical instruments.

It may be wise to heed the proverb "more haste; less speed". If online routes are to succeed in the medium term, not just the next few weeks, they need to be constructed in a considered way, and rolled out carefully, perhaps even in stages, to different groups of young people.

There is, however, one area that all **must** consider in setting up online provision – paying close attention to safeguarding, for which Music Mark has provided an excellent reference page containing advice and guidance from a number of organisations:

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/online-music-teaching-and-safeguarding/>

In addition, there is other advice available such as that from the NSPCC:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely/>

Expectations

In this fast-paced time of moving more teaching and learning online, there will be key considerations in successfully managing the expectations of different groups.

Whether it is groups of young people, your staff, your organisation or other stakeholders, a well-trodden maxim, particularly helpful in these uncertain times is: "under-promise and hopefully over-deliver". In the push to organise online teaching and learning it is important to have realistic expectations for what can be achieved in the short and medium terms.

Young people's expectations and those of their parents/carers. Some young people will find the notion of online learning, especially one-to-one lessons, motivating, exciting and rewarding, at least in the short term. Some young people may even say that they prefer it. As with all things in life, take their enthusiasm with a healthy pinch of salt. (Healthy = a pinch, not a bucket!) Remember that they will have a whole load of other learning to cope with, and the pressures of the cabin-fevered environment of home life. What is/was achievable in "normal" life is probably not the same as what can be achieved in the current situation. How teachers modify the curriculum, its content, its approach and its pace of delivery are going to be crucial aspects of successful sustainability.

Equally some young people will be disheartened by the online experience, for a whole range of personal, musical, technological, emotional and family reasons. Important to give them

space, time, reassurance, perhaps some additional differentiation, different motivations, and maybe even a pause in their learning if needed, whilst they adjust to the other pressures of home life. Consultation with parents and carers will be key. For some young people, the adjustment will take considerably longer than others. Some may not adjust well at all.

And then there will be the “hidden” children - just as there are in every class or group taught in any setting or in any subject. They will be the ones who don’t express an opinion, or at least not overtly so. As in all education, don’t take their “silence” as acquiescence, but don’t subject them to the Spanish Inquisition either. Be aware that they are there. Prompt them, encourage them, challenge them, give them feedback. Keep eyes and ears open for the clues that they may give off that they need more, or less, support at any one time - a hallmark of great teaching in any scenario.

But there’s the rub. Contextual clues, intended and unintended signals, body language and “atmosphere” can rarely be replicated in an online environment compared with a real-life teaching scenario. Teachers cannot see the “whole” pupil and can only view that angle which the camera portrays. And vica-versa. We can see what we can see. We can’t see what isn’t visible. And we shouldn’t speculate about it or make assumptions.

What expectations are there for parents/carers to have direct role in their children’s online learning? Clearly, they will have an indirect role, especially in setting up the lessons, communications and safeguarding. But what about a more direct role – being involved in their child’s online lesson, either as a participant or in support. There is a school of thought that says the younger the child, the more directly involved parents/carers should be in the lessons themselves. Indeed, some approaches, such as Suzuki, have always been predicated upon the parent (usually the mother) learning alongside the child. Some children may need this close parental/carer involvement, and in some cases, it may enhance their learning. Of course, another argument is that parents/carers are not directly involve in music lessons that take place in school, and it may disturb the teacher/pupil relationship if it were to change. There’s no easy answer. But it’s worth thinking about.

Teachers’ Expectations. Expectations of your teachers for what can be achieved, and how they might be achieved, will vary. There may be a correlation between teachers’ confidence and confidence using ICT and their expectations for what can be delivered and achieved. But crucially there may be other important issues, such as broadband speed and reliability, nature of hardware and software available, ability to moderate a curriculum and differentiate in an online environment, even the ability to communicate persuasively online. And of course, personal, family issues that may impact on their expectations and ability to deliver online.

And so, finally in this little section, it is down to you, as your organisation’s leaders, to set out what might be reasonable expectations in this most unreasonable of times.

Please set the highest bar of expectation when it comes to safeguarding issues. But in all other dimensions of online learning, give latitude as to what should be expected of your staff, and of your

young people and their parents and carers, at least in the short term. There will be time enough to evaluate, revise and improve.

