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Summary of the Local Government Reorganisation Big Meet Tuesday 3rd March 2026 (online)

Matt Godwin from the Department for Education (DfE) provided an overview of the current status of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), highlighting the key principles and timelines for the reorganization of local authorities and how they relate to the music hub network. He emphasized that Music Hubs are actively represented in both DfE and cross-department conversations on LGR. The DfE is actively monitoring and engaging with affected Hub geographies to minimise disruption to music hubs and services.

Adam Cookson (ACE) provided an update on how Arts Council England is working with local authorities and other partners to address the impacts of LGR and Devolution on music hub partnerships. He emphasized the importance of music hubs and the need for a bespoke approach to support each Hub geography that might be affected by LGR. Adam highlighted that the Music Education Team is collaborating with ACE's Strategic Partnerships Team to ensure Music Hubs are prioritised and their concerns are communicated to the LGA. They are also working with Area Teams to ensure that the significant role of Music Hubs is emphasised in ACE's responses to LGR consultations, along with any specific implications for local authority music services. He encouraged attendees to reach out with any concerns or questions (either to their RDM or to Adam direct), as Arts Council England is committed to supporting Music Hub partnerships through the LGR process.

The meeting discussed the potential impact of local authority boundary changes on music services and hubs. Matt explained that decisions would be made on a case-by-case basis once government decisions are known, and DfE intent to create an FAQ to be shared with hub leads. A concern was raised about the potential mismatch between Music Hub borders and unitary authority borders, which could create confusion for schools.

The meeting also discussed potential border changes and their impact on funding allocations. Matt emphasized the need for transparency regarding grant funding once decisions are made, while Stefano suggested that the DfE would continue to set out grant funding allocations to Arts Council England based on 5-16 population calculations and FSM data. Bridget provided an example from 2019 when Bournemouth and Poole Unitary Authority expanded to include Christchurch, resulting in changes to the (old) Music Education Hub geographies in Dorset and BCP and therefore funding allocations were updated to reflect these border changes.



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Challenges faced by local music services due to local government reorganisation were raised, highlighting how changes in authority structures can threaten the survival of music services that have historically provided the backbone for music hubs. Stefano acknowledged these concerns and assured that the government is mindful of the importance of local authorities, including in the new Schools White Paper. Others also raised the financial and operational challenges that reorganisation poses to music services, with a specific concern noted about the economic viability of services in areas undergoing local government changes.

Further challenges of navigating local government reorganisation were highlighted, emphasizing the importance of using the "music hub" designation as a strategic argument to prevent the disaggregation of services. There is a need for a compelling case to justify not separating services, focusing on statutory requirements, access, and inclusion.

There is also uncertainty surrounding the Devolution plans – i.e. to create strategic authorities. Surrey's plans for a Strategic Authority have been paused which has meant there is a lack of ambition to discuss future strategies including the potential to unlock central government funding as a Strategic Authority. Bridget thanked colleagues for their resilience and creativity in the face of these challenges and encouraged them to seek support from the Arts Council and the DFE.