

**Musicians'
Union**



2017 Education Report

**A review of the current provision
of music education in England**

A Musicians' Union report
Autumn 2017

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What kind of music education should exist for children and young people? For the Musicians' Union (MU), the short answer is that all children and young people (CYP) should have 1) the chance to learn an instrument and 2) access to meaningful musical experiences through which to learn and develop. This requires an empowered and supported workforce for whom teaching is a viable and attractive career, but MU members who teach often tell us that they have less job security and lower pay than ever.

This report, which follows three previous education reports from the MU,¹ seeks to outline some of the causes for this, while also making recommendations for addressing key issues and highlighting where progress has been made.

How we got here: summarising the current situation

At its most basic, school music education is typically delivered in two ways: by a child's classroom teacher and by a peripatetic instrumental (peri) teacher if the child is learning an instrument. Until recently, peri teachers were mostly employed by local authority music services – organisations paid for by a combination of ringfenced government funding, local authority money, school budgets and parental contributions.

In 2011 the government asked for a review of music education.² This reported that music services were uneven in their provision and were often failing to link up with other relevant organisations in their areas. The review's key recommendation was the setting up of music education hubs – umbrella organisations that would oversee peri teaching in schools but also act as facilitators for wider musical participation. The government's 2012 National Plan for Music Education (NPME)³ adopted this recommendation as policy (for England only) and announced a complex bidding process for music services and other bodies to become 'lead organisations' of the new hubs. In a surreal turn, nearly all music services in England won bids to become lead organisations, with the result that things carried

on largely as before, except for a funding reduction that was brought in at the same time. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which were not included in the NPME, music services continued to operate.

Today, despite the government's commitment to funding until 2020, financial straitening for hubs and music services remains a significant problem, compounded by cuts to school and local authority budgets. This has led to widespread manoeuvring around peri teachers' terms of engagement in an attempt to save money, resulting in fragmentation and demoralisation of the workforce – an ironic outcome, given that the intention of the NPME was to improve and standardise music education.

Meanwhile, with many schools becoming academies and abandoning the national curriculum altogether,⁴ school music provision has become increasingly inconsistent. A further complication is the government's disastrous English Baccalaureate (EBacc) performance measure, which discourages schools from offering arts subjects altogether.⁵ For the MU, these various challenges can be divided into three main areas: employment, policy and sector support.

Employment

Contracts

A key issue for MU members who teach is the limited extent to which peri teaching still exists as a viable career. Where it was once usual for peri teachers to be employed on teachers' pay and conditions, many are now self-employed or on questionable zero-hours contracts. This often cuts out employment benefits such as pension and paid maternity/paternity leave; causes confusion around benefits like holiday pay; and means that non-teaching work, including preparation and travel between schools, becomes unpaid. This leads to job dissatisfaction and insecurity, resulting in a high turnover of teachers, which in turn impacts on continuity of learning and the ability of hubs/music services to provide a broad programme of activities.

Of those who contact us, the majority of MU members who teach work as peri teachers either without a contract or with one that is not fit for purpose. Where contracts are used, they

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frequently offer no regular work and sometimes contain clauses that restrict teachers from working elsewhere, which is challengeable for those not employed full-time by a hub/music service. Such contracts have shifted control too far away from the teacher, who can end up with no guaranteed work and no rights should their work be terminated. This affects the loyalty of teachers, who are often unable to sustain a career with this pattern of work.

Recommendation:

Template contracts that are fit for purpose should be developed and agreed by the sector. Contracts are beneficial for both employers and teachers and should always be used, regardless of whether teachers are self-employed, employed or workers. Contracts should NOT be used to define employment status according to the hub/music service's preference; rather, a teacher's employment status is defined by the manner of their work, and the contract should formalise this.

Pay

In addition to losing the benefits that come with employed status, many peri teachers are earning significantly less than the MU recommended self-employed rate of £33 per hour. This rate is reviewed annually and factors in holiday pay, sick pay, pension contributions and other costs that a self-employed individual needs to cover, unlike some rates currently offered to peris. Hubs/music services mainly operate by charging schools and/or parents for the services of peri teachers, but with no standard model for doing this, some are paying teachers a smaller proportion of this money than others for their work. Others are engaging teachers through employment agencies, diverting funds away from teachers' pay and into agency commissions. Given that hub/music service managers have mostly retained employed salaries that are sometimes equivalent to headteacher pay scales, it is a source of shame that teachers are often so poorly paid.

Much instrumental teaching also exists outside of hubs/music services, caused by schools hiring peri teachers directly or through agencies. This can leave teachers unsupported and forced to comply with unsatisfactory conditions, in particular the growing trend of charging for the use of teaching rooms at rates of up to £10 per hour.