Access and Inclusion

What about those children and young people who might have access to the internet at home but for whom access presents challenges? Drake Music has compiled some excellent guidance and advice on how to improve accessibility, especially in “group meetings”:

<https://www.drakemusic.org/blog/becky-morris-knight/accessibility-in-video-conferencing-and-remote-meetings/>

And what about those children for whom internet access at home is impossible? Are there ways in which they can access learning via other means? Email, snail mail, phone dial in. There are no easy answers, nor should you beat up yourself for not being able to fully meet their needs at the moment. But consult with parents/carers, other colleagues, and young people themselves (and their teachers in schools) where possible, to see what else might be able to be provided.

Schools

How can your organisation sustain relationships with schools during this difficult period? Many schools are still open and have been over the Easter break, to provide support for vulnerable children and children of key workers. Pupils of different ages are mixing in class or working on projects together, with their schools trying to enforce the 2 metre social distancing rule.

Whilst there have been directives for music education hubs not to send teachers to physically visit schools, are you still able to maintain contact with key staff in schools? Some organisations have already contacted all schools in their area(s) to let them know they are still there, and ready to help in whatever ways they can, including redirecting parents/carers to online teaching and resources. Are there services that your organisation can provide for those children still attending schools, in consultation and negotiation with key staff there?

Those organisations that already have a direct relationship with parents/carers through, for example, instrumental teaching programmes, or ensemble memberships, will already have their contact details. But those organisations that contract with schools, who then act as broker, and banker for such provision, may find accessing contact details of individual parents/carers more difficult, unless the schools are willing to signpost. There is evidence that some have already done so.

The Curriculum

It is a given that the curriculum delivered online will have differences to those delivered in “usual” settings – whether they be in school, or out of school.

For reasons, already discussed above, the expectations of young people, their parents/carers, your staff, and indeed your organisation will be varied and variable. But even though that is the case, and indeed the home circumstances of some may or may not be conducive to making good progress, it is

worth considering what elements of an online curriculum might be common or what elements might be elective. A few other thoughts:

Frequency and duration of lessons – for some inexplicable reasons, possibly historic, possibly social, possibly economic, many music lessons have always been given for “*x minutes, once per week, term time only*”. This begs a question. Is this frequency and duration the optimum for securing good progress and attainment (whether in “normal” settings or not)? Does the advent of more online learning make the opportunities for this frequency and duration to be more flexible, or less flexible? Does it encourage teachers and pupils to think of progress differently, if frequency and duration are different?

Curriculum Content – notwithstanding the technical issues alluded to above, will online learning encourage teachers and pupils to focus on a different range of skills, concepts and knowledge? For example, the current technology available is not particularly helpful if focussing on “ensemble” skills, where frequent time-lags can undermine attempts for two or more to play with close synchronisation. Is online learning more conducive to some elements more than others? For example, some technical skills, some areas of improvisation, composing? In any event, is this an appropriate time to enable young people to take more control of their learning, or are there too many other factors such as home circumstances, availability of ICT etc that might undermine it?

Pace of learning – teachers and young people are probably already re-evaluating what is an optimum pace for learning certain aspects in an online medium. It is certain that for some young people the pace might be far slower, especially if practice routines are hampered because of home circumstances. Interestingly, for some it may improve, and the pace may be quicker. For many, it is likely that the pace of learning could be erratic, at least in the short term.

Assessment – given the issues above, there is no doubt that teachers and pupils alike will be reconsidering approaches to assessing progress and attainment. The role of teacher assessment is as important now than ever before. Possibly even more so. But please don’t spend undue amounts of time or energy re-inventing assessment wheels specifically for online learning in the “now”. Keep things simple, unpressured, useful for the learner, and above all supportive.

Instruments – Many children will already have their instruments at home. But what about those who don’t? Some organisations are making provision for the loan of instruments from stock and delivering them to homes. In terms of maintenance, some organisations are signposting parents/carers to online stores for the provision of, for example, woodwind reeds. Some organisations are providing replacement instruments, delivered to homes, where, for example a string has broken, or a key is stuck. There will be some children who, although they have their instruments at home, cannot practice because of where they live. In some cases, practice mutes may be a way of part-overcoming the issue.

