

# **Developing Organisational Resilience A Guide for Music Education Hubs**

## **Covid-19 Supplement No.2**

### **“Towards Stabilisation”**

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**July 2020**



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

**Developing Organisational Resilience**  
**A Guide for Music Education Hubs**  
**Towards Stabilisation**  
**July 2020**

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## Background

This “Towards Stabilisation” supplement was commissioned in July 2020 by Arts Council England (ACE) to support Music Education Hubs (MEHs) in developing their business stabilisation plans for the October 2020 payment. It is the second of two Covid-19 supplements to the original “Developing Organisational Resilience” guide of 2019 and is offered as independent guidance with the hope that colleagues find it helpful.

In March 2020, the nation went into lockdown in response to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, with all but essential services being forced to close. The impact on individuals and on organisations has been significant, in many cases devastating and for some, tragic.

At the time of writing, a range of measures to ease lockdown had already been introduced nationally with more planned for the coming weeks and months, in the hope that some semblance of “normality” could return, in and with schools, and in society.

All MEHs – their lead and partner organisations, and the schools and pupils they serve – have felt and continue to feel the full force and impact that lockdown has had on their work and operations. Their provision in schools, such as whole class ensemble tuition, along with singing strategies and small group tuition, has largely been curtailed. Ensembles have not met, and music performances have been cancelled.

MEH business models have been seriously disrupted and for many, their income from schools, parents and other sources has plummeted. Although MEHs continue to receive the Department for Education (DfE) grant through ACE, the finances of many organisations are in a difficult state, and for some they are verging on the perilous.

A good number of MEHs have been able to transfer some one-to-one tuition to online platforms, and there is much to suggest that this has been successful. They should be congratulated for their swift and creative actions and responses. There have also been some innovative ensemble and singing provision online, as well as further developments and additional resources being made available by music education and commercial organisations.

The DfE has published its guidance on schools’ full return in September. However, there continues to be some uncertainty about arrangements in individual schools, and what that might mean for music education organisations. Doubts have been expressed about whether MEHs will see a full return to their usual operations and ways of working in September. It may take longer, and even then, it may only be a partial return.

MEHs are seeking ways in which they can secure a more stable position in the current upheaval, and perhaps also lay foundations for “re-setting” in the months ahead. However, they will only achieve stability if a majority of their lead and delivery organisations are able to do so.

ACE has introduced a requirement for a short, simple, and flexible business stabilisation plan from all MEHs by 6 October 2020, with an update in January 2021, and has issued some guidance (to which I have contributed). This can be found in the guidance section of ACE's website.

The purpose of this supplement is to offer support in this task by:

- Providing some guidance on how to approach “stabilisation” in uncertain times
- Suggesting some options that might be useful for organisations to consider in navigating their steps towards stabilisation

Please note that, in this fast-changing situation, new information and announcements from the DfE and elsewhere might come at short notice, and some statements made in this document may be superseded.

The DfE published its [“Guidance for full opening – schools”](#) today, 2 July 2020, and I've attempted to recognise some of its contents pertinent to MEHs before I pressed the “send” button on this document to ACE today.

As with previous writings on Organisational Resilience, it is emphasised that this document cannot pretend to be totally comprehensive. The myriad of contexts and structures that MEHs work within will ultimately generate a multitude of solutions appropriate for their local situations.

Nigel M Taylor  
2 July 2020

## **“Stabilisation”, a response to the “now”**

MEHs have been hard hit by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been some creative and resourceful responses, especially in providing services online, which have been humbling to see and very welcomed by many.

But the finances of many MEH organisations are severely strained. Those lead and delivery organisations who have a diversity of income streams are potentially in the most difficult position. Organisations whose regular cash-flows depend significantly on income from schools and from parents, have become financially unstable, as those streams of income have plunged since March and remain critically low. Some of these organisations may be in a highly vulnerable position.

Conversely, those organisations that are almost wholly reliant on the DfE grant, or those that are solely commissioning bodies (and do not engage in any delivery themselves) may be the least unstable at present, and perhaps least vulnerable, for now.

**MEHs will only achieve stability** if a majority of their lead and delivery organisations are able to do so. There are likely to be variable and varied approaches to stabilisation, even within a single MEH, as lead organisations may have little, if any, influence on the governance of sovereign partner organisations. Some organisations may be stable already. For others it may take weeks or months to achieve it. It may mean some difficult short-term decisions to protect medium and longer term provision.

