

Education Committee

Oral evidence: Music Hubs, HC 725

Tuesday 21 May 2024

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 21 May 2024.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Robin Walker (Chair); Flick Drummond; Vicky Ford; Gen Kitchen; Andrew Lewer; Ian Mearns; Jess Phillips; Mohammad Yasin.

Questions 1 - 100

Witnesses

I: John de la Cour, Chair of Board of Trustees, Severn Arts; Andrew Lane, Managing Director, Dynamics Medway; Carolyn Baxendale, Head, Bolton Music Service; and Michael Summers, Manager of Music Education, Durham Music Service.

II: Bridget Whyte, Chief Executive, Music Mark; Chris Walters, National Organiser, Education and Health & Wellbeing, Musicians' Union; and Stuart Darke, Director of Legal Services, Independent Society of Musicians.

III: Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Minister of State for Schools, Department for Education; and Jenny Oldroyd, Director for Curriculum and Qualifications, Department for Education.

Written evidence from witnesses:



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: John de la Cour, Andrew Lane, Carolyn Baxendale and Michael Summers.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this one-off session of the Education Select Committee on music hubs. We have a full panel of witnesses this morning. Our first panel consists of John de la Cour, chair of the board of trustees of Severn Arts, Andrew Lane, managing director of Dynamics Medway, Carolyn Baxendale, head of the Bolton Music Service, and Michael Summers, manager of music education at Durham Music Service. You are welcome; we are grateful to you for coming to give evidence today. I will start with an open question for all of the panel: what are your views on the changes to music hubs and the music hubs investment programme?

John de la Cour: Thank you, Chair. May I start by thanking the Committee for giving your time to this subject, which matters a great deal to us and my colleagues? You have many other subjects to think about, too, so we very much appreciate the opportunity to answer your questions on this. I have been asked to say thank you on behalf of my colleagues on this panel and on the next.

In answer to your broad question, I would open by saying that if you believe that the core mission of music hub personnel is to try to grow numbers, improve standards and raise more money for the cause, I am sorry to say that the experiences of the last 18 months—the amount of time that has been taken up on going through all this—means that we would have been further forward now if we had not had to go through all of that. That is not a terribly good start for a funding programme. I and many of my colleagues believe that the implementation of this programme is acting against its own ambitions. It takes too long.

When we started with all of this, as you know, the intention was to completely shake up the whole system and start again. I remember writing to Sir Nicholas Serota in February last year as a professional funder, which is what I am and where I am coming from. I have created programmes for the Arts Council, for the lottery and for private foundations, so I think I can recognise a badly constructed funding programme when I see one. I am afraid that that is what I tried to say and that I thought that the Arts Council personnel were biting off more than they could chew. The whole thing was being thrown up in the air, and you do not do that if you are not extremely clear as to what benefits you want to get from this. That has never been clear to anybody, I think.

There is a whole set of things that I might talk about. There was a lot of rhetoric about partnership working, yet there were hundreds of pages of guidance that everybody had to plough through. For example, buried in page 33 of an 80-page guidance document, you were suddenly told that the support for the teachers' pension scheme was to be suddenly withdrawn. This had enormous human and financial consequences to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

some hubs. You do not bury that in the middle of your guidance document. You do not take six months to announce awards to 35-odd hub lead organisations, as happened last week. The deadline was in September. It took six months to do this, and this was for about 35, I believe, uncontested bids where the money had already been agreed before they even start.

Finally, I would say that you do not give the architects of the plan the responsibility to monitor its failure or progress, with all due respect to the personnel who are involved in that. If I or any other professional funders were running this, with the exception of this, you would engage independents to do this with fresh eyes and fresh thoughts, especially when you are dealing with a plan that has very wide ambitions but a funding programme behind it that is completely unable to meet those expectations.

Q2 Chair: Okay. A strong charge sheet there. We will come back to more detail about the funding issues such as TPS later in the session, but I am grateful for that introduction and broad view. Who would like to go next?

Andrew Lane: I would like to raise the risks involved, particularly in areas where there have been competitive bids. I am from the Medway music hub, and sadly, at this point, the delivery of music hub activity in Medway is at enormous risk. The new Kent and Medway hub was bid for competitively by both current hub leads, and as yet Dynamics, as the unsuccessful bidder, has received only one communication from the new HLO, which relates purely to requests for data, financial and operational information. There is no indication at all that they are seeking to work in any partnership. We have had no reply to our proposal for an equitable partnership, which reflects the Arts Council's often stated aim of locally nuanced provision.

As background, Medway has been consistently ranked by the Arts Council as being among the very best in the country across a number of their key performance indicators—according to Arts Council data collected for the last 11 years—with our highly inclusive and accessible provision, in particular, the breadth and the extent of that provision. For example, pupil participation in whole class ensemble tuition is almost two and a half times the national average, with participation in progression opportunities, small groups and large groups also higher than the national average. We teach well in excess of 18,000 pupils across our various weekly programmes each year, made possible by a number of fully funded and subsidised programmes in schools, starting in early years key stage 1, with a focus at key stage 2 on whole class and small group progression opportunities, and funded projects in secondary schools. All of this provision is bespoke and is supported with free instrument loan in Medway. The feedback from schools and those participation rates are absolutely outstanding.

As for the national picture, it is very rosy in terms of how Medway ranks. It is also incredibly favourable compared with our neighbour, Kent, which



HOUSE OF COMMONS

was the successful bidder. There was some new data published yesterday afternoon. As of last Friday, in four out of the last six years of available hub data, Medway taught more pupils across its individual, small group, large group and whole class tuition than Kent. That is in spite of the fact that Kent is five times the size of Medway. Medway also outperforms Kent in the vast majority of data points presented by the Arts Council in their data dashboard, including school engagement.

We present this data to demonstrate that with no potential partnership at all so close to September and the start of the new funding agreements, the risk to the significant levelling down of provision in Medway is stark. That view is shared by our partners, including Medway Council and our schools and teachers in the Medway community, and demonstrated by the strong campaign against the Arts Council proposals made during the consultation phase. Out of 544 responses, 460 objections were raised to the proposed Kent and Medway geography in the Arts Council survey, which was preceded by over 120 letters to local MPs a few months prior. All of this is in the context of incredibly short timescales for responses. However, the impact of this has been totally ignored by DfE and ACE.

We have a recommendation to alleviate this risk in Medway. We go back to the fact that there has been no evidence presented by Arts Council or DfE to explain the rationale for the changes to the 43 hubs and a dismissal of a number of majority opinions expressed in the consultations. We risk drifting into a situation that no hubs that I am aware of would have chosen, which has no evidence of being any more effective than the current structure.

A national board is an option, as supported by ISM, who you will hear from later, but we appreciate that this may not be possible or desirable for many hubs considering how far down the line we are in reorganisation for September. Therefore, our key recommendation to this Committee is, in areas where there were competitive bids, that the process of transition for this September is paused, with a one-year roll on of the existing Arts Council funding agreements with the current hub lead organisations for next academic year, with a view to a negotiated transition supported by Arts Council to resolve issues and enable new contracts to begin in September 2025. Where current HLOs bid against one another, there has been no groundwork laid or preparations made during that bidding process. A September 2024 start to new contracts in this context presents an enormous risk to the existing provision for children and young people. We are aware of approximately six areas facing similar challenges to Medway where this could be effective.

Q3 Chair: Thank you very much; we will certainly bear that in mind. Can I come to Carolyn?

Carolyn Baxendale: Thank you for the invitation to speak today. I agree with my colleagues so far in that we have had a year of uncertainty. Hub lead organisations have been asking three questions: will they continue to be a hub lead organisation in September? If not, will they be invited to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

be a partner in the new hub? If they are invited to be a partner, how much funding will they get?

Those three questions have created that element of uncertainty. We now have a roadmap for September. I feel that there are some key benefits in the regional hubs. We are over the milestone now. If we can grasp and embrace the collaboration opportunities, I think that there are some good things that can come out of the reorganisation, provided that the large regional hubs are grown from the grassroots upwards.

