

Musicians'
Union



Musicians' Union Hub Report 2016

A Musicians' Union report
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Introduction

What makes music teachers happy at work? Apart from all of their pupils practising every day of course! Music teachers are no different to other workers in that pay and conditions are important, including being paid the correct amount on time, as well as safe workplaces, regular work and being appreciated and recognised as professionals. On the whole our members who teach tell us they get an immense amount of satisfaction from what they do – inspiring and creating the next generation of musicians – and that this view is consistent with surveys about work generally which show that job satisfaction comes from doing something you are good at and something that gives you a sense of purpose.

What affects music teachers negatively is their professionalism being undermined and music becoming increasingly marginalised as a subject in schools. School teaching is currently deemed to be an unhappy profession with morale amongst the workforce at an all-time low. A recent survey of 13,000 teachers showed that nearly three quarters of them had seriously considered leaving the profession and this is in addition to austerity cuts which have impacted the music education workforce disproportionately.

As we have previously reported, since the inception of Music Hubs in 2012* there have been extensive job losses involving many music teachers with the impact not only felt by affected staff but also by current and potential pupils. Music education within schools is already suffering as arts subjects are increasingly given a low priority whilst job insecurity and diminished working conditions has led to an underappreciated workforce who are leaving the profession or who are just not being attracted to it in the first place.

The findings in this report are drawn from over 70 cases where the MU has represented members in music service restructures as well as from a survey our Hub Reps** completed about as to what was happening in their Hubs. We also consulted with the groups of teachers who have started up their own organisations, entirely taking on the functions of music service delivery or significantly complementing it, when teachers have been made redundant. The MU has actively supported

groups setting up Teaching Co-operatives in Milton Keynes, Wiltshire, Isle of Wight*** and other alternative models such as the Cornwall Music Service Trust and it is these inspirational examples that shows that enforced change can have a positive outcome.

This report, therefore, lays out our continued areas of concerns which we feel are still not being addressed, but also hopefully strikes a positive note to show that there are alternative approaches for those music services who are facing drastic Local Authority (LA) cuts to think more carefully about how they remodel provision for the future to ensure that a qualified and experienced workforce is maintained.

1. The case for music services

Our view is there is a valuable and ongoing role for each local area to have a group of professional, qualified instrumental teachers who are organised and operate together. Why? It is helpful for schools and parents to be confident they can access quality assured teachers who receive ongoing professional development. According to our Hub Reps, teachers value the opportunity to learn from one another as well as the support and advice of good management. Positive contact with colleagues addresses the inherent isolation of this profession and pupils benefit from both the opportunity to have built in progression routes as well as a balance and wider choice of instruments.

2. The effect of Local Authority cuts

Local Authorities are being faced with difficult decisions regarding cuts to their budgets and this has resulted in many cases where the music service has made redundancies to their peripatetic teaching staff. In some areas the Hub has relinquished their direct responsibility for instrumental teaching, as it was not one of the core roles of the National Plan for Music Education (NPME), therefore leaving schools and parents to source teachers directly. This has sometimes resulted in a very confusing picture with instrumental teaching becoming incohesive or

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unaccountable and teachers working very much as individuals. To address this some Hubs have introduced schemes which 'accredits' or 'licenses' teachers who were formerly employed so schools are able to judge who is a suitable teacher or not whilst other Hubs have responded by training school leaders to be more confident in their capacity to assess the quality of music teaching in their schools. Both models have flaws in their design and can be problematic for the teachers involved.

We are seeing a variety of solutions as Local Authorities are restructured or as services are outsourced to multi-conglomerates. Some LAs attempt to retain control of a newly modelled music service, often refusing to consider alternative options, and attempt to reappoint teachers to new contracts as instructors or tutors on reduced hourly rates, whilst some music services are being set up as new legal entities separated from LA control. Although this process can be quite arduous for those involved, in our experience when the music service separates from the LA, there is the intention to retain a semblance of what was in place before the cuts and therefore there is a commitment to finding workable longer term solutions. The main priority being that the offer to schools and parents remains both affordable and accessible.

3. Teachers taking control

In Cornwall, music service teachers were made redundant by the LA and it was the teachers themselves who came together to form their own business, the Cornwall Music Service Trust. Gareth Churcher of CMST explains; *"Many believed it an impossibility to create a music service in such a short amount of time...Through this challenge we have gained a lot and in all honesty, lost little. A great feeling of ownership is now evident within CMST due to the huge team effort needed to achieve the goal, a sense of freedom that we are own entity with the ability to see external funding....and the belief that in our model we have a sustainable future, posting a healthy surplus in our first 8 months"*.