Evaluation

The current move to develop online learning is a new experience for some colleagues. As well as providing an “alternative” to the usual provision it could (and probably should) also easily fall within your organisation’s research and development mode. As with all “action research” endeavours, it’s ideal to build in an evaluation framework from the outset. For some reason, this element is sometimes the last to be thought about, and occasionally rushed in its construction and implementation. It is completely understandable. And yet, in this most febrile of times, it may be worth spending more time now to develop a framework and process to assess the short and medium term impacts of these new initiatives. Not for its own sake, but precisely to identify those areas that are working well, and achieving expectations, and those that are not and why, so as to give a secure foundation to further development (or re-engineering or cutting) in the future.

Important to the notion of sharing findings of the great range of developments currently being undertaken, Music Mark has indicated its willingness to collate such findings in a) a virtual library of action research projects and their findings and b) analyses of those findings to identify trends, and ongoing developments and issues. The CEO of Music Mark and her team will communicate on this matter in due course.

Technical issues

This author does not claim any expertise to advise on the technical issues that seem to be arising in some of the moves to online teaching and learning. Clearly there are problems that some colleagues are facing in software such as Zoom and Skype, and possibly others, for example time lag, unstable connectivity, jittering video and unclear audio.

If you have access to your ICT experts, in your organisation, or in a school, or elsewhere, seek their advice. All this author can proffer are a couple of basic tips:

- Use a wired connection rather than Wi-Fi if possible, by connecting your computer or laptop to your Internet router using an Ethernet cable.
- Close other programmes on your device that might be using your internet bandwidth. Pause downloads that may be running in the background and turn off background updating programmes such as Dropbox.
- If possible, ask anyone else who is using your internet at home to pause what they’re doing; or you wait until they are finished before starting.

Monetising online provision

There are debates about the extent to which fees for “online music lessons” should be commensurate with those previously given in “normal” settings.

This is both complex and challenging.

There is no doubt that individual teachers will want, where possible, to see their services being recompensed adequately, even if they are providing them through different media and contexts.

Organisations will also be giving thought as how to best do this where “online lessons” are being provided by them, or through them.

Where previous “one-to-one” lessons in and out of school, were paid for directly by parents/carers/others, there is an argument to support this being sustained where it is possible to do so – with the caveat expressed in the final sentence of this section.

It is where lessons normally given to groups of pupils (no matter how large or small the groups), now being provided in one-to-one online lessons, that decisions could become more complicated, depending on the expectations of the pupils, their parents/carers and the organisation and its teachers.

Moreover, and recognising that different organisations contract in different ways with schools and/or parents and carers, there will be a need for sensitivity and care in trying to set up online arrangements, especially where the school is the “customer” and where they pay or part-pay for your services through the parental contributions or fees that they collect themselves.

In whichever ways it is done, it has to be paid for from somewhere. It cannot ever be “free”. Some organisations will be pitching it as part of their Research and Development programmes. Some will be organising it as a “temporary alternative”. If it is to be free at the point of delivery, then the beneficiaries (and parents/carers/schools) must understand that it is being subsidised from other sources. And that that subsidy may change in the future.

There are no hard and fast rules for what can or should be done. Or what shouldn’t be done! It will be a matter for local decisions, including the extent to which each party is willing and/or able to make a financial contribution to the costs.

However, to state the blindingly obvious, the individual financial circumstances of parents/carers and others may well have changed for the worse, and make it difficult, or even impossible to fully monetise online provision successfully at present. And of course, the same goes for your teachers.

3. We Shall be Changed?

We all look forward to the time and place when, once again, we can work and socialise freely, travel without restrictions, and enjoy a return to “normality”. Schools re-opened, businesses re-started, (restaurants and pubs open!), and music education organisations re-emerged with the passion, conviction and music-making energy of former times.

And yet, when it comes, it may not feel like the “normality” of former times. Yes, the day to day might feel similar in some senses and in some routines. But I wonder to what extent we can ever fully revert to the ways we worked in before the Covid-19 crisis.