In my mind, it is important to recognise that all of the local areas need local leadership and a local response. There is a risk in this new landscape that we will end up with a series of top-down models that will not serve young people or schools. However, I believe—as I have experienced in the last 12 years in greater Manchester—that you can have the best of both worlds. If the collaboration is strong and people are willing to work in partnership, you can have strong local services with a clear regional strategy and an ambitious programme. Working together seems to be the best outcome for all stakeholders.

Q4 Chair: Do you feel that those relationships are in place for you to be able to do that with the other hubs in your area?

Carolyn Baxendale: They absolutely are in our area. You may know that previously we had two hubs in our area, the Greater Manchester hub and the Central Manchester hub. Through this process, we came to a consensus before the application process that we would all work together. Unlike in Medway and Kent, it has worked very well for us and we are looking forward to the future, with new opportunities in mind. It has been a positive experience for us.

Some of the key practical benefits of working together is that all of the partners in the hub area can align themselves with one ambition. There is a shared goal, provided we all have local flexibility. That is to do with the hub lead organisation not dictating, but facilitating. It is important that we do not go for a quick fix and that the Arts Council do not present us with a lot of tick boxes, as we will then have a top-down model. We need time.

Q5 Chair: There is an important balance to strike between tick boxes and KPIs, as well as having a clear vision of what you want to achieve. Coming back to John's point, if the aim is to bring in more funds to get more children involved and to provide more music, that is what we would all want music hubs to focus on rather than bureaucracy.

Carolyn Baxendale: Yes. I would like to ask the Arts Council, particularly for the new regional hubs, to give them time and space to evolve those partnerships so that they can develop trust. They need to develop frameworks for sharing, because it is about sharing and not working in your silo. That takes time. I would like to see the Arts Council being more vocal about how they will support the new regional hubs.



Q6 **Chair:** Thank you. Michael, can I bring you in?

Michael Summers: Thank you. First, on behalf of the sector, can we thank DfE and Arts Council for the funding? It is very welcome, and we appreciate it. However, I would say that it is not enough. Unfortunately, it has not risen with inflation since we started. For Durham and Darlington over the last nine years, we have lost in the region of £1.125 million, as it would have been had the funding been aligned with inflation. That equates to about £300,000 this year. I am having to either increase costs to parents or to schools. Had my staffing structure remained the same, it would have cost me an extra £400,000 compared with nine years ago. I have had to adapt and reduce staffing, which is impacting on what we can actually do.

While I think that we would all agree that the aspirations of the national plan are fantastic—we do not think that anyone would disagree with the aspirations of the national plan—we are being asked to do more for effectively less money. The age range has increased, including early years. With our larger hubs, we are joining a consortium across the north-east. That will cost an additional administration fee that we will have to absorb in the revenue grant. We will have to look at engaging lead schools in paying for that. While the aspirations are fantastic, the funding is not sufficient to continue the work that we are currently doing, let alone to fund the new plan.

Q7 **Chair:** On the regional dynamics and being able to work with those, are there good working arrangements in place with the other hubs with which you are working now?

Michael Summers: Yes. I think that we are fortunate that we have always worked together as a region prior to this process. We have always worked collaboratively and shared best practice anyway. I think there is a feeling that it has been ordained rather than being an organic process, and I am yet to see the actual data to demonstrate that we, as the north-east joined together, will have either a better impact for the young people or better use of public funds. The actual data that we have seen tells us the opposite.

I was involved with the focus groups. Of the 139 people that were there, 36 were from music hubs, everything else was the wider sector, and they all agreed that more local and a greater number of music hubs would be more effective for young people.

Q8 **Chair:** The Department has said, “More and better strategic collaboration across larger areas will improve the quality, breadth, and consistency of music education”. Do you agree with that statement? By the sound of things, not.

Michael Summers: It is very hard, because you want to disagree with the statement, but we have not seen the data to support it. It is very hard to explain to my schools, to the young people, the pupils, why we



are joining this larger consortium. It is effectively because we have been told to do it.

Q9 **Chair:** Is that is the case across the board?

Michael Summers: Yes.

Carolyn Baxendale: Can I pick up Mike's point about funding? The related issue for me is the workforce. This has to be an outcomes programme. There is no point in going forward if this is not about better outcomes for young people. Better outcomes for young people mean retaining a high-quality workforce, but the problem is that that is increasingly expensive. As Mike said, what hubs have been doing over the last few years is reducing their staff, offering them less favourable terms and conditions, or giving more work to the same people. That does not best serve the needs of young people.

In Greater Manchester, we have increased our income targets in general to maintain our staffing levels. Broadly speaking, we have managed to do that, but it has become increasingly challenging, with the economic situation, to generate enough additional income beyond the grant to maintain good-quality terms and conditions for the workforce. If there is anything that DfE can do to encourage and support music hubs to maintain a high-quality workforce, I would welcome it.

Q10 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** I think we have talked about the selection process. My colleague Gen is going to talk to John and Carolyn, but can I talk to you, Andrew and Michael, about the implications for not getting that lead hub? Andrew, I think you mentioned that there has been no communication at all, so perhaps you could elaborate on that, and then Michael, I want to hear how you feel you are going to fit in.

Andrew Lane: Yes, I suppose I have stated quite plainly the sense that the fact that we have not got the HLO status in Medway is an enormous risk to the provision there, because so far there has been no sense of partnership at all. Throughout the process, the Arts Council has said there may be fewer hub lead organisations, but there should not necessarily be fewer delivery partners—delivery organisations.

As it stands, and we are at the end of May, we are looking ahead to September, and obviously schools are off at the end of July, so in terms of making plans for September, we are currently in a situation where we have no idea what the provision can possibly be for those children in Medway. We have no idea whether Dynamics, as the lead organisation for the last 11 years—which is a continuation of the structure of work before that, over the previous 10 years—will have any opportunity to deliver that at all in the way that it is being done now.

In Medway, we have an incredible entitlement to music education. It has been enormously successful for the last 11 years, and to be frank, the comparisons across the board suggest that the provision could fall off a cliff. We could be heading into a dangerous situation in terms of what the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

children and young people actually receive and what support the schools receive. I am afraid that in our experience, the fact that we are no longer an HLO is a huge risk to the provision in our area.

Q11 Mrs Flick Drummond: Is that more because of the financial implications, or do you think that they are going to ask for a restructuring of what you do?

Andrew Lane: In terms of financial implications, we certainly agree with colleagues about the fact that there has been static funding. We are now in a situation where we are looking at the national plan, which has again been very well received, but the amount of funding provided is the same, and yet the responsibilities are greater and the bureaucracy is greater, in terms of the reporting and so on. There are ever-increasing demands on the time of hub lead organisations, as well as, of course, the fact that there have been 895,000 more children in the schools over the last decade.

Financially, every hub has had to make changes, adjustments and evolutions over the last 10 years. Every hub has dealt with it differently. We have a different structure in Medway from across the border in Kent and from other colleagues along this table. We have managed that change of finances without, so far, any risk to the provision for children in Medway. How long that can go on for will always depend on the evolution. With the increased expectations on hubs, it will be difficult to see how that can be continually expanded. We will always be looking for maintenance. We have such a high level of participation in Medway. We have been delighted to be able to keep that going so far, but where we are now, there is no financial offer, no partnership offer at all, on the table for Dynamics to continue its work in Medway, which is incredibly efficient in terms of value for money. I cannot see how that could carry on in the next phase unless an appropriate agreement was in place.

I also note that even in areas where there has been excellent partnership and good relationships, where the transition to multi-area hubs is smoother, we are still talking about top-slicing the grant—3% to 5% seems to be fairly standard. Talking to colleagues, some are budgeting for almost a 10% reduction—a 10% drop in their budgets. Once you take into account all the other considerations around bringing these hub structures together, all the new meetings and things that have to be put together, you are almost accounting for maybe 10% of the budget of the hub revenue grant that needs to be spent purely on the new HLO structure. In a time when there are increased responsibilities, and also the idea that larger hubs can be more efficient and more effective, I think that is highly questionable considering the amount of budget that will go straight away on providing provide this extra layer of bureaucracy.

Q12 Mrs Flick Drummond: Michael, is that going to be the same for you in Durham?



Michael Summers: To an extent. We are fortunate in that, across the north-east, we have formed a consortium. We are part of a consortium bid, with North Tyneside Council being the lead partner—but even that, in terms of Arts Council allowing a consortium bid but having a lead partner, seems a slight conflict in terms of language, but we are working very well together. I do think in that respect it will be successful.

