

Sound Connections' Briefing Paper

The Importance of Music – A National Plan for Music Education

The Department for Education and Department of Culture, Media and Sport published 'The Importance of Music – A National Plan for Music Education' (the Plan) on 25 November 2011. The Plan provides "a flexible template for high quality music provision throughout a pupil's education." It is the first time a Government has published a strategic vision for schools, arts and education organisations that sets out its expectations for the provision of music education including outcomes and children's achievements. These include progression and excellence, improved skills and leadership whilst ensuring greater quality and accountability amongst music educators.

The Plan's vision is "to enable children aged 5 to 18 from all backgrounds and every part of England to have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument; to make music with others; to learn to sing; and to have the opportunity to progress to the next level of excellence". The vision extends to 2020 and will be resourced by three years of ring-fenced funding: £77m for 2012/13; £65m for 2013/14 and £60m for 2014/15. The 2011/12 Music Education Grant (formerly the Music Standards Fund) is £82.5m, so the 2012-2015 funding is in effect a 27% reduction by year 3. This will inevitably have implications for implementing the vision in its entirety.

The key element of the Plan is that music education hubs should deliver the vision and their remit is to be the centre of music education provision in one (or more) local authority area(s). Arts Council England will be responsible for distributing the DfE funding for hubs, and for the assessment of their performance against criteria set out and monitored by DfE and DCMS.

Key elements of the Plan that have implications, and provide opportunities, for the non-formal and community music sector include:

- A recognition of both the intrinsic and extrinsic values of music and music education
- The importance of **partnerships** and **partnership working**, and the requirement of the hub lead organisation in its funding application to provide "evidence of partnerships forged or proposed" and "evidence of an audit of provision in the area." There is an expectation that most hubs will involve a range of providers, including relevant ACE National Portfolio Organisations and Bridge organisations, and in particular, local arts and community music organisations.
- **Continuing professional development (CPD) and qualifications**
 - Hubs will be required to arrange to meet the CPD needs of their own workforce as well as supplying CPD to schools and strengthening leadership practice.
 - There is particular emphasis on hubs providing CPD in music technology to teachers and music educators who lack knowledge and confidence in using technology to support the delivery of music education.
 - By 2013 a music educator qualification will have been developed by Creative and Cultural Skills, with ACE support, to ensure the wider music workforce is better skilled and properly recognised for their role in and out of school.
 - Artsmark will be developed to become a quality kite mark for organisations focussed on delivering musical opportunities for pupils in and out of schools.
- **Music technology:** The Plan's Annex 2 provides in depth guidance detailing the types of technology available, providing examples of how it can be used to support effective music teaching, instrumental learning and singing. There is an emphasis on the creative use of music technology, in particular for pupils with special needs and disabilities. Also, schools are encouraged to address issues of technical support and a recommendation to them to allow access to Youtube channels on music education.

- **Singing:** the Plan values the benefits of singing and the work of Sing Up, and recommends that each school should have a choir. One of the Government's required core roles of a hub will be to "develop a singing strategy to ensure that every pupil sings regularly and that choirs and other vocal ensembles are available in the area."
- Consideration of **the musical needs of all children:**
 - Hub lead organisations in their funding applications will be required to provide evidence of "an existing or proposed regular local needs analysis"
 - They will need to consider how to ensure that children in challenging circumstances have access to music education.
 - Hubs and schools will be required to "break down barriers to music through innovative approaches to teaching and making music."
- **Musicians providing inspirational input:** this is an expectation for all pupils *in* schools in Key Stage 1 and 2, and for pupils at Key Stage 3 to be provided *in* and *out* of school. One of the recommended Hubs' extended roles is to provide access to "large scale and / or high quality music experiences for pupils, working with professional¹ musicians and/or venues. "
- **Progression and pathways:**
 - Hubs are encouraged to work in partnership with local, regional and national organisations to promote next steps in musical progression, including performance opportunities that may be signposted using social media. See the Plan's Annex 4 for a set of useful case studies including Rhythmix's work with young people in challenging circumstances
 - The Arts Council's *Take It Away* scheme that offers free loans for instrument purchases has been extended again to 5 to 18 year olds alongside 18 to 25 year olds.
 - Accreditation routes should be available through Arts Award, graded music examinations, GCSE, and BTEC courses
 - Signposting should be provided for routes into music related careers, and into the wider creative industries.
- **Talent and potential.** The DfE will continue to fund the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS), the National Youth Music Organisations (NYMOs) via Youth Music and Music for Youth for its festivals and the Schools Proms. The Plan encourages Hubs to promote the MDS and NYMOs as potential progression routes.
- **Hub governance and increased accountability:**
 - A section on hub governance highlights the need for accountability not only to the DfE via ACE, but also to parents/carers, schools, local delivery partners and through Ofsted inspections. It is suggested that young people may participate in Hub steering groups.
 - In the applications, hub leader organisations are expected to provide evidence that ranges from the ability to deliver the required core roles, extension roles where possible, and other locally identified innovative roles, financial viability and business acumen, to how they would raise additional funding; demonstrate their local needs analysis and audit of provision; and their data collection strategy and quality assurance plans.

Timescale

- 17 February 2012 is the deadline for applications to be made to ACE
- From late April 2012 announcements of successful hub applications will be made; ACE will solicit proposals for any areas not covered by successful hub applications; hub funding agreements will be negotiated and business plans agreed. Grant arrangements run from 1 August to 31 March 2015

¹ All references to professional musicians include community musicians, freelance musicians and those employed by professional organisations such as orchestras and opera companies who also work in education

- September 2012 onwards – ongoing monitoring, practice sharing and following up

What is missing from the Plan?

- **Creativity**
The word creative is mostly used in relation to the Creative Industries and little mention is made of music as a creative subject except in terms of music technology and in the section about the benefits of a music education.
- **Composers**
They are mentioned once in the foreword, but are not included in the Plan, nor in the definition of professional musicians as provided in a reference point in the first section on Music Education Hubs.
- **Early Years**
'Early years' is mentioned as the starting point for music teaching and the Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes are stated. However the Plan only suggests, rather than requires, that hubs will link with work in the early years, and with hub partners that are funded by Youth Music or trusts and foundations.
- **The National Curriculum**
The results of the current review of the National Curriculum will be known early in 2012 and until then there is no guarantee that music will retain its place as a foundation subject.
- **Direct accountability to the Department for Education**
With the appointment of ACE as the fund distributor and performance assessor, the direct relationship between the Department for Education and schools, head teachers and the local authority funded providers of music education into schools has been weakened. It must be hoped that this does not lead to a devaluation of music education which will have implications for achieving the vision of this Plan.

What will Sound Connections do next?

- Sound Connections has already incorporated some of the Plan's recommendations into its own activity and advocacy plans for its next phase.
- With the publication of the Plan, Sound Connections now aims to embed more of the specific recommendations around disadvantaged children, singing and CPD.
- Sound Connections will develop a clear offer for emerging hubs which will enable its experience, knowledge and skills of the non-formal and community music sector to be incorporated into hub plans and funding applications
- Feedback from the wider sector and views from the non-formal / community music providers will be shared in debates, and incorporated into planning and strategic discussions.
- Sound Connections will continue to update its members on latest developments and new opportunities.