For, we shall have learned a great deal about ourselves, our colleagues, our pupils, their parents/carers and especially about the “art of the possible”.

Sometimes “necessity” is the parent of invention. And no more so than in this current situation. I have been hugely impressed by the creative and flexible responses being developed by music

education organisations up and down the land. Our experience of these, and our expectations for them are changing us, and by the time that a “normality” returns we *shall* be changed.

The future?

We shall look back on this period and consider what else might we have done or could we have done. We shall consider the lessons we have learned and how we enact that learning in our future planning and ways of working.

So, after your well-earned, perhaps too short, Easter break, to resume once more the fight with the immediate fires and to consider your responses for the coming weeks and months, perhaps also set aside some time to ponder what the following issues might mean for your organisation in the future:

Teaching and learning. To what extent will your organisation consider a more mixed provision of physical settings and online as part of your core offer of teaching and learning to pupils, parent/carers and schools (and others)? With the current state of technology, and indeed some pupils’ access to it, it may be challenging to consider large group or whole class teaching through an online medium. But as technology continues to improve, and expectations and expertise continue to grow, are there more options available to consider individual and small group teaching online? Perhaps not every lesson, but a mixed economy? Could it be offered more flexibly than current arrangements, especially regarding frequency of lessons? Will it be sustainable in supporting good musical progress, and in the economics of its provision? How will the quality of teaching and learning be assessed over the medium and long terms? Who will be responsible for the updating of technology in each major advance?

Ensembles. The same caveat about the current state of technology pertains to ensemble work, perhaps more so. Even greater is the need for humans to work and to socialise in real, physical settings, which is why our long tradition of youth ensembles in and out of schools has been so rich and so impactful, musically, educationally and socially. However, are there some aspects of ensemble provision that might find a place online? For example, some organisations have a peer-to-peer “buddy” system in their ensembles, and in their teaching and learning programmes, where more experienced pupils provide mentor support for younger and/or perhaps less experienced pupils, with guidance from teachers. With all the caveats of safeguarding and permissions in place, this might be an area worthy of further exploration in an online setting.

Home Working. There is something particular about “going to work”, whether it be to “the office” (cue David Brent gags) or to a range of venues according to demands, or schedules or the needs of clients and customers. The current Covid-19 situation is clearly showing that the traditional notion of “office-based working” is being very smartly and creatively challenged. As someone who has been a home worker for several years (and with latitude from previous employers for many years previous to that, to spend time at home working on difficult or challenging strategies or tasks) I know of the benefits that not having to travel into the office can bring. Not only commuting time saved, but super-productivity from having uninterrupted periods of time to focus and to think. Of course, we all need and sometimes crave the camaraderie of the office or other work venues, and the opportunities they present. But are there also times when we should think “as long as the work is done to a high quality and on time” who cares if it’s done in pyjamas or with an endless supply of caffeine, or in the evening, or not first thing in the morning”? A caveat: home working doesn’t suit everyone, for a variety of reasons.

Other provision and services. If nothing else, this current situation has provided a clarion call to consider what services might be delivered in different ways. Some organisations have digitised significant amounts of their services, products and administrative functions, with much of it through online interfaces, able to be accessed from anywhere.

Some organisations still rely on modes of operation, particularly for their administrative functions, that are restricted within the confines of the physical office or the Local Area Network, and particularly on spreadsheets in the ubiquitous “F” drive.

Is there mileage in your organisation considering what other services and functions might be accessible more universally to staff, pupils, parents/carers, schools and others through an online medium? For example:

- Curriculum support for schools – via video conferencing, webinars etc
- CPD for schools, for your staff
- Staff meetings across large or small geographic areas
- Governance and/or Advisory Board meetings
- “Parents’ evenings”, or other feedback occasions
- Composing – lessons, support, workshops for pupils?
- Internal assessments – “local instrumental exams” - via skype, zoom or other software
- Administrative functions – e.g. pay claims, instrumental stock, staff data returns, pupil reports, staff meetings etc
- And more besides!

