

Kirsty Williams
Minister for Education
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

23rd September 2020

Dear Ms Williams

We are writing on behalf of the music education providers in Wales, who believe that music education in all its forms must be an integral part of every Welsh pupil's school life. We call on you to publicly support and commit to this ambition.

Music is an indispensable subject in a broad and balanced curriculum. There is strong evidence – not least gathered from all over the UK in the last six months – that it has a hugely positive impact on children and young people's health and wellbeing. The skills learnt through practical music making provide valuable transferable skills supporting employability. Moreover, music is at the heart of many parts of the creative sector, on its own generating over £124M of spending in Wales in 2018.

Despite all this, there is significant inequity of access to musical learning across Wales. The country's music service provision has been eroded over many years, which largely appears to have gone unnoticed. Whether you now have access to instrumental learning, ensemble opportunities and the chance to perform and attend inspiring professional music events depends on where you happen to live.

A review of music education in Wales by the Culture and Welsh Language Committee two years ago highlighted many challenges. Subsequently, the sector warmly welcomed the Welsh Government's initiative in commissioning a feasibility study to look at key recommendations in the 'Hitting the Right Note' report. The establishing of a stakeholder group was also welcomed, and their conclusions that the overarching recommendation in the CWLC report for the writing of a national plan for music education in Wales and that further interim funding was essential, was reported back to the Welsh Government. Neither the money nor the plan have been forthcoming and, while the challenges identified two years ago remain, the pandemic has further weakened music services and other organisations and impacted opportunities for a whole cohort of pupils.

Urgent action is required to save the music education services across the country that are still, some of them only just, striving to provide opportunities for children and young people. Only with urgent action and a clear pathway to grow and sustain their work can these services assure to children and young people access to a broad and diverse range of musical opportunities.

In England, the National Plan for Music Education, published in 2012, clearly articulates the responsibilities of all those involved in children and young people's music education, particularly schools and a network of music partnerships made up of schools, local, regional and national providers. These Music Education Hubs have seven roles defined in the plan and the English Department for Education provides funding to support delivery of these roles. Funding is allocated to

each local authority area according to a formula, based on numbers on roll and deprivation. Music Mark, in partnership with other organisations is currently campaigning in England for increased funding in recognition of year-on-year growth in pupil numbers and inflationary increases to costs. The request equates to £12.50 per pupil, per year.

Music Education Hubs in England achieve considerable impact with this modest funding through partnership working. Welcome bi-products were a focusing education strategies within cultural providers and a new willingness to work at a local level. This has created closer partnership working in many areas, with many Hubs now playing key roles in local cultural education partnerships (LCEPs).

A similar scale of commitment with a Welsh-appropriate structure from the Welsh Government, at a cost of a little over £5,850,000 per annum, would reinvigorate music education providers in Wales, reversing years of underinvestment nationally and locally, and ensuring the highest quality of music education for children and young people, wherever in the country they live.

In addition to a clear plan and appropriate funding, and perhaps more urgently, it is essential that clear guidance is produced to clarify how music education can resume in Wales during the ongoing pandemic. The many social and health benefits of music making are well documented and therefore we ask the Welsh Government prepare national guidance to ensure that local interpretation of what is possible does not prohibit the ability for teachers to provide musical learning which must be part of the recovery curriculum for Wales.

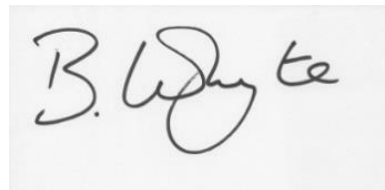
We, the organisations who have co-authored this letter, stand ready to work with the Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association to develop a National Music Education Plan for Wales. The sector in Wales is already coming together to support each other through a discussion forum. With a national plan and funding towards that plan from the Welsh Government, our partnership would also be one of action.

We look forward to hearing from you and to working with you to ensure that every child in Wales has access to music education and its many immediate and long-term benefits.

Yours Sincerely



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Music Mark



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CC: Deputy Culture Minister
Culture & Welsh Language Committee
Arts Council Wales
Welsh Local Government Association

This Letter is supported by the following members of the Music Partnership Forum Wales:

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Cardiff County and the Vale of Glamorgan Music Service
Cardiff University
Carmarthenshire Council Music Service
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