4. Co-operatives

Our work in supporting Music Teacher Co-operatives has been very positive. We launched the handbook 'Altogether Now' in September 2015 and have both legal documents and supporting documents in place for groups of teachers to access if they are interested in setting up their own Co-operative. Milton Keynes Co-operative, which launched in 2014, now has 62 teachers involved and operates very effectively alongside the small music service team which was retained to deliver Arts Council funded core role work in schools.

Gemma Shirley of Milton Keynes Teaching Co-operative explains:

"There have been many positives about setting up the Co-operative for teachers and students alike but most importantly it has allowed us to maintain professional standards and the continuation of excellent instrumental teaching for the pupils of Milton Keynes."

A similar situation in Wiltshire resulted in the setting up of a Co-operative in Salisbury in 2015 after teaching posts were cut. Jane Parsons, one of their directors, says of the experience so far: *"I know all our teacher members appreciate the help given us by the MU, and value having the support and network of other colleagues and a sense of identity. These principles are all at the heart of the Co-operative model."*

The success of both the long standing and newly formed Co-operatives shows that they can be a viable alternative solution for teachers to continue to work together. Those that have formed recently in extremely difficult circumstances should be celebrated and those individuals who have embraced the challenges as opportunities lauded as it is because of their hard work and commitment that they have flourished. The MU is proud to have helped and to be providing continued support for the Co-operatives and their teachers.

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5. Business Models

What incentivises music teachers to work for a third party? The differential in the charge to school or parents for lessons compared to what teachers get paid covers the pay for managers, administrators and core running costs. When the system is effective and supportive then teachers do see the value of working for a bigger organisation as opposed to working for themselves. Teachers can begin to resent the differential charges when the perception is that they are excessive or the organisation is deemed to be run to the detriment of the workforce.

We looked at how many managers and administrators are needed to run music services or Hubs effectively. Our data showed a great variance in the ratio of managers to teachers in music services. The average ratio was 1 manager to 20 teachers but the range was between 1 manager to 7 teachers to a staggering 1 manager to 100 teachers.

Each Hub still operates very differently – either because of historical reasons or how they have evolved – and this lack of consistency continues to create a “postcode lottery” of provision which the NPME was supposed to address. It also means that the experience for the teacher continues to be very varied, from those who feel supported, invested in, appreciated and well managed to those who feel exploited and under appreciated resulting in them questioning why they are continuing working for the service.

6. Rates of Pay

What is fair pay for instrumental teachers? In our survey we saw teachers increasingly being moved away from employment to self-employment and even for those who were employed we saw an erosion of terms and conditions with no structured pay scale. Some established music services that still have Local Authority funding are valiantly upholding their terms and conditions for their workforce and here there is still the opportunity for instrumental teachers to see working for a music service as a viable long term career option. Issues we continue to deal with for members regarding their pay include a lack of transparency

as to what hourly rates include (travel time, holiday pay etc.); teachers being treated as self-employed when they are actually workers and a too high a level of control being imposed on self-employed teachers. In some of the more brutal restructures we have dealt with the cuts imposed on the workforce do appear quite bluntly to be keeping the management in well paid, pensionable employment while the teaching workforce suffer. We are increasingly getting reports of instrumental work being offered at extremely low rates of pay which undermines the profession and we also are seeing a proliferation of teaching agencies moving into areas where the music service is not seen to be serving their local schools or pupils. These agencies can operate with terms and conditions that are particularly onerous and they can be extremely exploitative of a workforce which usually works in isolation. They are not subject to any regulation or scrutiny as to how they operate and often engage young or inexperienced teachers who receive no training or support. It is an area of concern for us and one we continue to monitor and advise members on.

Paying teachers too little for their work whilst still charging schools an inflated fee can lead to teachers questioning why they work for the music service and to consider approaching schools directly. It is important, therefore, that rates of pay for teachers are maintained and that a sense of fairness is promoted to ensure that the best possible teachers are attracted and maintained in the profession.

As Gareth Churcher from CMST explains, by getting their business model right:

“...Other gains have been secured; employment for the teachers of CMST benefiting from an employer pension contribution, travel allowance, CPD and a salary that pays all year round”.

