

**Musicians'  
Union**



## **Music Education Hubs – the real picture so far**

### **Report summary**

After the publication of the Ofsted report in November on the progress of the Music Education Hubs in England, the MU asked its members who work in education to report what was actually happening with their work and what impact the changes over the last 18 months had had.

This report is a summary of the information we received, looking behind the headlines as to why Hubs are paying the price for Government policies that do not add up, even though there is a National Plan for Music Education and a commitment to funding.

Our report concentrates on the workforce, who we represent, and how they have been negatively impacted by the changes resulting in many job losses or an erosion of terms and conditions.

We also raise concerns about the opportunities and access for pupils to music education and what effect this will have on the musicians of the future.

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February 2014

The Musicians' Union has over 30,000 members and of these over two thirds work in music education. As a trade union we provide representation, support and advice for members across the UK and in 2013 we saw an unprecedented rise in the number of legal cases and calls for support by our members who teach. Many of the MU's officials are former professional musicians and teachers and as our members work across all areas of music education we are uniquely positioned to report and comment on the progress of Music Education Hubs in England.

After the publication of the Ofsted report in November the MU consulted with its members who are working for music services and within Hubs and asked how the report reflected what was going on in their area of work and what impact the transition to Hubs has had. Our report contains a summary of the information we gathered along with criticisms of the Ofsted report.

The publication of the Ofsted report caused much consternation within our membership and questions were raised with us as to what the political motivation for such a report was. The original headline, 'Music Hubs Fail to Improve Music Education', only served to undermine the work Hubs have been doing to try to engage with schools. It was also demoralising for teachers who have, in very difficult circumstances, continued to deliver lessons and provide tuition to pupils throughout this period.

The report was based on a very small sample of 31 schools and did not take into account any of the data that Hubs have been asked to produce for the Arts Council. The Ofsted visits began in February 2013, which was only months after Hubs came into existence, yet they are blamed for faults in the delivery of music education which was completely out of their remit.

The report was therefore not only based on an unreliable sample but it also lacked context. For example the report criticizes one Hub for 'implicitly condoning' a school for not having a full time Head of Music yet this situation, as with any concerning the delivery of music education within schools, is solely the responsibility of the Head Teacher of the school. The Hub is not in a position to insist that the school appoints a music teacher and often is left trying to deliver music education to pupils in an unsupported environment. It is difficult for them to have 'challenging conversations' with

schools because Hubs do not have the authority to dictate to Heads how music is taught in their schools and in fact could antagonize relationships with schools if they did.

The MU is particularly concerned at the way the report shifted the aspirations of the National Plan for Music Education (NPME) since the formation of Hubs. Ofsted seeks to lay the blame of perceived failures of curriculum music teaching with Hubs when in reality there are a myriad of reasons why some schools fail to deliver quality music education to their pupils and very few of them are the fault of the Hub.

In the NPME the role of curriculum teaching in school was one of the extended activities for the Hub yet in the report the emphasis changed to it being one of the core purposes of their work. Most music services and de facto, Hubs, have limited experience in the delivery of curriculum music and it seems that this change in expectations now makes it harder than before for Hubs ever to 'succeed'.

Similarly the criticism of how notation is taught presents another anomaly. To date, in both the national curriculum and GCSE music, the emphasis was not on learning notation and yet again here the emphasis has changed. We acknowledge that notation has a place in the learning of music but this change undermines pedagogical developments based on encouraging creativity and the diverse approaches to music making which are relevant to young people. It is also worth noting how few cultures actually use notation to make music.

The aspiration of linking First Access schemes of work to the wider curriculum is one that would be welcomed by instrumental teachers who themselves are often frustrated by the lack of connection with the school to the work they are doing. Ofsted's observation that these schemes of work often fail to link to the wider curriculum doesn't take into account that many instrumental teachers delivering First Access work are paid only for their contact time. Without resources to pay them to set up classes, plan with class teachers and so on, this expectation will remain unrealistic.