I would echo Andrew's points about the additional cost. I was doing some sums around that. We have met at least monthly for the last 18 months—the seven of us as hub leads—so that is a huge amount of time and money. I would suspect that it is about a day a week of work at the moment—not at the coalface, not actually responding to the needs of young people, but putting governance and management structures in place to facilitate this new hub.

Q13 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** And for very little change.

Michael Summers: For very little change. There will be some ideas here. We have already set sharing for CPD across the area. There will be additional progression routes, but also with such a vast area with some challenging transport links, there is no way that an ensemble that I offer in Darlington, our big band, can be accessed by a pupil in Northumberland. It is not physically possible.

So we can share best practice, but my other worry about the plan is that there is no real talk of pedagogy. There is no real focus on what the needs of the young people are and developing teaching and learning for them. At the moment, we are spending a lot of time talking about governance and management, and what we are measured on is output rather than outcomes. I believe that if we had more of a focus on the delivery and what good music education looks like, the entire sector would have something to aim for and we would have better outcomes for the young people we are serving. At the moment, a lot of time is spent on the bureaucracy of the process.

Q14 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** Did you have any input into how this new structure was organised at all, or has it all been top-down?

Michael Summers: No, we did—totally. It was a completely equal partnership, so all seven of us as local authorities—eight if you include Darlington, the only representative representing two local authorities—were completely involved, as well as with the discussion obviously with the newly combined authority that is just being established in the north-east. So yes, I would say that we have been completely involved.

Q15 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** Did the selection process allow everybody to feed into what an ideal music hub service would look like across the country, or was it just placed on you? I think that is what I am trying to ask.

Ian Mearns: The consortium came together, and therefore there was one bid, wasn't there?



Mrs Flick Drummond: I am talking about across the country.

Chair: In terms of the structure.

Mrs Flick Drummond: In terms of the structure of the selection process.

Michael Summers: So the structure, no, we had no say in it. Again, as I said, it was actually against what focus groups said and what the Andrea Spain report, published by Arts Council in August 2022, said about what good hub partnerships should look like. They both suggested different models from what we find ourselves with. This goes back to my point that we are yet to see the data to support what these greater hubs are.

There is also some conflict about the new geographies. As Durham and Darlington, we are still a large hub as it stands, but there is talk of this being consistent across the region, across the country. There are three new hubs that are smaller in terms of number of schools, and two new hubs—one of which is a neighbour—that are smaller, in the number of pupils and the amount of revenue, than we are now. So on this idea of consistency, there are 13 new hubs that cover two local authorities, as we currently do. I cannot see where that consistency is.

The final point about geography is that we were also told that it would improve the quality of provision, but we have not been told, first, what good provision looks like, and secondly, where the provision previously had been benchmarked and had not been successful.

Chair: To Andrew's point, there is data—in terms of the Arts Council's data hub—that shows what hubs were achieving.

Ian Mearns: Going back to Michael's point about the north-east, the contention—if there was a contention at all—was about the geography of the proposed area that was going to be covered by the new process. But once it became clear and determined that that was the geography, the local authorities very quickly came together to form that consortium to get a successful bid.

Q16 **Chair:** Was that your experience as well, John?

John de la Cour: We were teamed up with Herefordshire and Shropshire. Shropshire could not bear the thought of being with us, and we were not terribly keen on it either. The reason was that they are a perfectly good music service, but they are a local authority service; Severn Arts is an independent charity with PAYE staff. We employ staff on employment contracts, whereas the Herefordshire hub do not have any employment contracts at all and operate very differently. One was attempting to put together three very, very different entities, and thankfully we managed to appeal, and a different arrangement came about, but that took time as well. The same kind of thing was going on in some other areas. People scrambled to—

Chair: That is useful. I will bring in Gen.



Q17 **Gen Kitchen:** That very nicely comes on to my question, which is to John and Carolyn. Your organisations have been selected to be the hub lead organisations for the new hubs from September. Do you consider this to be an appropriate timeframe, and what communication have you had regarding the next steps in the process? You both touched on it a little in your opening remarks, but could you give us a little bit more detail?

Carolyn Baxendale: Yes. I think it is an appropriate timeframe for us in Greater Manchester, and the reason why is that we have been working in this way since 2012. When we first put a multi-authority hub together in 2012, we had a fairly light-touch compliance framework from the Arts Council and, to be honest, we could try out new things, we could find our way, we were trying something new, and there was a sense of excitement about doing something that had not been done before. It did not happen in six months, nor did it happen in 12 months, and the maturity of those partnerships has taken time.

What I am saying is that everybody across the country is not at the same point. That is for Arts Council to look at very carefully now and to try to perhaps be a bit more bespoke about the support that they are giving to some regional hubs that are starting off those partnerships for the first time.

To go back to the point about whether regional hubs actually work, I have seen a large number of benefits. I go back to the point about the best of both worlds. If you are working together across a region, there are things you can do that you could not do when you were working in your silos in your local authorities. You can assess the CPD needs of the region and be more targeted about where you are providing CPD. I am not saying, "Let's do CPD in one particular area and everybody come to that course". I am talking about identifying the needs, because we are bringing practitioners together from a number of local authorities and we understand what the needs are of the region.

The other things you can do as a region is provide additional opportunities for children that did not exist. We have found that the children who are playing in the Bury music ensembles do not want to travel to Stockport, and vice versa. As a group of local leaders in music education, we have been able to create a Greater Manchester tier of ensembles that our more advanced children can access. It gives them something ambitious to aim for, it gives them a challenge, and they get to work with people and organisations that they would never access if they were working in their locality. We have created new pathways for children in our region, but again, that did not happen instantly.

Chair: It was 10 years in the making.

Carolyn Baxendale: Yes. I think the opportunities are there and people have to see the potential in collaboration.

Q18 **Gen Kitchen:** Can I ask the two of you whether you think it favours city



HOUSE OF COMMONS

hubs or city regions rather than more rural regions, as we have in Northamptonshire? Has there been a difference in the geography?

Carolyn Baxendale: That is very difficult for me to say, because I have been head of Bolton Music Service since 2008 and we have grown our service over a long period and taken on new opportunities. I have always worked in Greater Manchester, and I agree that we are quite a dense area. I can travel to see my colleagues in Tameside, and it takes me half an hour. I guess there are other issues in the shire counties that will be problematic, but they need a different set of solutions.

John de la Cour: I think you are probably getting a message from some of us that there is a widespread feeling that, "If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it", and certainly not this way. It is not finished yet. A well-meaning person congratulated me on the success of Severn Arts in getting HLO status, and I said, trying to be as gracious as I could, that I did not want to be congratulated; I want to be thanked.

Staff up and down the country have worked enormous numbers of hours, meeting ridiculous deadlines, having to plough through enormous amounts of paperwork. Many experienced managers have told me that these last 18 months have been the most torrid times in their entire arts career. Sight has been lost of the fundamental truth that the funder needs the funded just as much as the other way around. That is why I am so keen on trying to adjust the relationships, so that there is a more even understanding between both sides, as it were.

I feel sorry, if I may say so, for a lot of the Arts Council staff, too. Having managed grant-making staff myself, I can tell you that there is nothing worse than having to present a badly constructed programme with conditions in it that have not been quite thought through to an increasingly irascible clientele. It is not a very comfortable thing to be doing.

Things have not finished yet. There are at least a hundred or more pages of guidance as to what we have to go through before the grants are confirmed. Apparently, there are six stages of where you have to request the money over the next year, six payment moments, which take up a great deal of staff time, as well as the data collection and all the ancillary stuff that goes with it.

For me, when the chief executive of Severn Arts said that she had been ticked off for not including an agenda in one of our annual returns, and that this would affect our risk rating, I think that is when I had had enough, because there is quite a lot in the material about risk ratings, but almost none of it is going to imperil the opportunities for children to learn music, or any of that.

Q19 **Gen Kitchen:** Finally, as a supplementary to this, what measures need to be taken to ensure that the programme is a success? I realise that that is probably a really wide question, and I am conscious of time.



Chair: One thing from each of the panel would be helpful.