Another concern is HMRC's IR35 legislation, which changed in April 2017 to include bodies in receipt of public funding.⁶ IR35 was designed to combat fake self-employment but is being interpreted by many schools as threatening the legality of how they engage peri teachers. This had led to various reactive measures from schools, ranging from bringing in token room rental fees in an attempt to demonstrate that teachers are self-employed, to introducing forced employment, or even stopping music tuition altogether. The MU will be producing guidance for members on dealing with IR35 and has already successfully challenged schools that have taken incorrect action around IR35 on behalf of our members.

Recommendation:

The MU believes that reasonable minimums should apply to teachers' pay and conditions, and is willing to work collaboratively with Arts Council England (ACE) and other relevant organisations to achieve this.

Because they are funded by public money, hub/music service pay structures should be fair and transparent. ACE, which allocates the funding for hubs, could improve transparency by publishing information on pay and terms of engagement for both managers and teachers in hubs. The MU would argue that room rental fees are unfair and, where used, indicate that schools may have become agencies for private music tuition rather than providers of music education for all. Room rental fees are not necessary to demonstrate that teachers are self-employed and should not be used as a revenue generator to plug gaps in school budgets.

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Initial training and CPD

The MU's view is that teachers working for hubs/music services should benefit from initial training and regular CPD (continuing professional development), and that these activities should be paid. However, MU members report that regular CPD is not always provided by hubs/music services, that CPD is sometimes unpaid, and that the teacher sometimes has to pay to access it. Other concerns raised are around the quality and relevance of the CPD provided.

Recommendation:

The MU wishes to support hubs/music services in providing CPD and delivers workshops and courses on subjects such as safeguarding, equality and diversity and promoting positive behaviour.

CPD for hub teachers is a requirement of the NPME and a necessity for good teaching. Asking self-employed or hourly paid hub/music service teachers to fund their own CPD leads to an unreasonable situation where teachers not only have to pay for the CPD but may also have to take unpaid time off work in order to attend it. Therefore, hubs/music services must make a commitment to provide paid CPD for teachers. The NPME recommended that a new qualification be developed for music teachers. This qualification, the Certificate for Music Educators (CME), is now offered by ABRSM and Trinity College London. The MU has developed support materials for the CME and would urge ACE to recommend that hubs/music services take up this qualification, which offers valuable CPD and leads to a recognised award.

Policy

Conflicting ideas

Music is the only school subject with its own policy plan and ringfenced funding allocation, yet never in recent years has it suffered a lower status. Stories about schools closing their music departments appear regularly,^{7,8} with the unsurprising result that GCSE and A level music entries are plummeting.⁹ What, then, is the government's real vision for music education? The MU's view is that the government understands the benefits of music, but that its policy in this area has been caught in the crossfire of other policies that seek to promote the uptake of so-called core subjects. Such policies, in particular the EBacc, have undermined the government's efforts to support music.

Recommendation:

An ongoing project for the MU, ideally in collaboration with other organisations, is to show the government that a broad and balanced curriculum is most beneficial. Plenty of evidence exists to support this claim, including a recent summary of research into the positive effects of learning music.¹⁰

The government needs to see that its current education policy contains inherent contradictions. The MU would like to see broader government engagement with the education sector, in a structured way, to ensure that a representative range of voices are heard. Current consultation is typically limited to an insufficiently small number of groups and voices.

Accessibility

The NPME asked hubs to ensure that all children get the chance to learn a musical instrument, which by necessity has led to the introduction of whole-class instrumental teaching. Still a relatively new phenomenon, this demanding form of teaching requires advanced classroom management and differentiation skills, and has frequently been forced

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on peripatetic teachers – many of whom previously taught individuals or small groups – with no additional pay and insufficient training.

While whole-class instrumental teaching can be effective, each child will normally experience it for just one year or less due to funding limitations. Beyond this initial funded period, continued learning typically depends on parents making a financial contribution, which leads to inequality when parents cannot afford this. Meanwhile, access to music education for those with learning difficulties or disabilities remains patchy, despite some excellent individual initiatives.

Recommendation:

As well as improved terms and training for whole-class instrumental teachers, the MU would like to see more research into the efficacy of whole-class instrumental teaching if it is to remain a flagship delivery method for hubs/music services. The MU would be happy to participate collaboratively in this.

Given that additional money is unlikely to be provided for instrumental learning beyond the funded whole-class period, the music education sector must work to support different kinds of musical progression. Some research into this subject has already taken place,^{11,12} and there is a pressing need to translate this into action, which should include training for teachers.