The fluidity of the present situation is a major challenge, with frequent updates and developments in the process of easing lockdown, and with changing advice on what constitutes safe social distancing.

The DfE has, today, published [new guidance](#) on schools’ full opening in September. There will be variations in how individual schools interpret the guidance. For example, “supply teachers, peripatetic teachers... can move between schools” is a welcome policy change that rescinds the lockdown instruction of March. Schools will undoubtedly take an individual view on what is allowable or doable in their contexts. There remains conflicting evidence about the “safety” or otherwise of playing a wind or brass instrument or singing in confined spaces. The DfE is advising schools that there “may be an additional risk of infection” where these activities take place and has recommended some mitigations including a limit of 15 pupils in a group. Further guidance has been promised by the DfE. We all hope that it will be based on scientific evidence, not on conjecture, and that it will arrive soon.

This level of uncertainty makes forecasting and planning for stabilisation difficult. However, MEHs must plan, to respond to the “now”, and for the immediate future. Many are planning for a “different normal”.

## Approaches to Stabilisation

Achieving stability assumes that an organisation can survive in the short term.

The harsh reality of the current climate may result in some organisations being forced to close. Some organisations may not survive unless there is some substantial and immediate financial support, and/or there is some semblance of a return of business, and/or they make sweeping changes to their business models. Some may be able to be “mothballed” until more stable conditions return.

For some organisations it may already be too late. This is a situation which will be extremely painful and regrettable, and one with which this author can fully empathise. (In the past, as Chair of Trustees of a regional community music organisation, I had to oversee its closure: its cash-flow had deteriorated significantly, and it became in danger of trading insolvently.)

The following conditions are likely to underpin an organisation’s capacity to stabilise:

- openness of accurate information, regularly and frequently communicated
- sufficient and timely political will, strategic and operational capacity, guidance and support
- the capability to be flexible and responsive to constantly changing situations, information, and guidance coming from the centre and elsewhere
- understanding that current planning is interim, loaded with uncertainty, and subject to adjustment at short notice
- recognition that to achieve stability, some significant changes within the organisation may be needed, even if only for a temporary period
- capacity to provide at least some services, albeit different and/or reduced compared to previous norms
- sufficient customer loyalty and commitment in the immediate future
- sufficient cash to continue paying its employees and its creditors on time, or within mutually agreed time-frames and conditions

Assuming most of those conditions are in place, there are several actions that organisations might consider taking, towards attaining some stability. They are described in the following pages.

Whilst they are set out in an order, which hopefully has a logic to it, they should **not** be interpreted or regarded as a strictly linear sequence of events. Some activities or steps may need to be undertaken earlier or later in the order of things, others may need to happen simultaneously, some may not be needed at all, depending on the circumstances of the individual organisation.

## Assessment of the current position

All MEHs, and their constituent organisations, will have undertaken an analysis of their current financial positions based on the known knowns of the period since lockdown. Depending on how a MEH is structured this might be straightforward, or a much more complex task.

This author makes two simple assumptions about the current position:

- Where organisations are employers, some will have decided to Furlough some or all staff; the number is likely to be much higher than that reported to ACE in its April 2020 survey. Some organisations may not have been able to take advantage of the scheme.
- Where organisations have direct responsibility for paying premises rent, rates, utilities and other overheads, all has been done to secure support from landlords, local authorities and suppliers.

At the risk of stating the obvious, organisations should double-check the information they hold on their current financial positions. They should be microscopic, surgical, and honest in analysing the details. They should ask at a minimum:

- Is it the most up-to-date financial information?
- Is it accurate and reliable?
- Does it include all the information it needs to do?
- Are the details clear and verifiable?
- Has the information been verified by more than one person?

Many a wrong decision has been taken (or the right decision delayed) because of inaccuracies that lay hidden in financial information.

For example, if an organisation employs staff, it should make sure that the employment on-costs have been fully accounted for in budgets and financial analyses. If an organisation is unsure, it should immediately go to its HR and accountant leads to verify.

Similarly, it's worth double-checking the current impact of Furlough on the organisation's budget (and remembering that employers will have to contribute progressively more towards the scheme in August, September, and October, before the scheme is then withdrawn). The calculations for staff employed on Teachers' Pay and Conditions are more complex than for some others. It is worth a re-check.