John de la Cour: I have said this in my written evidence as well—I am going to say two things. The first is benchmarking—we have to benchmark. There is no information as to the level of proficiency, attainment and so on among young people in this country, and therefore, we do not know what we are aiming for. This programme said from the outset that you must have targets so you know what it is you are spending the money on.

Secondly, I would ask for an exercise to reduce the compliance requirements by at least 50%. I used to work for a lottery boss. Compliance requirements tend to accrue over time in funding organisations, especially when you get staff coming in who are nervous and so on. So the answer, when you do not have a very good relationship with the funder, is just to add more compliance to it—that is what people do. I had a wonderful boss who embarked every few years on what he called “barnacle scraping”. It had gone too far, and we needed to do something. I would urge, maybe under the chairmanship of the Minister, that we sit down and persuade ourselves that we do not need all this stuff. We are not going to run away with the money, I can assure you.

Carolyn Baxendale: I would like to finish by celebrating the fact that we have a national plan for music education. I pay tribute to all the colleagues who worked on the first national plan, the second national plan, and also the model music curriculum. In my experience, these documents are making a difference in our local schools. We have headteachers now who really do value music and want to work with our music hub, despite the sometimes gloomy messages that we hear in the media about music education in schools. There is still a mixed picture across the country. I would like to celebrate that, and to say those documents are helping music hubs to fight the music fight and to work with schools. Finally, the plan is very ambitious—rightly so—for all children, but the level of funding only allows us to deliver part of it.

Q20 **Jess Phillips:** Is the level of funding enough? You have already pointed out the issue of inflation, and I am sure that everybody who works on any public sector contract would currently say the same, but is the level of funding enough for the ambition?

Carolyn Baxendale: No, it does not meet the ambition of the plan, but music hubs are expected, as part of their terms and conditions, to generate additional investment, and that has always been the case. Music hubs generally, in my experience, are very good at that—it is part of their DNA, generating additional funding from parents, schools, trusts and foundations and local supporters.

Q21 **Jess Phillips:** From trusts and foundations—I also spent my entire life filling in applications. I once did one with school nurses when we decided that would be competitive tendering, and we worked out that in the time for filling the documents we could have inoculated half of Africa with the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

nurses in my office. It is a waste of time. If you are a local authority, like North Tyneside local authority, you cannot apply for trusts and grants.

Carolyn Baxendale: No, so quite a few music hubs have set up separate charities. We have set up one in Bolton called Trust Music, which generates about £30,000 a year as a bursary fund for children. That has run out this year. Children who cannot afford to pay for lessons can access a bursary through our partner charity. We can also raise money through other routes to support children on free school meals who need remissions. All of that additional income is now an expected part of our business, and it is difficult to predict year on year.

Q22 **Jess Phillips:** Has there been any extra funding for the music hubs within what you were already doing, with regard to the job of a fundraiser and/or the bureaucracy that you are currently having?

Carolyn Baxendale: No, the music hub funding has stayed static, and I would ask for at least a look at increasing it alongside inflation or in line with inflation, but that has not happened.

Q23 **Ian Mearns:** The problem with that model is that the capacity in a particular geographical area to raise funding from its local community will be very different in different places.

Michael Summers: I would echo that point, and we need to pay tribute to the sector as well for how entrepreneurial we are. We run things like office choirs. We run a vocal festival that brings in additional funding—that is just a little bit. We also have a charitable arm. That takes a lot of time to establish as well, and we are all doing things all the time to make sure that we can ultimately deliver for the young people in our area. What is published is that the grant is doing that, but I would argue that it is not. It is down to the sector and down to the hard work and diligence of people working a huge number of hours to make sure that those young people can access fantastic provision.

Q24 **Jess Phillips:** I would not expect you to have this, but I wonder whether there will be a monitoring system of how the 43—by the way, there are 43 police forces in the country. I think that is the reason. They have literally picked the number 43—I cannot come up with a better reason. To Ian's point, will there be some way of knowing how much each one has raised to look at the regional disparities for funding going forward and any idea that the DfE or ACE will pick up on that?

Carolyn Baxendale: Yes, ACE does monitor that because they do not just monitor the spend of the grant; they monitor the total outturn for the HLO and its partners, including the additional income that is generated.

Q25 **Jess Phillips:** So we will be able to see if basically London gets loads more than everyone else.

Carolyn Baxendale: Yes.



Michael Summers: Very briefly, back to the point about rurality, in areas such as Durham and Northumberland, where there is very sparse population, it costs far more to deliver. The funding model is based on pupil numbers, so a small school that has 20 pupils in the dales and Durham does not get as much money as a larger school, so they are instantly at a disadvantage and we have to subsidise that through other ways.

Q26 **Jess Phillips:** And on the capital grant available for musical instruments and equipment, are any changes needed to that specific part of it?

John de la Cour: How long do you have?

Michael Summers: First, it is incredibly welcome for the sector. Our instrument stocks have been hammered, for want of a better word, for many years, so to get that money in is great news. There are, however, some challenges with the administration of that—we cannot actually pay for the administration of those instruments. So with things like putting asset tags on and putting them out in schools, that has to come from our revenue grant; we cannot use the capital grant.

We have to buy brand-new instruments. We can start to buy second-hand instruments, but only if the provider is on a portal, so I cannot go on to eBay or Facebook Marketplace and buy cheap instruments. It feels very unsustainable, and it feels like a couple of large instrument providers will make a lot of money from this.

The final thing from me is that we cannot pay for repairs. We have to buy brand-new instruments. Each year, we have invested about £12,000 annually in repairing our current instrument stocks to make them ready, but we still have other instruments that need to be repaired.

My final point—sorry—is about SEND and the special adaptive instruments for pupils. Very often, what we do is go into a school and look at the child, speak to the child, and we will make the adaptive instrument. I have a fantastic instrument repairer who can do that, who can make the adaptive instrument for that pupil. That takes time and materials, but in terms of the capital grant, all I can do is buy a set adaptive instrument for the pupil that might not actually respond to their needs.

Q27 **Vicky Ford:** Michael, did you mean repaired, or serviced?

Michael Summers: Yes, sorry—

John de la Cour: We have 7,000 instruments. I have to say, we do not need the 300,000 that we are about to be given. You are not supposed to say that in the public sector.

Q28 **Jess Phillips:** I was going to say, are you going to have excess in your capital?

Michael Summers: Can I counter that? We do need them.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

John de la Cour: What we do is repair them, and it is very difficult for us to keep—but we are not allowed to use this; it has been flatly refused.

Q29 **Chair:** Is any rationale given for that?

John de la Cour: I think some members of the following panel may know more about this.

Chair: Okay, we will come back to the question.

Q30 **Ian Mearns:** I am looking at the nice colourful map of the geography of some of these areas—some do make sense and some not so much. Somebody has made a decision somewhere that that is the way they should be. We have heard some concerns about the impact that the changes to the teachers' pension scheme may have on music hubs and the staff that they employ. Have any of you been affected by this, and if so, how?

Michael Summers: Not directly, because we are a local authority hub and obviously it is more for an independent trust, so it is probably better to speak to our colleagues in the second panel, who probably have a better national view than my perspective.

John de la Cour: Yes, Severn Arts is affected by this, and we have had to go through ghastly consultations—we hated having to do it, but we have had to—and everything that goes with it in order to protect the company. It was about a £300,000 hit.

Carolyn Baxendale: Yes. We have a lot of local area partners in our hub. Some of them are local authority organisations and some are independent companies. The independent music services are now finding it very difficult because they do not know about the teachers' pension scheme support. It is very welcome that centrally employed teachers are now being supported with the teachers' pensions uplift, but we are still waiting to understand whether other organisations will be supported or not.

Q31 **Chair:** It essentially creates a greater imbalance between the independent organisations and the—

Carolyn Baxendale: Yes, and if music hubs are about consistency, which they absolutely should be for young people, we need a consistent approach to the teachers' pension support across music hubs, in my view.

Q32 **Andrew Lewer:** On top of that, would you recognise a statement that it is particularly unfair if this ends up with independent providers not having their teachers' pension scheme contributions covered, given that successive Governments have encouraged people to take on that money?

Carolyn Baxendale: That is how it would play out in our hub, because some of our organisations would not get that support and some would.