And he goes on:

“Admittedly, due to the implementation of a common pay scale, some employees have had to take a reduction in salary but they would not be any worse off than if they undertook their work privately. The proof of this is that if the offer of employment and salary was insufficient CMST would have seen a huge decrease in staff numbers.”

CMST has over 90 staff and covers the whole of the Cornwall region.

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7. Quality Assurance

The MU understands and appreciates the need for quality assurance and indeed our members support the fact that their professionalism and expertise is being recognised but we feel this is an area of work that really needs to be explored by all concerned and good practice shared.

Our members have given examples of shockingly bad appraisals where procedures and policies are not followed or thought through and these have resulted in the teacher becoming demotivated or even felt like they are being bullied. We have also seen the introduction of schemes that attempt to monitor or assess teachers who are no longer employed by the service. We continue to be sceptical of the imposition of such schemes especially when they impose restrictive conditions that are difficult to justify. Apart from the absence of reliable, nationally agreed criteria, their very locality makes them vulnerable to the complaint from teachers that they can appear not to be open or transparent. Few such schemes stand the test of real scrutiny such as how to appeal, reviewing of teaching standards etc. and even if the motivation is honourable there is a sense of Hubs attempting to continue exerting control on people they recently made redundant or who never worked for the music service in the first place.

The Co-operatives have worked to address this issue head on by tackling the tensions around control of self-employed contractors through robust contractual arrangements under a framework of fairness by members agreeing to participate in ongoing Continual Professional Development and evaluation of their work as pre-requisite of their membership

8. The rise of self-employment

From our survey we found that one third of teachers are being contracted as self-employed with full or even part-time employed roles becoming increasingly rare.

Self-employment for teaching work can present problems for organisations attempting to introduce it as the guidance from HMRC is open to interpretation. In the attempt to appear compliant with HMRC

criteria we have found some services insisting that teachers (contractors) negotiate individually for their hourly rate, which can be very divisive; an introduction of room charging by schools and a lack of engagement on anything to do with providing CPD or appraisals so as to not test the element of control that comes with employment.

The ensuing muddle is characterised by Hubs attempting to regulate the unregulated with increasingly worrying consequences. We have had reports of serious breaches of data protection, of confusion over Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and of teachers going without basic safeguarding training all of which puts teachers in very vulnerable positions as well as exposing the pupils they teach to risk.

9. Continuing Professional Development

Investment in staff – whatever contracts they are on – promotes a sense of being valued which in turn promotes more commitment by staff to their organisation. Training can raise professional standards as well as stimulating debate and supporting the premise that as teachers we never stop learning. Encouragement and support, as well as advice when needed, are all immensely valuable to teachers who work very much in isolation.

In our survey we asked about what was being offered around CPD for the teaching workforce and found stark contrast. One Hub had not offered any CPD opportunities for more than 3 years whereas other teachers were receiving sessions 2 or 3 times per year. Variation on this scale again undermines the aspirations of the NPME to develop a level playing field as it shows that the experience for teachers is very different depending on where they work.

It is training, support, being part of a community of music teachers, promoting best practice in work and communicating with other teachers which are among the wider factors of what incentivises teachers to work for a third party and not be an independent operator.

It is a concern of ours about the accessibility and quality of what CPD is on offer to music teachers as a failure to invest in the workforce surely limits the prospects for success of the NPME.

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A few enlightened Hubs are now offering the Certificate for Music Educators (CME) for their music teachers and the early signs are that this is extremely promising, reaping enthusiasm and renewed interest from teachers. The MU has been doing some work on providing support material for modules of the CME and we hope that this material will be accessible for instrumental teachers working within music services and Hubs from September 2016.

In its first year of trading Cornwall Music Service Trust ran a survey on what health issues the teachers identified as affecting them in the workplace. As a result of this needs based approach they ran two sessions for their teachers, one on back issues and one on mental wellbeing, which completely addressed the issue of what CPD their teachers wanted to engage with.

10. Communications

How well are Hubs perceived to be at communicating, both internally and externally?

Encouragingly in completing our survey some Hub Reps found their Hub Leaders open and willing to share information about how their Hub was operating and were happy to engage with the process. Some Hub Leaders were defensive about sharing information and some refused to engage with us on collecting information which they felt should not be shared.