It's also worth verifying that all income due has been received by the organisation or is scheduled to be received imminently.

Many MEH organisations will have already undertaken a close review of their current costs and income streams and will be staring at a large and growing gap between income and expenditure since March 2020.

Two simple questions at this stage:

- Are there any other costs that can be easily reduced or removed, right now?
- Is there any other income that can be achieved, right now?

The likelihood of achieving significant savings or major boosts to income in the immediate term is probably quite small. However, every little helps, and even if those questions have already been asked, they are worth asking again.

Many MEHs, and their individual organisations, will have shared the information on their current financial position with their Governance groups, with trustees, with line managers, and with ACE and others. It is important that those in receipt of the information:

- have a shared, consistent, and CLEAR understanding of the current position
- are frequently updated with contemporary information, as it comes to hand
- have the opportunity to both challenge and support, and
- are fully aware that other options may need to be considered if survival and stability are to be secured.

It is rarely desirable to make decisions hastily, even though the urgency of the situation might prompt it, or powers on-high might even encourage it.

On the other hand, some organisations will need to think fast, and act quickly, if they are to survive and stabilise.

### **Scenario modelling and financial forecasting**

ACE is asking all MEHs to prepare Business Stabilisation Plans which, ideally, cover 6 months October 2020 to March 2021 (but they will accept 3 months October to December 2020) and include cash flow forecasts/budget modelling for two scenarios: “expected case” and “worst case”.

Such is the gravity of the current situation, this author suspects that many MEHs will have already commenced such plans; in some cases, they might be “rescue” plans, in advance of any stabilisation.

Scenario modelling and preparing financial forecasts up to the end of the current financial year should provide a frame of reference and trajectory, to adjust and modify regularly as the situation changes over the coming days, weeks, and months.

Two scenarios, along with respective financial forecasts, will inevitably include some conjecture.

**Expected case scenario**, (or “likely case”) based on:

- what contracts and income streams you know you have in place from September onwards (acknowledging that some will start later) up to the end of the financial year
- what contracts you feel some confidence in gaining over the period
- what other income you might bring in
- what costs you will incur over the period, including any new costs associated with new ways of working

Be realistic, not overly-optimistic, and be clear about what your assumptions are based upon.

In a “best case” scenario, there will hopefully be an incident-free return of all schools in September, clarity of guidance that enables teachers/tutors to visit schools again, further guidance on singing and playing brass and wind instruments. This may lead to additional contracts being won. This scenario may show incremental gains of contracts over time but could still present a negative gap between income and expenditure, both ongoing and by end of March 2021.

**Worst case scenario**, based on:

- what contracts you know you have from September onwards
- what other income you might bring in
- what costs you will incur over the period
- but in the context of:
  - schools not being able to open as currently planned, and/or
  - guidance on visiting teachers is restrictive, or
  - significant market resistance from schools (for whatever reasons) or
  - the advent of a second “spike” that precipitates a partial or full lockdown

This “worst case” for many organisations is likely to show a major gap between income and expenditure up to March 2021, and above that already reported for the period April-June 2020. For some, “expected” and “worst” cases may be similar.

Scenario modelling will always contain a range of variables – a mix of “known knowns”, “known unknowns”, and speculation on “unknown unknowns”. It will of course also be based on the current information you have, for example from your needs analysis and your contacts with schools, parents, and pupils.

Scenario modelling, with financial forecasts, provides a basis for the consideration of a range of options, routes, and decisions, so it is really important to keep the models updated in “real time”, as new information comes in. That may mean **daily updates** in the current situation.

### **Needs analysis / customer commitment**

All MEHs are required to undertake a Needs Analysis as part of their funding agreement with ACE. It has always been important to configure provision and services to respond to articulated needs. ACE is not asking for a full needs analysis as part of MEH Stabilisation Plans, but evidence that planned provision has taken needs into account.

Many MEHs undertake part of their needs analyses early in the calendar year, as a precursor for securing contracts from schools from the beginning of the new academic year. In some cases, this must be done at this time because of corporate marketing and contracting processes.

Some MEHs have been able to stay in contact with many, or even most schools in their local authority area(s) since lockdown, for some it has been more difficult, and for others, contact with schools may have diminished.