Chair: Okay. I am very grateful to our first panel. We have overrun, but



it is very important that we heard from you. Thank you for the enormous amount of work that you have been doing, and thank you to everyone working in this process for navigating the process that you have been through. You have given us plenty of questions for our subsequent two panels, so thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Bridget Whyte, Chris Walters and Stuart Darke.

Q33 **Chair:** Welcome to our second panel. We have Bridget Whyte, the chief executive of Music Mark; Stuart Darke, the director of legal services at the Independent Society of Musicians; and Chris Walters, the national organiser for education, health and wellbeing for the Musicians' Union. Thank you very much for coming to give evidence. What are your views on the plans to reduce the numbers of music hubs, and what impact do you feel that they will have on the provision of music education?

Q34 **Bridget Whyte:** Thank you for having us to speak today. I welcome the ambition of the new plan. It was no secret that I was critical of the first plan, despite being involved in that and in the music manifesto prior to that, because plan one did not really hit with schools. They did not even know it existed. It talked about every child having the opportunity to learn a musical instrument but did not talk about how to go from that and progress. Both those matters have been addressed. Half the plan writes about the school and the role of the school, and there is more concentration on recognising the importance of progression.

The other thing that has changed, because the Department for Education has changed, is that we now look at nought to 25. That is fantastic. Music learning does not start at five. It should start as soon as possible, ideally pre-birth—singing to your baby in the womb is really powerful—and music education does not stop. We should carry on into higher and further education and support our industry of tomorrow—an industry that is worth billions and employs over 210,000 people. That is just the music industry. I am not sure it actually counts music teachers and professionals like us.

It is a great plan, and it has great ambition. However—

Q35 **Chair:** I sense a “but” coming.

Bridget Whyte: And—we should not really say “but”—so I was slightly surprised to see within the plan the talk of reducing the number of hub lead organisations. I say this all the time, and my colleagues here will have heard me say it many, many times: a hub is a concept, not an organisation. It is a concept of partnership working. Partnerships are already happening in the music education hubs around the country. There are 114, and we already reduced from 121 at the start in 2012. I was slightly surprised when it was said that there would be fewer. We started to ask, “Well, what does that mean? How many fewer?”



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The process to getting where we are now has been long and protracted, but has seemed rushed at times as well. The idea of the prescribed geographies felt very rushed in terms of discussing how it would work. Using words that Carolyn has used regularly, prescribing rather than organic partnerships is difficult, and partnerships take time to build.

We have had a year of uncertainty. I feel that there was a lot of consideration of whether this was about mergers and acquisitions. Mergers of music services, so one music service rather than four—well, no, that's not what it was about. Acquisitions—taking on another school in a multi-academy trust: that is not what it is about either. It is about local partnerships and the local delivery network and how that works together. Some of our new geographies will be fantastic. They will fly. Others will need a lot more time to make them work, and they might not work.

There was actually a partnership of two in London, which started together and then split, so that they worked separately, as separate music hubs, a few years ago. It can work and it sometimes does not. As I said, we are now at 114, so we have made it work in some places to combine areas already. It just takes time and it needs to be done organically.

Q36 **Chair:** Okay, thank you. Does anyone else want to come in on that before we go into more detail?

Stuart Darke: It might be useful to highlight some things from the ISM's point of view on the restructuring in the investment programme. We are very grateful that we have been able to come and speak to you all today. We come to this position, as the ISM being a subject association for music, wanting to see high-quality music education for young people across the country. We have been fairly vocal about our lack of support for the investment process and the way it is being run.

We have questioned the Department several times about the lack of evidence that underpins the rationale for going from 120-odd hubs down to 43. It is interesting what you say about picking a number almost out of the air. We have no idea what it aligns to—how it aligns to anything beyond it being a number somewhere approaching 40.

There is a lack of evidence in relation to saying, "Well, what is the quality of education now, and what needs to be addressed in the structures of the hub organisations in order to improve education if it is lacking anywhere?" There is a real lack of evidence and there is nothing to show—nothing we have seen, and we have asked for it—around why reducing the number of hub lead organisations will lead to higher-quality support for schools in an area, for pupils in an area, for people in an area. There is nothing to show how that will address any cold spots—nothing around saying, "Well, why are there cold spots in education? Is it about schools not being able to afford it—the time, the money in schools and what have you?"



Even the DfE's own rationale, if you can call it that—there is a lack of evidence, we would say, for that rationale—is not being met. There are still single local authority hubs within the structure. There are ones that line up with combined authorities, and there are ones which do not line up with combined authorities. That is because there has been an evolution over time with hubs developing partnerships, and a real disparity in the number of pupils in different hubs and a real disparity in the number of schools as well. All those things are not lining up with what the DfE is saying is the reason for it, and the DfE rationale is the kind of management speak that you might expect in trying to justify something.

We also had concerns about the consultation and the short timeline in that consultation—the fact that, back in January 2023, you had 10 focus groups with 10 days only for people to comment on a digital survey about the geographical areas. There was a March 2023 survey, but no real change then to the 43 hub lead organisations' geographical areas. Again, it made us question, "Well, has someone picked a number and said, 'That's the number there are going to be'?"

Hubs had only three months to submit a bid after reading information that was available to them just one month prior, but then ACE had six months to evaluate all the bids as well. There was a short timeline from April when successful hubs were told to that being done publicly in May, and then to put things in place for September this year—putting real pressure on hubs and organisations that were already tasked with delivering music education to young people. They were doing all the things that they were meant to be doing—reporting to ACE, ticking those boxes—but they were also having to engage in that process. There has been an impact on cost as well, as you have heard.

Q37 Chair: And presumably an impact on musicians. Chris, do you want to come in on that?

Chris Walters: Yes. Bridget's comment that some of these hubs will fly and others may not work is very pertinent. There is a sense that this is not an organic restructure. It has been imposed. There have been all sorts of different responses to it that we heard very well articulated by the first panel. We are going to see some big successes here, and we are going to see some huge struggles and problems.

The question for me is: why was it imposed? What was the rationale? The rationale that was given was expressed in very open language, and it did not show how this was going to lead to improved outcomes in music education for children and young people. Going forward, we will see that this is going to continue to be a challenge, because these larger hubs are going to have to rationalise within themselves, and that is going to take a long time. We have heard about communication.

I am representing the teaching workforce in these hubs. There will be issues, because there are such different teacher pay rates and terms across the different organisations that make up the hubs. There are also



details like the different organisations charging schools differently and offering different services, and to what extent and how is that going to be rationalised, because whatever the guidance is, the stakeholders on the ground will need consistency to understand what is being offered by these hubs.

We have talked about the funding issue. There has been standstill funding. For our sector organisations, we have observed that the funding that is linked to the national plan for music education seems based more on affordability than on a costed assessment of what it would take to deliver the plan. We would like to see that, but if I could bring it back to teachers, there has been a long change over decades in how visiting music teachers are engaged and how they operate. That is because we have had this flat funding and there has been a real-terms cut, and the organisations that engage the teachers—what were the music services and now the organisations that are forming these larger hubs—have struggled to make ends meet. One of the ways they have responded to that has been to reduce and minimise teachers' pay and terms. We now see great inconsistency around hubs in that regard.

As Carolyn referred to, that does not lead to the best outcomes for children and young people. We have already heard that some people will get top-up for teachers' pensions; others are on freelance contracts. The Arts Council data dashboard talks about half of the workforce being employed, but we do not know the rates of pay, and we do not know what type of employment contract. The other half are on freelance or zero-hours contracts. There is a question mark for me about whether freelance is even an appropriate status for teachers that are delivering a structured, funded programme of education, where there needs to be accountability and control.

To summarise, this process was not the issue that needed fixing with music education. There was such a lot of other stuff that we could have put our attention into collectively—the sector, policymakers, stakeholders—yet it has been an enormous distraction. Hubs are run on a shoestring. Management, often one or two people, has been spending all their time on this bidding stuff. There would have been a lot of other stuff that we could have looked at.

Q38 Chair: Thank you; that is a useful point. Bridget and Stuart have talked about a lack of evidence behind the number. What evidence should the Department gather to ensure the success and measure the impact of the programme? We all want things to be evidence-based, and our job as a Select Committee is to try to make sure that they are. You have talked about the variation in performance that we could see. What key metrics should they be looking at?

