



Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Dear Secretary of State

### **Ensuring Delivery of the National Plan for Music Education**

We write to you representing the employers and employees of music education delivery organisations across England, which are currently facing a significant funding shortfall that will severely limit their ability to deliver the Government's 2022 National Plan for Music Education: *The power of music to change lives*.

Department for Education funding has supported the music education sector in delivering the ambitions of the first National Plan for Music Education. It was also fundamental to Music Education Hubs' capacity to respond positively and successfully to Covid-19.

Many of the highly skilled instrumental and vocal teachers engaged by Hubs, who are vital for the delivery of high-quality musical learning in and out of school, benefit from being part of the Government's Teachers Pension Scheme. However, the 2019 increase to Employer Contributions and the proposed further increase in 2024 have resulted in significant challenges for their employers as follows:

- The grant which covers increased Employer Contributions for the TPS, introduced in 2019<sup>1</sup>, is being removed for independent music services from September 2024. We understand that this will result in a collective c.£1.2m hole in budgets across at least 15 local authority areas.
- An additional 5% increase in Employer Contributions has just been announced<sup>2</sup>. It has been confirmed that the DfE will cover the increase for schools, FE institutions and Early Years settings, but it has not yet confirmed its approach for "unattached teachers" in Local Authorities, or for other employers who offer the TPS such as Music Service Trusts.

One Music Service Trust, a Hub Lead Organisation covering three Local Authority Areas, reports that **from September 2024 it will face a total annual cost of Employer Contributions of £1.15m – greater than the £1.13m funding it receives to deliver music education.**

Without additional financial support, many Music Service Trusts will be forced to increase fees to parents and schools, which will result in fewer children and young people being given access to musical learning

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.musicmark.org.uk/news/music-mark-successfully-lobbies-dfe-to-support-hubs-with-the-teachers-pension-scheme/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/news/employers/2023/10/valuation-result.aspx>

and experiences from their local Hub. Alternatively, they will be forced to withdraw staff from the TPS, which will worsen an already significant recruitment and retention crisis in music education.

It is vital that we have the workforce necessary to deliver the National Plan. If access to the TPS comes under threat, this will seriously harm the prospect of Hubs when trying to recruit the skilled workforce they need in order to deliver the Plan. Making sure that this highly professional workforce is adequately rewarded for their work is vital to the success of the Plan.

Music Education Hubs are required by Arts Council England, the fundholder appointed by the DfE, to demonstrate a commitment to “Fair Pay”. The ISM, MU and Music Mark wholeheartedly welcomed the requirement for Hubs to commit to this, in particular the statement within the Investment Programme Information Sheet “Equality and Fair Pay” that states:

*“fees for artists, and practitioners working for ... projects funded by us should be in line with, or better than, recognised codes of practice and guidelines set by the relevant lead bodies”.*

Without additional funding, the increased TPS Employer Contributions will make it impossible for some employers to remain part of the TPS, placing them in breach of these “Fair Pay” expectations.

Our concerns about TPS Employer Contributions are part of the wider financial challenges faced by Music Education Hubs. Funding for Hubs has risen by just 1% since 2012. During this time, the Bank of England inflation calculator shows inflation running at 37%. The comparison with 2007 funding levels is worse: there has been a 9% fall in funding against an inflation increase of 61%. This ongoing stagnation of investment is particularly evident at a time when Hubs are being asked to deliver the exciting and expanded ambitions of the new National Plan for Music Education.

In summary, the ISM, MU and Music Mark would ask you, as Secretary of State, the following:

- **To support all employers with staff in the Teachers Pension Scheme to cover the increase in Employer Contributions.** This is essential to ensure that Hub Lead Organisations can continue to operate.
- **To commit to an inflationary-linked uplift to the funding for Music Education Hubs,** so that they will be able to meet their obligations and your aspirations, ensuring true equity of provision.

Like you, we strongly believe that music has the power to change lives, as is so clearly expressed in the new National Plan for Music Education. But on current funding levels – set against increases to TPS Employer Contributions that are existential threat to delivery – many organisations within Hubs are finding themselves struggling to identify which areas of activity to cut next.

Yours sincerely



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