Stating the obvious again, all schools are different. Even given a fair wind, that in September 2020 all schools will have fully re-opened for all pupils, they will respond in different ways:

- Some may welcome their external music education provision back with open arms
- Some may be less enthusiastic for a range of reasons that might include curriculum priorities and public health considerations
- Some schools may show marked levels of resistance to rekindling externally provided music education provision, or even having any music at all

Ongoing engagement with schools specifically to clarify what they need, what they would like, what they will pay for, at what price, and over what time period, will of course provide valuable information for the scenario modelling. Knowing customer commitment at this juncture is crucial. The same goes for parents/carers and pupils.

This vital aspect of modelling may need a **higher priority** and much more staff time to engage with the sheer number of schools, parents, and pupils, than perhaps was the case in the past.

## Some options that might support moves towards stabilisation

You must first consider whether you're in danger of "**trading insolvently**" in the immediate future. If you are, you need to **act now**. Contact ACE and Music Mark **now**. You should also seek independent legal and other professional advice immediately.

The financial gaps identified in the scenario modelling will raise pressing questions for organisations as a prelude to considering what options might need to be pursued:

- Is there sufficient cash-flow to maintain solvency over the period?
- Are there any reserves (or remaining reserves) that can be drawn upon?
- What else can we do to close the financial gaps?
- What options do we have, or should we consider?
- How long do we have to address the gaps?
- Is there anyone who can/will bail us out?
- What happens if we do nothing?

The following options/approaches are not set out in any hierarchical order nor should they be interpreted as such. Some options will take longer to implement than others.

None of the options below assume any additional financial bailout from central government or elsewhere, even though it may appear to be increasingly, and urgently necessary.

Each organisation will need to make its own decisions on what to do and when to do it in the context of its scenario models and financial forecasts. MEH organisations should consult with each other in the hub. Many will have already considered some of the following:

### ***Deliver services in different ways.***

We have already seen the large shifts of some teaching provision onto **online** platforms. Is there scope for expanding this to meet schools' needs as well as those of pupils and parents? The key question is, can they be **successfully monetised**? If an organisation is struggling financially there's no point adding to deficits by selling services that lose money.

Although online platforms appear to be more utilised for one-to-one teaching rather than groups (because of inherent issues with synchronisation), are there opportunities to consider whether some aspects of, for example whole-class ensemble tuition, might be delivered by **lead teachers working remotely** but with more online support materials and in partnership with established providers such as Charanga? Are there some elements of a MEH central ensemble programme that could be provided/delivered online? There are already a number of well-established

“virtual” choirs, bands and other ensembles. The same caveat of monetisation applies.

Similarly, are there opportunities to deliver **professional development** activities currently planned, or newly planned, via online means? Is there scope to expand this provision, especially if it encourages more participants and reduces costs and/or brings in additional income?

Assuming that schools follow the DfE guidance and visiting teachers are able to work in schools again, the ongoing caveats around social distancing and the “risks” of playing of brass and wind instruments and singing may continue for some time.

Are there ways of delivering “whole-class ensemble tuition” programmes in schools to **smaller sized groups**, that are suitably socially distanced? Likewise, are there any prospects of delivering MEH central ensemble programmes to **smaller “chamber”-sized groups** that are socially distanced?

All of these “different ways” assume that prevailing conditions allow them, that they can be successfully monetised and that they are commercially viable.

### ***Deliver new services***

Are there **new services** that your organisation could deliver to schools and pupils? Composing, song writing, lessons, support, workshops for pupils? Internal assessments, “local instrumental exams”, online?

Are there services to **new client groups** that you don’t currently engage with, such as older people, perhaps in partnership with other funding organisations such as NHS, public health, well-being teams, Dementia charities etc?

### ***Other work***

Is there other work that staff could be **temporarily** assigned to, and for which an income could be received? For example, in schools (visiting staff regulations permitting) such as pupil support, supply teaching, PPA cover, or in Local Authorities to boost their capacity if needed (via redeployment where it is possible). Several organisations have already redeployed some staff. It may be worth a further round of exploration for those that haven’t.

### ***Freezing services***

Notwithstanding that many MEHs have already frozen or part-frozen some of their services since March, is there an opportunity to **freeze** any other services that are currently being provided or planned to be provided that are not viable in the short

term, either because they do not derive sufficient income, or are too costly to provide at the moment? Are there activities or partnerships or financial commitments that can be withdrawn from? Are there departments or services that can be “mothballed”? To which activities can an organisation apply the principles of “**strategic quitting**”? (i.e. taking a strategic decision to stop certain things, either because they are too costly, add too little value, are inefficient, or simply someone else could do them better.)