Bridget Whyte: A key metric for me is engagement by schools in this. The role of schools in music education is vital. It is where most children and young people go every day, and that is where they will receive a large proportion of their music education. Music education hubs and the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

partnerships that make up a music education hub provide support to schools, training for teachers and support for schools. They make the music department one of the largest departments in the school, potentially, from all the visiting music teachers that come in.

At the heart of this, however, is the provision of music in schools, whether that is within the curriculum or co-curricular activity. Music Mart is a subject association, and we represent all the music education hub lead organisations and many of their partners. They would say that the biggest challenge is that the plan is non-statutory. The model music curriculum is non-statutory. Without statutory expectations of all schools, that core music offer cannot be developed and increased by the music hub's activities. That core offer is available only where a school sees the importance and value of music and teaching music.

We particularly think of our secondary schools, and the challenge that we have in secondary schools where our academies and free schools can choose the curriculum that they study—I know that you will talk about this too, Stuart. The measures are not allowing for schools to choose music when it is a subject that can support much wider learning, as well as the rigour of the subject in and of itself. So we have a challenge, particularly in our secondary schools. Of course, we can't fix that challenge, even if they were to become statutory. There aren't enough secondary school music teachers for the secondary schools in England.

Q39 Jess Phillips: Are there some schools that don't do music GCSE, for example? I literally just had to go and wake my son up to make sure he went to his A-level, by the way.

Bridget Whyte: Yes. There are some that don't do GCSE music at all. There are lots.

Stuart Darke: The number of students taking GCSE music is low, especially when you look at it as the percentage of the total cohort. It has been reducing over the past few years.

Q40 Jess Phillips: Is data on that potentially something that could be collected?

Chair: Certainly when I was at the Department, the argument was always that there were declining numbers taking music GCSE but rising numbers taking grades and other elements of music education externally, partly because of the work of the music hubs.

Chris Walters: There has been a rise in vocational alternatives to GCSE, but even accounting for that, the total trajectory is downwards. There has been a positive increase in the variety of qualifications that are available, but we are not on an upward trajectory with engagement at music at key stage 4, key stage 5, GCSE and equivalent, A-level and equivalent, and then on into university.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bridget Whyte: That is having an impact on university rolls. We are seeing cuts to university music departments, which of course does not support the pathway to industry, which is part of the plan.

Stuart Darke: That leads on to what should change. You have heard this morning from people who fill in the returns to the Arts Council that it is about outputs, not outcomes. So that may well be a change. But in terms of reporting on things like risk factors and that sort of thing, how does that go to the quality of education? There is no benchmark in that at the moment. There is no saying, "Where are we at the moment? How do we improve, have we improved and does having 43 hub lead organisations improve that process?" That is what is impossible to answer, because there is no benchmark about where we are at the moment.

I suppose there is that bit of fear from our perspective about hubs being set up to fail as well. As Bridget highlights, the plan is non-statutory and hubs are being graded, for want of a better word, or assessed on how much engagement they have in schools, but schools don't have to engage. If hubs are admonished by Arts Council for not having high engagement, how are they going to increase engagement when schools don't have to engage? The plan is non-statutory. It is more nuanced, I think, than that, because obviously there is a funding point as well. If you are going to make something statutory, you have to back it up with the funds as well at a school level—not just maybe at a hub's level.

Q41 **Gen Kitchen:** That leads us nicely on to my question. What are your views on the adequacy of the funding available to deliver the music hub investment? Obviously, we heard in the previous session that it seems to be wanting. Stuart, the Independent Society of Musicians has said that concerns about funding are so serious that the process should be paused to allow an investigation to take place. What type of investigations would you suggest takes place, and what changes would you hope to see as a result?

Stuart Darke: The pause was most definitely while the process was going on. We started talking about a pause, I think, back in September last year before the bids had closed, because we were starting to see the problems building up, as I have outlined. We wanted an investigation into the rationale and the evidence, or the lack of evidence, about why we would have 43 hub lead organisations, especially since when surveyed, 43% of the sector said 87 hubs, only 39% said 40 hubs and even less said 10 hubs. That is what we are talking about investigating. We are talking about what the quality of education is and how you make that quality better. How do you get a higher-quality music education for young people?

As you have heard this morning, the funding is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the national plan. We have had static funding, in effect, since 2015-16, at a time when inflation has been rife and pupil numbers have gone up. You are talking about around £9 per pupil, something like that, for the music education hubs; that is their funding. To compare that



with other things—we often compare it with the money invested in sports and PE education—the sports and PE premium was £320 million just in 2021-22, so the £380 million that has been spent, which I think Arts Council and the DfE quote for music hubs over five years, is dwarfed in one year by what is spent on sport and PE. That is not to say that sports and PE should not get that money; it is just to demonstrate the inadequacy, in our view, of the funding for music hubs.

Chris Walters: Can I come in to support the comments that have been made? I would like to see a piece of work that looks at the ambitions of the national plan, which, as has been said, was well received by the sector. If that national plan happened everywhere, we would be in a really good position with music education. I would like to look at the gap between that and the funding that is available and, to be honest, about how far we are falling short of that, or how far we are going to be falling short of that on the budget that we have.

A previous question was about how we are measuring good outcomes. One way to do that is through social equity justice for people who cannot afford music education and whose experience as a child or young person from a less well-off background is going to be that taster bit of learning an instrument. That will be funded from the funding that is available, and there is then the inability to continue because there is not the resource behind that child progressing, whereas another child whose parents can afford to subsidise their learning will be able to continue. Over time, that leads to inequality in who progresses on a musical instrument, who takes it into a career, and what the balance of the music industry looks like. We risk inequity if we do not take a closer look at the chasm—maybe chasm is too harsh a word, but the big gap between what is funded and what is asked.

Q42 **Chair:** Bridget, you want to come in on that. Surely within all this data that the Arts Council gather, there must be data on free school meals, participation and continuity. Is that something that needs to be given more light?

Bridget Whyte: I want just to answer Chris's point about needing to cost the national plan. How much would it actually cost to deliver the ambitions of the plan? Music Mark has just commissioned the independent think-tank Demos to do just that. We should have answers that we can submit to the Committee by the autumn. We believe that it is going to be an eye-watering amount, but we would agree that at least inflation should come into play here.

The ISM and Music Mark asked the Government to increase the grant. In 2019, we asked them to increase it to £100 million, and that was not looking at inflation but recognising the ambition of the last plan and the need to cover costs. We have increased the number of children and young people over the last 10 years by nearly 500,000—there were 9 million children in the last school census that was quoted. The inflationary increase for the grant in 2012 would be £103.2 million, according to the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bank of England inflation calculator. The first year of music education hubs saw a drop in funding from £82 million to £75 million. It then went down further until 2015 when it came back up again.

Looking at the figures for the Department for Education's contribution, in 2012, it was £75 million, and in 2022-23, it was £76 million, whereas the inflation calculator would have said £103 million. However, parents contributed £31.7 million in 2012 and in 2022-23, they contributed £51.9 million. They paid that much for music education. We do question whether that is part of this conversation about equitable access. Inflation would have had parents paying £43.6 million. Parents are paying above inflation.

A colleague of mine who is a lecturer at a university told me that the tuition for their two children was the fourth highest monthly expenditure for them, following their mortgage, utility bills, and food, at £250 a month. They are not sure they can maintain that cost. Parents are subsidising the music education for children and young people in this country.

Carolyn is right about the challenge of raising the other income. Our colleagues have been so entrepreneurial. They have worked so hard to raise funding from elsewhere, and the Arts Council has supported this significantly. It is a real success story. The Arts Council supports music education more now. However, local authority funding has dropped, and school funding, measured against inflation, is dropping. It is getting harder to raise funds from trusts and foundations. All these things are making it harder and harder for our colleagues to ensure equitable access to a high-quality music education. It is creating challenges with our workforce, too.

Q43 Vicky Ford: I want to speak about the national plan for music education—what you think is good, what you think is bad and what was left out. Before that, however, to make a declaration of interest, I am not a musician. I did not do A-level music, I did not do GCSE, or O-level, music. I do have grade 8 in one subject, and grade 7 in another subject. When I think about my teenage years, music was core to my happiness and wellbeing. It is through playing in ensembles and bands that I learned about teamwork. It taught me to concentrate and it taught me to listen. They are all soft skills that we have not even mentioned.