There are two significant tensions which the Ofsted report fails to address or mention. The first is that the aspirations of the NPME do not sit at all well with the Coalition Government's wider policy for schools. Schools are under pressure from the Secretary of State for Education to become autonomous, set their own curriculums and budgets

and move away from Local Authority control and yet Hubs are expected to engage with schools in their areas without any statutory obligation to do so in place. While Hubs were being set up calls were made for either the Department for Education or Arts Council England to write to schools informing them of the change. This never happened so we are unsurprised that there are some schools still completely unaware of the National Plan or that a Music Hub exists in their local area.

We are finding that schools are increasingly making budgetary decisions about instrumental teaching and replacing music service teachers with self employed instrumental teachers or agencies thus distancing themselves further from any engagement with their Hub.

The second tension is the loss of Local Authority investment. We now have the perverse situation where central Government funding is fast becoming the sole public funding for most music services, via the Hub. Many Local Authorities have used the confirmation of three year funding for Hubs as an excuse to withdraw their investment as they are under pressure to make significant savings themselves. As Government has withdrawn the power and influence of Local Authorities and cut their expenditure music services have, unfortunately, been one of the many casualties of this process.

### **What is happening on the ground?**

The lack of context in Ofsted's report disguises the underlying reasons for the perceived failure of Music Hubs. In the MU's view, and as reported to us by our members, music teachers feel they are being pilloried by Ofsted for the failings of the music services they work for.

The workforce is a critical part of the equation as the quality, experience and skills of teachers delivering on behalf of music services affects the quality of the musical experience for pupils.

Unfortunately what we are seeing is the teaching workforce actually bearing the brunt of the cuts that are taking place and in 2013 the MU represented members in over 40

music services where hundreds of jobs have been lost or terms and conditions severely eroded.

We have seen music services making the whole of their teaching staff redundant only to re-engage them on casual and zero hour contracts or as self employed teachers. We have even see a contract called an 'As and when contract' which means teachers do not know what commitment of work they have on a weekly basis.

Widespread casualisation means many teachers are losing employment rights and benefits of employment. They have no guarantee of work; no pension; no holiday pay; no maternity/paternity pay and no chance of any career with a music service as there was before. We also see a lack of investment in teachers and their training or continual professional development. Yet, alongside this diminution of rights, we see many music services still seeking to impose control over their workforce with restrictive employment covenants. We see Local Authorities telling part time, hourly paid teachers on casual contracts that they must disclose all the other places they work in and seek approval when they take on other work. In reality they want the workforce to continue to behave as if they are employed whilst not having any of the rights of employment.

The result of these changes is that highly qualified experienced teachers and younger teachers eager to build their careers and progress are finding that there are no secure jobs in instrumental teaching anymore and this has a dramatic effect on both the morale of the workforce and also on who is attracted to work within Hubs. We hear from many teachers who now find it is more lucrative to run their own private teaching practices and avoid all the disorganisation and haphazard arrangements which seem to hamper some music services.

Unfortunately, what we are seeing is that the postcode lottery which the NPME wanted to address has actually worsened. Rural areas are particularly affected with young people often less well served than those in towns or cities and with the rising cost of travel it is more cost effective for self employed teachers to operate from one location. We have reports of Hubs excluding potential partner organisations because they are seen as competitors to the music service (one and the same thing in most areas) and we have evidence of some Hubs failing to respond to requests for communication from musicians wishing to find out how to engage with them because of a perceived conflict

of interest. Our members are rightly angry at the behaviour of some Hubs which are then seen to be behaving like monopolies and not the collaborative organisations they were meant to be.

Here are the comments from one member which sadly illustrate many of our concerns.

*'There are now more managers. They are very interested in collecting data but not much else.'*

*'Tutors are on zero hours contracts. The majority of tutors are recently out of college and are inexperienced in teaching, especially large groups of young children.'*

*'This leads to a high turnover of staff which results in a lack of continuity of teaching in the schools which causes much dissatisfaction. Our teaching is not observed any more. When teaching First Access programmes children have to share instruments and cannot take them home to practice. We are pressurised to prepare children to attend Saturday centres which is impossible in the conditions we are working in.'*

*'There is a very unpleasant atmosphere and low grade bullying. Tutors are afraid to challenge the system or even ask for anything.'*