### ***Increasing income/boosting cashflow***

Difficult though it is, and in an even greater competitive context, are there any other grants, temporary loans, **cash injections** or donations that could be secured in the short term from Local Authorities, trusts and foundations, philanthropists, charitable givers?

Are there ways in which **cashflow** could be boosted by changing customers’ payment conditions? Up-front, in advance rather than in arrears? Many organisations already do this.

Is there any appetite for **raising prices**? It may be difficult or even impossible in the current context to raise prices without causing even greater market resistance. But it should be an option for consideration.

### ***Reducing costs***

Balancing the need to keep focussed on the needs of children and young people, along with reducing the costs associated in providing for them, is a huge challenge. Reducing costs is a big ticket item in closing a financial gap, and often the most testing and potentially painful to achieve. Some of the ways described below will take longer than others to complete.

As already asked, are there any areas of cost that can be easily and swiftly stopped or frozen? My experience of contemporary music education organisations is that many are already very lean, but it’s worth asking the question. (I hate the term “low-hanging fruit”, partly because of its “management-speak” connotation, but also, in my experience, some fruit that hangs low is over-ripe, sometimes difficult to pick, makes a mess on your hands and clothes, and ends up adding little to the pie anyway.)

There may be some cost savings to be made by switching staff to **home-working** for more than a temporary basis, but only if that results in reduced use of office premises that can then translate into reduced rent, rates and utilities. In many cases that may not be possible in the short term and in any event may bring more upfront costs taking into consideration the need to provide appropriate hardware, software,

communications infrastructure and health and safety considerations. There may be accrued savings in **travel** from home working, but it's unlikely that it will convert into much cash in the short term.

In an employing organisation, **staff** are likely to be the largest percentage of its costs. For many organisations Furloughing some or all staff has provided a temporary cushion. But the organisational costs of Furloughing are set to increase in the coming months, and the whole scheme is scheduled to close in October. It may be worth considering:

- Are there aspects of staff **pay, terms and conditions** that might be negotiated on a temporary basis, so that costs can be reduced until a stabilised position has been attained?
- How possible is it to introduce more **flexible contracts** to respond to fluctuating demand from customers, clients, or different times in the day?
- How flexible are staff to be able to take on **different work** that may be out of their immediate spheres of expertise?
- Are there **staff vacancies** that can be frozen?
- Are there any staff whose work and costs can be **shared** between two or more organisations?

How likely is it that an organisation needs to **restructure** its staff, and perhaps **disestablish posts** within the structure to reduce its costs? If you have already been contemplating a restructure of your organisation, is now the time to **prioritise** it?

For some organisations restructuring may be an option that brings the biggest cost savings to reduce the financial gaps. It takes time, consultation, and strategic certainty to produce ultimate cost reductions. It brings with it, however, the potential for delays, appeals, some additional short term costs of redundancies, and even possible reputational damage.

There may be some organisations for which restructuring involves changing from an employed staff to a part self-employed or fully self-employed workforce. For some it may be the only viable route to take to avert collapse, without any other serious options or intercession from elsewhere.

**Merging** with another organisation may bring some financial support in the medium to long terms, especially in shared back-office and administration costs. Merging is not an immediate solution. It takes time, and in many cases, upfront additional costs to make the transition.

For more detail on some of these options to reduce costs, readers may wish to go to pp 42-48 of the updated [Organisational Resilience document of 2019](#).

## **What else?**

Write to your local MP, and to the Chair and the Leader of the Local Authority (Authorities) in which you operate, to appraise them of the current situation for music education in general, and for your organisation specifically. (Music Mark is currently drafting a template for such letters.)

Communicate your position to all stakeholders (staff, governors, partners, schools, parents, pupils). You may decide to include a range of options you are considering, or it may be too early in the process to disclose.

Keep ACE involved and updated on your current position and let your Relationship Manager know at the first sign of major issues. ACE's Relationship Framework welcomes an open and honest relationship with funded organisations and they are there to listen, understand and support.

## **Looking to the Future**

For MEHs, achieving “stability” is a crucial step beyond survival. It's also a transitional step on the path to achieving a more resilient future.