There is a lively ecosystem of research and innovation around musical access for people with disabilities and learning difficulties,^{13,14,15,16,17} in part the result of frustration felt by those who have been excluded. The MU would like to see the best of this work rolled out more widely, along with training for teachers.

Sector representation

Music education organisations

The UK music education sector is populated by a wide range of organisations, but none of these stands out as the go-to organisation for music education. The Music Education Council¹⁸ seeks to fulfil this function by including representatives from other organisations, but it is yet to achieve a level of engagement that would truly unite and represent the sector. While most organisations in music education are making progress in their own areas, the overall result can seem like a confused patchwork of special interests and sometimes contradictory ideas.

This becomes challenging in a climate where music is disappearing from the school curriculum. Lacking any centralised leadership, the sector is unable to agree a unified course of action to ensure that CYP will continue to be able to access musical learning. It also struggles to address longstanding problems, such as the small or non-existent amount of music training given to non-specialist primary teachers, despite the fact that these teachers are often required to lead classroom music lessons. There is also a tendency for work to be duplicated, an example of which is the recently announced and publicly funded Music Commission,¹⁹ which seeks to understand musical progression, even though much research on this subject already exists (cited above).

Recommendation:

Music education organisations must be prepared to collaborate more meaningfully, putting aside self-interest where necessary. The Music Education Council could yet facilitate this, which the MU would support.

The sector would benefit from greater pooling of successful projects and research in order to help avoid duplication and build consensus around positive, informed courses of action.

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Arts Council England

ACE is the fund holder for hubs and collects data from them for evaluations, which are then passed back to the Department for Education. The MU believes there is scope for this process to become more robust and transparent, thereby benefiting the sector and also the public, who have little awareness of hubs and their purpose.

In terms of the data collected by ACE, MU members report that this often seems random and fails to pick up on the real issues. It also overlooks quality, focusing only on what has been taught and to whom, and is largely unpublished.

Recommendation:

Given that hubs are funded by public money, ACE's evaluative process of hubs should be open and transparent. It should also cover the quality of work being done by hubs, working in collaboration with Ofsted as appropriate. One of the aims of the process should be to increase public understanding of hubs and their purpose, which could be achieved by publishing all evaluative data as part of a public-facing reporting programme.

Hub/music service governance

MU members report a wide variety of management styles and governance structures within hubs/music services, and commonly observe that more could be done to communicate key strategic aims to teachers. Most hubs/music services have put advisory boards in place, but MU members report that these are sometimes dysfunctional and often do not include workforce representation.

Recommendation:

ACE and Music Mark, the subject association for music education, have an important role to play in providing best practice guidance around hub/music service leadership and governance. The MU is often contacted by hub/music service managers requesting practical advice, and while it is not the MU's role to advise managers, we are willing to work collaboratively with Music Mark, ACE and others to ensure that any guidance is grounded in sound employment practice. The MU's network of hub reps has been invaluable in providing us with information about what is happening on the ground, and we would encourage all hubs to include MU hub reps or a representative of the workforce on their advisory boards.

DBS and data protection

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks were launched in 2013 as a more flexible and less complicated replacement for the previous CRB check. Applicants use their DBS certificate when changing jobs or roles as they are now portable, which naturally applies to music teachers who often work in a variety of different settings.

The MU is seeing significant confusion around DBS checks. Some schools do not accept checks done by a local authority, and hubs/music services are often unaware about the update service, which maintains up-to-date DBS certificates online and eliminates the need for further checks. Members report that they have been asked by schools for photocopies of DBS certificates and sometimes for copies of passports and other forms of ID, which could constitute data-protection infringement.

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Recommendation:

Hubs/music services must take time to understand how DBS operates and support teachers when they are faced with unreasonable requests for photocopies. Music Mark and other relevant organisations should provide practical guidance for hub/music service managers on data protection. The MU is happy to play a collaborative role in this.

Conclusion

The MU acknowledges that many hubs/music services try to treat their teachers fairly, and our aim is to remain open and constructive in our dialogue with these hubs/music services and to share and support their examples of good practice. Others, meanwhile, are not engaging teachers in ways that we can endorse, while the unregulated private sector is often even worse, with self-styled teaching agencies paying rates barely above the minimum wage, exploiting teachers who are trying to build up a teaching practice.

For these reasons, the MU has been required to support teachers in other ways. Our work with music teaching co-operatives is a primary example of this, in particular our free guidance pack on how to set up and run a co-operative.²⁰ The MU has so far helped with the formation of a number of co-operatives as well as supporting various trusts and community interest companies around the country, enabling groups of teachers to create stability, set their own terms and interact with schools on a professional basis. Given the variation we are seeing among hubs/music services, and the situation in Wales, where music services are coming close to collapse due the withdrawal of funding, it is likely that we will see more co-ops emerge in the near future.