What is good about the national plan and what concerns do you have? I want then to talk about monitoring the outcomes, especially those softer outcomes.

Bridget Whyte: What is good about the national plan? What is good is that it does focus on schools and schools' responsibility for music education. It talks about progression, not just first access. It recognises that some children and young people may want to go into the profession, and that we should expect to have elite musicians as we have elite sportsmen and women.



There is some real strength to the national plan. It is a little long compared with the national plan in Wales. We now actually have two national plans in the UK, as there is a national plan in Wales, which is very closely linked to the new curriculum in Wales. That is the other thing that is strong about it: it links with previous Government documents, such as the model music curriculum. However, the problem is that it is non-statutory and it is ambitious but without the funding behind it.

Chris Walters: I agree. In all of this, the national plan is not a problem. It is a very good document that describes a coherent vision for music education. The problem is rolling it out, the hub restructuring that we are talking about, the monitoring, the funding behind it, and whether the ambition is serious enough to make it statutory and to make it accountable in schools. We would want it to be, because it is a good document that would benefit so many children and young people if it was consistently implemented.

Teachers are out of scope, and that is a concern for us. We have said, and it has been alluded to, that there are great inconsistencies in how the workforce are managed. A lot is asked of them and some of them are on very precarious contracts, but the national plan did not include them in its scope. In fact, we have not found anywhere where teachers are in scope. I would really like to find a structured and formal way to introduce that issue into the conversation.

Stuart Darke: I think, like my colleagues, that the plan has laudable aims in what it wants to do. As well as it being non-statutory in nature and the concern about funding, it is also part of a wider ecosystem of school accountability and the accountability measures do not necessarily include subjects such as music—so EBacc and Progress 8, those sorts of things. It is part of a wider ecosystem. Those things potentially have to be looked at as well to sit alongside the music education plan.

Q44 **Vicky Ford:** Chris, when the plan was published two years ago, you said that “the proof of its value will be in outcomes for children and young people, and it is vital that these are monitored effectively”. Between you, you have mentioned the need to monitor the number of schools that are involved. You have mentioned wanting to monitor the number of children from more challenged backgrounds who are involved. What else should be monitored? How do we monitor some of those softer impacts that I mentioned, such as the impact on children’s wellbeing, teamwork, and communication skills that they get through music?

Chris Walters: Those are really important questions. The monitoring and evaluation of the hub programme in the last 10 years has tended to be around participation numbers among different groups of children and young people. Where we have struggled, and what has not been part of the data gathering, is with qualitative assessments of the educational outcomes. I would like to move to looking at the monitoring in terms of how good these outcomes are and how well the children are benefiting from them. I think it was said in the previous panel that we are



struggling with that. What counts as a good outcome from this programme has not been defined. What does a good outcome look like? I would like to see some work on that.

Vicky Ford: For example, playing an instrument by myself was okay, but the main benefit to me was when I started playing in ensembles, groups, singing in choirs. We would say that it is important to monitor the numbers of those opportunities to sing in choirs, play in ensembles, and be in a band, but it is also about the quality of that band, choir, and so on.

Chris Walters: Yes, absolutely. We do need to find a way to say, "Is this ensemble delivering a quality experience and"—you could say—"providing a return on the investment that we are putting into this?"

Q45 **Vicky Ford:** Is there anything else you want to say about monitoring?

Bridget Whyte: I believe there is going to be an independent evaluation. I do not know where the DfE has got to in the process of appointing somebody, but I would hope that that would be within scope for them to look at. Academics will have ways of monitoring outcomes rather than outputs.

Q46 **Vicky Ford:** None of you has said that we need should monitor the number of teachers, the number of peripatetic teachers and the number of instruments—whether there are any trombone teachers in Durham.

Bridget Whyte: That work is happening on a local level, in terms of making sure that there are enough trombone teachers. Some quantitative data is being collected. I believe there is work going on behind the scenes with the Arts Council and the Department for Education to look at the data, and questions are being asked to make sure that they are less up for interpretation, and to talk about engagement with schools and what engagement looks like. There is work to be done to look at not just numbers, but the quality.

Vicky Ford: Well, if the end game is one day to win Eurovision, we have a lot of work to do.

Q47 **Ian Mearns:** I will take us back to funding and the nuts and bolts. Chris, the Musicians' Union has expressed concerns about the impact of the changes on teachers' pay and conditions. Could you briefly outline what these concerns are and how they should be resolved?

Chris Walters: A fundamental shift has taken place over a long time, not necessarily connected to this latest hub restructure. It is an issue of flat standstill funding for a long time, which over time does not go as far and drives the people who are running hubs into a position where they are having to make difficult decisions.

When I was learning an instrument in the '90s, we lived in a world where there were career instrumental teachers—peripatetic teachers who were



HOUSE OF COMMONS

employed and had parity with other types of unattached teachers in the local authority and with classroom teachers, in terms of their status and professional standing. They were not paid hourly only for contact time, and they were not on freelance contracts, dubious or otherwise. They were employed, it was their career and careers progressed, and that was a state of affairs that could lead to greater oversight, more consistency and hopefully better outcomes for children and young people.

Ian Mearns: You almost make me feel nostalgic for my time as chair of the education committee in Gateshead.

Chris Walters: The shift from that to where we are now is something that I tend to think has gone under the radar a bit. It has had not had a lot of political oversight, ending up in a situation where visiting instrumental music teachers are treated in a way that is quite different from other teachers who are part of the funded education programme. The union's recommendation would be to have a review.

In Wales, the Government are running a review of teachers' terms and conditions to bring these issues to light. It is not going to be easy to resolve, but we do need to look at the right types of contracts for this kind of work and the right pay scale. The Musicians' Union would say that we recommend a national pay scale and a contract for visiting music teachers, because they all basically doing the same work. It does not make any sense to me really that there is this huge variety of different types of contracts and statuses that have been driven by affordability rather than genuine fit for the work that is being undertaken. That would be my suggestion.

Ian Mearns: Thank you very much. Any other observations on that?

Stuart Darke: I just support what Chris said about the feelings of an awful lot of ISM members and MU members about the precarious nature of their employment as hourly paid music teachers, with them going from one term to the next, hours differing, contracts not giving them employment rights, and them working on a freelance basis rather than—

Q48 **Ian Mearns:** Zero-hours contracts have reared their ugly head, have they?

Chris Walters: Yes, for about a third of the workforce.

Q49 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** Can I add to that? Has there ever been a time when you have had a violin teacher on full-time contract? I have never heard of that before, because they have normally been coming in to do four or five hours a week.

Bridget Whyte: My father was a peripatetic music teacher for most of his career. He was paid on teachers' pay and conditions because he was a qualified teacher and he retired as a teacher in his late 60s having taught clarinet.



Q50 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** How long ago was that, roughly?

Bridget Whyte: That was quite a long time ago, but there are still teachers in the profession who do that and many more in Scotland where the music services, except in one case, are still within local authorities.

While I agree that we need to respect and value our workforce and give them the status that they deserve as part of the teaching profession, the challenge is that many come into the profession without teacher qualifications. While they are given great training and support by music services and other colleagues and they may be great teachers, they may not have the qualification that would allow them to go on to a qualified teacher pay scale. We need to be careful not to create a hierarchy that penalises people who are great teachers but do not have a qualification.

We also need to recognise, particularly with the young people coming into the workforce, that they want a portfolio career. They want to be able to play. They want to be able to do gigs, to do teaching, to do some community music work and whatever it is. They want to create something that they would call a portfolio career. It is challenging for them to be given a freelance contract, if they are going to be teaching on a specific day and a specific school and it is set for them, because that is not the terms of freelance, but we need to recognise that any teacher's terms and conditions must accept that there will still be some diversity in the teaching workforce.

Chair: That is a very interesting point.

Q51 **Ian Mearns:** As an example, my own local authority had a peripatetic music service with employed teachers working directly for the local authority, and it was a good service. Cuts have seen the end of that, I am afraid.