In doing so, it is fundamental to acknowledge that we have all changed. Schools, pupils, parents, carers, teachers, music education organisations - we have all changed. Covid-19 has wrought these changes in ways which very few had imagined just some months ago.

Amid the challenges of surviving and stabilising, now is also the time to begin to think about what is needed to “re-set” and regenerate for the future.

The **scenario modelling** discussed earlier may be a useful tool to use **regularly** in the coming months and years, as a means of setting strategic and operational parameters for future working.

It is likely that the needs and demands of customers and clients will continue to change, both in their content and their volumes. There may be continued and even growing demand for some services, whilst others may see a reduction. Local needs and demands will always influence the nature and range of services provided.

As has always been the case, schools will articulate different and differing needs and demands. MEHs may need to re-double their advocacy with some, or even many schools, especially those who might feel it is necessary to focus on a narrower curriculum, at the exclusion of music in the short or medium terms.

**Regenerating** demand from schools, through close and regular contact and engagement is likely to be a very high **priority** for many MEHs.

Young people, and their parents/carers, will invariably provide a range of views on their needs. Some may be content to continue with current online provision, others may need something altogether different. Some may wish to return to pre-lockdown provision as soon as it is possible. Some may want something new. It's vital to be considering how to regenerate demand, and to stimulate new demand from pupils and their parents/carers.

Those children and young people who live in the most disadvantaged of circumstances are always the ones who are likely to have had the least engagement or opportunity to participate in MEH activities. No more so than in the last few weeks.

Amongst all the fantastic work that many MEHs have undertaken since lockdown, the inequality of **digital exclusion**, especially amongst the most disadvantaged, has been brought into stark relief.

Looking to the future means seeking to promote and enable better access for all young people in and out of their schools, advocating and persuading schools to once again raise the profile of music and take sufficient steps practically, financially and technologically to fully support and develop it.

It also means looking to bring further flexibility in service offers, whilst taking the strongest steps to secure financial viability. Paradoxically this may mean a revision or even a reduction in some service lines that have been offered historically; the adage of "**do less – better**" rings as true now as it always has. If that helps focus on the priorities of meeting the needs of young people, it will be worth it.

Of course, all the above becomes pretty academic if too few organisations are able to stabilise and the MEH sector begins to falter.

But I am an optimist. Organisations are about people, and there are many **excellent people** leading MEHs and leading their constituent partner organisations. Their unrivalled commitment and dedication, in providing schools, children and young people with the best possible music education services and programmes, is an enormous strength of the sector.

For them to succeed in these most turbulent of times, they may need additional strategic and financial support from the centre, above and beyond that which is currently provided.

## Coda

In 40 years of working in music education, I have been lucky to have enjoyed many dazzlingly bright days. I shall always be grateful.

I've seen some averagely ordinary days. And I've had to confront a fair few wretchedly dismal ones too.

None have been as dark as those that have been upon us and continue today.

And yet, even in these most difficult of times I am reminded of the proverb attributed to Thomas Fuller: **"The darkest hour is just before dawn."**

It may take some time before the dawn breaks. But the sun will rise again on music education, of that I have no doubt.

Until then, stay strong, stay curious, stay positive, and stay optimistic. Children and young people, and schools, and your colleagues in the workforce, will rely on it. As you must too.

Look after yourselves, and your families and friends, and sustain your own health and well-being. Ensure that you take a well-earned break over the summer, to rest and recharge.

I look forward to meeting some of you in the ACE online support sessions in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, I offer you **"Song of Hope"** by Thomas Hardy (on the following page) whose words I have long-found uplifting and inspiring.

Nigel M Taylor

2 July 2020

[www.nigelmtaylor.com](http://www.nigelmtaylor.com)

## **Song of Hope**

O sweet To-morrow! -  
After to-day  
There will away  
This sense of sorrow.  
Then let us borrow  
Hope, for a gleaming  
Soon will be streaming,  
Dimmed by no grey -  
No grey!

While the winds wing us  
Sighs from The Gone,  
Nearer to dawn  
Minute-beats bring us;  
When there will sing us  
Larks of a glory  
Waiting our story  
Further anon -  
Anon!

Doff the black token,  
Don the red shoon,  
Right and retune  
Viol-strings broken;  
Null the words spoken  
In speeches of rueing,  
The night cloud is hueing,  
To-morrow shines soon -  
Shines soon!

***Thomas Hardy 1840-1928,  
English novelist, and poet***