*'The system for payments is haphazard, claim forms get lost and emails are not answered. The lack of payment is not taken seriously. I still haven't been paid for some work done in September Children whose parents cannot afford music lessons get a very poor deal. After their taster sessions there is nothing further for them.'*

*'I am sure that a lot of the problem is due to cuts in funding. Reorganising music provision by creating Music Hubs I am sure has been a colossal waste of money and time. I think a few of us predicted this sometime ago....'*

The introduction of Hubs, therefore, has not been a positive experience for many of our members and the changes taking place have tended to negatively impact on the workforce disproportionately. As Hubs were mainly based on the music services that existed before, those which were effective and organised have morphed into successful

Hubs whilst other music services have struggled with implementing the changes and any problems they had have been exacerbated.

We did receive positive examples from our members of Hubs working well and communicating effectively with their schools and of trying to make sure the workforce were supported in their work. There are also many examples of inspirational music teaching in schools and of musicians and teachers doing amazing work in often difficult circumstances. The fact that professional organisations are increasingly working with Hubs and that a more cohesive approach has been taken in some areas shows that the system can work well. We have also had Hubs wanting to engage positively with us in supporting teachers and realizing that having good relations with a trade union can be essential when change is inevitable.

### **How the MU is supporting instrumental teachers in their work**

The MU sought ways to engage with the Hubs from the outset and where possible we have advised to promote good practice in terms of employment and training as well as supporting effective teaching.

We produced a Music Education Hub pack, distributed to all 123 Hubs in August 2012, which included practical assistance and resources and we have continued to add further resources and information, which are freely available for organisations and individuals to use. These can be found at: [www.musiceducationuk.com/hubs](http://www.musiceducationuk.com/hubs)

In September 2012 the MU began recruiting Hub Reps across England as we realised that having information direct from the workforce was invaluable in helping us support and represent our members. We wanted to see the workforce represented on the Hubs' monitoring boards and advisory panels and the creation of the Hub Reps has enabled us to be proactive in improving relations between management and teachers.

The scheme is now established and we have over 30 Hub Reps with whom we hold regular meetings to share information and good practice. We are working with the Music Industry Association's charity, Music for All, on their third Learn to Play Day in April and

this year our Hub Reps are working with their local music shops to put on events in conjunction with their Hub.

Recently we have been working with the Co-operative movement to enable us to actively support groups of teachers who have been made redundant and want to work together rather than against each other to set up teaching Co-ops. There are examples of teaching Co-ops which were established in the 1990's and we feel that this can offer a real alternative to those teachers who are now self employed and feeling isolated and unsupported in their work.

The MU has been working with the British Dyslexia Association to produce modules for the new 'Certificate of Music Education' which will be launched in spring 2014. These modules will be available online to make it both affordable and accessible to instrumental teachers. We are also working with the BDA on a programme of events for teachers to attend which will support their learning in the CME.

Other projects include working with Music for Youth and the National Union of Teachers in producing online resources for classroom and instrumental teachers (free to access at: [http://www.mfy.org.uk/downloads/2013/infinity/infinity\\_resource.pdf](http://www.mfy.org.uk/downloads/2013/infinity/infinity_resource.pdf)) and working with Faber Music on printed resources for members including The Teacher's Toolkit and Practice Diaries.

The MU has always taken the issue of child protection very seriously and we continue to provide training for members both at workshops and through our online course which we developed with the NSPCC. We are increasingly asked by music services, schools and organisations to provide training for their teachers as they value our unique understanding of the particular issues affecting music teachers.

The MU is committed to supporting music education as not only is it a significant source of work for our members but we also recognize the importance of inspiring the next generation of musicians. The main issues to address are ones of accessibility and opportunity but also of the quality of teaching. The teaching workforce is vital for the success of the aspirations of the NPME and it is important to invest in teachers who are working now but also to attract the workforce and leaders in music education for the future.



In conclusion our recommendations are

1. Government works with Ofsted to ensure that schools get a consistent message that music education is both important and relevant.
2. That future national funding decisions are made quickly and that the current level of funding is at the very least maintained.
3. The data collection requirements from Hubs are revised to ensure they are fit for purpose.
4. That governance arrangements of Music Education Hubs are more closely scrutinised to ensure greater accountability and transparency.

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