Communicating the right information to the right people in the right way at the right amount is not easy in any organisation. For a group of peripatetic teachers working across multiple sites this challenge can become insurmountable. Still our survey showed that some music services managed to communicate with their teachers both effectively and appropriately. Where issues arose was when the communication was non-existent or spasmodic or when managers only communicated with teachers when some information was required – usually immediately – such as data collection. We also had reports from teachers about the problem around internal administration such as organising timetables, invoicing pupils or schools and the fact they were only communicated with when things were going

wrong leading to a culture of fear and mistrust. Again we feel this is an area where best practice can be shared as some music services get it completely right and some extremely wrong! Communicating effectively with your workforce, schools, parents and other partners has to be one of the most important roles for the Hub as it is providing information as to what is happening that brings support both locally and nationally for music education as well as showing that the Hub is operating both effectively and efficiently.

11. Schools

Engagement between Hubs and schools is, according to Arts Council England, improving. The general picture seems, as ever, mixed in that most primary schools are engaged with their Hubs whereas engagement with secondary schools is patchier. The underlying gap in policy where Hubs are obliged or compelled to engage with all schools who, on the other hand, are seemingly free to set their agendas as they wish, is still problematic and creates tension in some areas. As schools move away from their LA and become increasingly autonomous then engaging with their local Hub becomes much more of a choice rather than a given. We see some Head Teachers who are driven by their budgets going for the cheapest option available whereas others who better understand the value of quality music education are prepared to invest and support their pupils.

Worryingly, we have reports of schools looking at instrumental teaching as a way of creating revenue for the school by charging teachers for being allowed to teach there and we also are seeing an increase of schools getting rid of teachers with little or no notice on very spurious grounds with no opportunity given for recourse. It is little wonder that teachers who work in this very precarious environment begin to consider alternative ways of working.

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Conclusion

Four years into the roll out of the National Plan for Music Education and Music Education Hubs and our findings in this, our third report, show that the picture is as mixed as it ever was.

There are many positives to note as what is happening musically and we do acknowledge the Hubs that are trying to do their best in increasingly challenging circumstances.

It is heartening to hear from our Hub Reps about enterprising projects that they are involved in and attending both Music for Youth's National Festival and Proms shows the immense variety of quality music making that is still happening through Hubs and in schools.

Music Education is only possible with a committed, skilled and creative workforce. It needs the most inspirational and dedicated teachers who are able to rise to the challenges of working in difficult circumstances to be able to create young musicians who are able to enjoy their music making at whatever level, and therefore it is important that these teachers are able to continue their work within schools.

Policy makers and Government need to appreciate this to ensure that services are able to continue that allow schools and parents to access high quality music education for children and young people at affordable costs.

We feel it is the workforce that needs to be celebrated and supported as it is these music teachers who are the important component of the success of the NPME. If teachers are not appreciated or able to develop viable and fulfilling careers then unfortunately they will consider leaving the profession or go to work solely in the private sector leaving those who are not able to afford tuition at a massive disadvantage.

We hope that this report provides an honest and balanced view of what is happening with Hubs from the perspective of the workforce. We also hope that it does outline the alternative choices

when difficult decisions have to be made and that having a committed and skilled workforce is an asset and that there still are ways to keep teachers working together.

We would like to leave the final words of encouragement to Gareth Churcher in Cornwall:

"...The commitment of the staff was acknowledged with 1% pay rise at the start of the academic year 2015 and staff morale has never been as high. Long term I believe that CMST will go from strength to strength and if other services, who potentially will suffer a similar fate to what happened in Cornwall, are aware of our successes it will give them the confidence and knowledge to create a sustainable service for the future."

Thanks to Gemma Shirley & Sarah Tomlinson of Milton Keynes Music Co-operative, Gareth Churcher & Steve Hawker of Cornwall Music Service, Jane Parsons of Salisbury Area Music Trust, Heather Powell of Denbighshire Music Co-operative, Janet Hodgson of Swindon Music Co-operative, Phil Storer of Cotswold Music Group and all of the MU Hub Representatives.

* www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Files/Reports/Industry/Music-Education-Hubs-the-real-picture-so-far-Feb-2

** www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/Advice/Education/Hubs-Co-ops/MU-Hub-Reps

*** www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/News/2015/Sep/MU-and-Co-operatives-UK-launch-guide-to-forming-Mu

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