4. The Original “Organisational Resilience” Guide

Much of the contents of the original document “Organisational Resilience – A Guide for Music Education Hubs”, first published in January 2019 and updated in October 2019, hold as true today as ever before. The document is freely available on the Music Mark website:

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/developing-organisational-resilience-a-guide-for-music-education-hubs/>

Whilst it won’t necessarily help you to fight the current fires, it is hoped that the document has enough useful material to help you plan for the future, and especially in the aftermath of the current situation.

There is no point in repeating large chunks of the text here. But it might be useful to re-consider this from the guide’s opening section:

Martin and Sunley¹ argue that ‘organisational resilience’ can exist in three modes:

1. An organisation can ‘bounce back’ from shocks - rebounding as quickly as possible to a previous state, (with an implicit assumption that the previous state was stable)
2. An organisation has the ‘ability to absorb’ shocks - with a focus on maintaining the same structure, function and identity in the face of shocks (a capacity to absorb disturbances and still retain basic function and structure)

3. An organisation develops 'positive adaptability' in anticipation of, or in response to, shocks (an ability and capacity to adapt structure, functions and operations in the face of new conditions)

If 1. and 2. above are "bouncing back",

Surviving

Enduring

Strength

Returning to prior state

Preserving core mission/goals

then 3. above is "bouncing forward"

Thriving

Evolving

Flexibility & adaptation

Change

Developing mission/goals in the light of changed circumstances and needs

¹'On the Notion of Regional Economic Resilience: Conceptualization and Explanation,' Journal of Economic Geography, Volume 15, Issue 1 (2015). See also James Simmie and Ron Martin, 'The economic resilience of regions: towards an evolutionary approach,' Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 3(1), pp 27-43 (2010).

Once some kind of "normality" returns, to what extent will your organisation be able to bounce back, or to bounce forward?

The following is not a favourite quotation from the documents, but in these circumstances, it seemed apt to restate it.

"...there are known knowns; there are things we know we know.

We also know there are known unknowns.

That is to say we know there are some things we do not know.

But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know.

And if one looks throughout the history.... it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones."

Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of State for Defence. 2002

The speed at which Covid-19 has moved from being an "unknown unknown" to a "known unknown" is remarkable. It will eventually become a "known known".

The categorisation isn't important. It is how organisations are responding to this "shock" now and will respond in the medium term that is critical. And to those future "shocks" that are certain to appear on the horizon. Developing Organisational Resilience will be a key factor in bouncing forward.

Finally

I hope that this brief supplement is of some use. It was written in haste to provide a few immediate thoughts. As the situation continues to unfold, some issues raised here may need to be reconsidered.

I have been so impressed with all that has already been achieved within days and weeks. You will

know how much more is needed. In these hugely challenging times, please take care of yourselves, your families and your colleagues.

Remember the networks of colleagues in and through Music Mark, in your areas, the various WhatsApp, Facebook and other social media groups, and others who are there to support and help.

And if you feel I can be of assistance, do please contact me through my website www.nigelmtaylor.com.

Nigel M Taylor
April 2020

Further Reading

“Organisational Resilience – A Guide for Music Education Hubs” by Nigel Taylor, first published in January 2019 and updated in October 2019 on the Music Mark website:

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/developing-organisational-resilience-a-guide-for-music-education-hubs/>

Music Mark’s collected advice and guidance on online music teaching and safeguarding:

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/online-music-teaching-and-safeguarding/>

Music Mark’s collected advice and guidance for home-learning and online school resources:

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/resources/home-learning-resources/>

Advice on supporting mental resilience and wellbeing during a crisis by Rachel Pink:

<https://www.musicmark.org.uk/news/what-steps-can-you-take-to-preserve-mental-resilience-and-support-a-team-when-working-from-home-during-a-crisis/>

Advice from the Music Industries Association on supporting furloughed staff:

<https://www.mia.org.uk/2020/04/supporting-furloughed-staff/>

Undertaking remote teaching safely, by the NSPCC:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/march/undertaking-remote-teaching-safely/>

Improving accessibility in video conferencing and remote meetings, by Drake Music:

<https://www.drakemusic.org/blog/becky-morris-knight/accessibility-in-video-conferencing-and-remote-meetings/>