Government policy remains an area of concern, and the sector will need to remain both focused and positive in the face of this. More meaningful collaboration between music education organisations would help, as would the twin approaches of realism and optimism: realism in the face of challenges, many of which are outlined above; and optimism that, with sufficient creativity and innovation from the sector, children and young people will keep being able to access musical learning.

A final thought concerns the NPME, which will no longer apply after 2020. Rather than waiting for a NPME 2.0 to be written by government, it would surely be preferable for the sector to take a proactive approach and create its own. The MU is proposing to start work on this soon, and would be interested to hear from potential collaborators.

Musicians' Union – Music Education Team

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The British Musicians' Union was established in 1893 and represents over 30,000 musicians working in all sectors and genres of music, of whom two-thirds work across the whole of the music education sector. As well as negotiating on behalf of its members with all the major employers in the industry, the MU offers a range of tailored services and provides assistance for professional and student musicians of all ages.

1. Music Education Hubs (England)
[*https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/Advice/Education/Hubs-Co-ops/Music-Education-Hubs-\(England\)*](https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/Advice/Education/Hubs-Co-ops/Music-Education-Hubs-(England))
2. Music Education in England: A Review by Darren Henley for the Department for Education and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport
[*https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175432/DFE-00011-2011.pdf*](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175432/DFE-00011-2011.pdf)
3. The Importance of Music: A National Plan for Music Education
[*https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180973/DFE-00086-2011.pdf*](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180973/DFE-00086-2011.pdf)
4. Academies and maintained schools: what do we know?
[*https://fullfact.org/education/academies-and-maintained-schools-what-do-we-know/*](https://fullfact.org/education/academies-and-maintained-schools-what-do-we-know/)
5. Arts in schools plummets, new figures show
[*https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/exclusive-arts-schools-plummets-new-figures-show*](https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/exclusive-arts-schools-plummets-new-figures-show)
6. IR35 (intermediaries legislation): find out if it applies
[*https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ir35-find-out-if-it-applies*](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ir35-find-out-if-it-applies)
7. Music removed from school's curriculum
[*http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-essex-40422351/music-removed-from-school-s-curriculum*](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-essex-40422351/music-removed-from-school-s-curriculum)
8. Is this about to happen in your child's school?
[*http://www.halfwavinghalfdrowning.com/is-this-about-to-happen-in-your-childs-school/*](http://www.halfwavinghalfdrowning.com/is-this-about-to-happen-in-your-childs-school/)
9. Summer 2017 exam entries: GCSEs, level 1 / 2 certificates, AS and A levels in England
[*https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/summer-2017-exam-entries-gcse-level-1-2-certificates-as-and-a-levels-in-england*](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/summer-2017-exam-entries-gcse-level-1-2-certificates-as-and-a-levels-in-england)
10. The Power of Music
[*http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/735337/25902273/1422485417967/power+of+music.pdf?token=UDYaine8%2FcvLCmN3PVCJ6byfP%2BM%3D*](http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/735337/25902273/1422485417967/power+of+music.pdf?token=UDYaine8%2FcvLCmN3PVCJ6byfP%2BM%3D)
11. Ingredients to Create an Environment for Musical Progression
[*http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/ingredients-create-environment-musical-progression*](http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/ingredients-create-environment-musical-progression)
12. Musical Progressions
[*https://www.a-y-m.org.uk/how-we-help/musical-progressions/*](https://www.a-y-m.org.uk/how-we-help/musical-progressions/)
13. Skoog Music
[*http://skoogmusic.com/*](http://skoogmusic.com/)
14. Drake Music Learning & Participation
[*http://www.drakemusic.org/our-work/learning-participation/*](http://www.drakemusic.org/our-work/learning-participation/)
15. Sounds of Intent
[*http://soundsofintent.org/about-soi*](http://soundsofintent.org/about-soi)
16. A New Ambition for Inclusive Excellence
[*http://www.bristolplaysmusic.org/hub/a-new-ambition/*](http://www.bristolplaysmusic.org/hub/a-new-ambition/)
17. Soundbeam
[*http://www.soundbeam.co.uk/*](http://www.soundbeam.co.uk/)
18. About the Music Education Council
[*http://www.mec.org.uk/about-mec/*](http://www.mec.org.uk/about-mec/)
19. The Music Commission
[*http://www.musiccommission.org.uk/*](http://www.musiccommission.org.uk/)
20. Altogether Now - a Guide to Forming Music Teacher Co-operatives
[*https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Files/Guides/Education/Altogether-Now-a-guide-to-forming-music-teacher-co*](https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Files/Guides/Education/Altogether-Now-a-guide-to-forming-music-teacher-co)

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