You have all raised concerns about the impact of changes to the teachers' pension scheme on music hub finances, and in March, an email was dispatched from the Minister stating that the Treasury had committed to providing funding for this. Have you received any further information or updates on this? Do you feel that your concerns have been addressed?

Chris Walters: Where we are up to at the moment with this is that the top-up for the teachers' pension scheme employers' contribution runs out in August. There will still be a top-up for those who are inside local authorities—support for employers' contributions, not a top-up. There was a top-up for the those who were outside of local authorities, and that is coming to an end.

At the moment, let's say that there are still ongoing conversations, and we are engaging with officials on this, but we do not have anything tangible to suggest that there is a concrete plan for an extension. That is a pity, because as John on the previous panel said, the consultations to exit from the teachers' pension scheme are happening now. We are really up against it timewise. If there is going to be any hope for a continuation



of that support, we will need to be quick in order to give a pause to those consultations.

Q52 Chair: Do you have any feel for the proportion of those non-local authority hubs that have already dropped out of the teachers' pension scheme?

Chris Walters: I would say that about three or four are already well on the way to finishing their consultations. A similar number have paused. Others have not acted yet and are hoping that something will happen. Is that correct, Bridget?

Bridget Whyte: Yes, and about 1,100 teachers across 16 music service trusts are affected. There is another concern, as well as the music service trusts being affected by this. For some local authorities, the school census is used to calculate how much the local authority will be given to support the 5% increase—not the full, but the specific 5% increase that came into being last month. However, the school census did not require music services within local authorities to include some of their staff, such as sessional staff, or talk about the staff who have other activities outside their core hours. The bill for some local authorities will be much larger than the amount that they will receive based on the school census, because the school census was not expected to be used to calculate the teachers' pension scheme support. No one expected that it would be revalued, and that it would increase. The Department for Education is not supporting schools and they have had to work through the calculations to be able to support others. We are concerned about local authorities just as much as our trusts.

Stuart Darke: I agree with what colleagues have said. The cynic in me says, "Is this a way of getting people to not be part of the teachers' pension scheme—to withdraw from the teachers' pension scheme?" As Chris says, this is ongoing at the moment. Consultations are ongoing and once people are out, I do not envisage them going back in, even if some support was put in there. This is driven by funding. They are not talking about matching the employer contributions that have been made previously to teachers' pensions, even before the 2019 increase—the 16% to 23%. They are talking about defined contribution pension schemes that are contributing 5%, 6% by the employer. There is then no incentive for the employee, given the funding levels, even with support from the DfE, to say, "Actually, we will go back into the teachers' pension scheme". My fear is that those people will lose their access forever. It is not that they will go back in.

Q53 Ian Mearns: Do any of you have any information about the effect on recruitment and retention as a result of this?

Stuart Darke: Not in that way. As Bridget says, it is happening at the moment. I do not know if we will see people leaving the profession because they can do better elsewhere, or even trying to move to local authorities. The proof might be in the pudding.



Ian Mearns: If any data does come to light, would people let us know? I see one or two people nodding in the audience at the back.

Chair: That would be useful. Thank you. We are overrunning again slightly. Apologies to the Minister, who has been waiting. Thank you very much for your evidence you have given us today.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Rt Hon Damian Hinds and Jenny Oldroyd.

Q54 **Chair:** In our final panel for this session are the right hon. Damian Hinds MP, Minister of State for Schools, and Jenny Oldroyd, director for curriculum and qualifications at the Department for Education.

Perhaps I can start by asking you, Minister, to briefly outline the Department's aims and rationale for the reduction in the number of music hubs and how you expect the programme to achieve those aims. We have heard a lot of challenge from the earlier sessions around the basis for that reduction, so perhaps you can give us the case for it.

Damian Hinds: I thought we might have started with our objectives for music, because we need to see everything in the context of what we are trying to do overall, but I am sure we will come on to that. We want to have a network of lead organisations at the right scale and the right scope to be able to most effectively support brilliant music education at schools throughout the country.

Historically, we had a local authority area-type basis, but over time some mergers have happened organically. We judged that this sort of unit scale that we are talking about is appropriate. It is not unique, if you think about what has happened with academy trusts, for example. These things have changed over time. We can think about the way that sporting organisations organise themselves. They try to get a balance between being locally responsive and specific, but also large enough to get the right economies of scale, to be able to leverage partnerships, to be able to look at perhaps other additional funding opportunities, sponsorship opportunities, access, centres of culture in a wider area—all those kinds of things. Jenny may wish to add something.

Jenny Oldroyd: I completely agree with those points. We have heard quite a bit this morning about some of the funding challenges for hubs and some of the administration that hubs engage with. We are conscious that there are economies of scale to doing some of that in larger areas. There is no set overhead for the running of a hub lead organisation, but we think that some of those administrative roles might be easier if they are carried out over a wider area. That actually came through in some of the independent research that was undertaken of hubs that already



HOUSE OF COMMONS

worked with more than one local authority area, before the two-stage process of consultations started on those geographical areas.

There were some questions from one of your members about the difference between hubs in rural areas versus urban areas. Some of the advantages come through more for areas that do not have the cultural capital of an urban centre in their area, and we think that bigger geographical areas perhaps support equity in that sense.

I recognise that benefits will vary by area. We have talked about quite small, centralised areas such as Greater Manchester and much larger areas. In some areas, the advantages will be more to do with shared good practice and CPD, for example. In other areas, it might be that students and young people can get those advantages better where they can travel across an area.

Q55 Chair: We have also heard that some of the lead hub areas are still one local authority, some cover a couple, and others cover much larger areas. What you are saying about—

Damian Hinds: Local authority areas are, of course, wildly different in size—Birmingham, for example, compared with a London borough. People tend to think of London as a huge city, and it is, but it is subdivided into many local authority areas. Hampshire, where I am from, is geographically a couple of times the geographical size of Greater London. These things vary quite a lot.

Q56 Chair: Understood, but to your point that the rural areas might benefit from more agglomeration, some of the smaller areas have remained in rural spaces. We have heard that when the consultations took place, the sector, the hubs themselves, expressed a preference for a larger number. I think 87 was their aim. What was the logic in going for the smaller number of 43? What was the key driver of that decision?

Damian Hinds: I will let Jenny answer that specific question. She is much closer to it, especially the timing of it. My general observation is that you can always argue that a scale that you are talking about is too small or too big. We tried to strike a balance. However, that does not leave it not open to question from somebody who would argue in either direction.

Q57 Chair: You will have heard the last panel, some of the experts in this space, saying that their concern is that some hubs in the new format will absolutely fly, and others are being set up to fail. That is a serious concern being raised by experts. Jenny, how have you tried to mitigate against that?

Jenny Oldroyd: I am happy to talk through that. In January 2023, three models were put out for consultation: a regional model; a model of around 87 hubs, so more hubs and more local nuance in the structure; and a middle-ground model—the example used at that time was maths hubs. There are about 34 maths hubs.



We looked at different models and considered the benefits. While the current hub lead organisations very much preferred keeping the current geographies and that more nuanced approach, some of the organisations that are not involved directly with hubs but work with them preferred regional models, and there were others that could see the benefits across the models.

The success of the hubs programme is not just about meeting the needs of the hubs themselves; it is about meeting the needs of all the organisations that work with hubs to deliver music education and co-curricular activities in those areas. We tried to balance the different views of different types of organisations involved in delivering the offer across each area.

Q58 Andrew Lewer: You have talked about different sizes, and we have heard concerns about large areas being remote from the places that they serve. In addition to talking about how you intend to mitigate those risks, what was the thinking about the comparisons that the Department made between teaching school hubs, multi-academy trusts and local enterprise partnerships? Why are they doing it this way?

Damian Hinds: I think it is more that they are analogous. A question just came up about maths hubs. We organise subject support for all sorts of different subjects, including maths, based on hubs. Music hubs are different because they involve delivery, partner organisation, the loan of musical instruments and a different type of continuing professional development. However, an analogy of those different ways of organising is relevant. That is what I was alluding to in my opening answer. You can operate at different types of scale. What you are trying to do is establish the appropriate scale to support what is a very large network of schools with a very diverse set of needs.

Q59 Andrew Lewer: One analogy that comes to my mind is in local government and housing, where the Department is constantly pressurising housing associations to merge and to be bigger based on some sort of assumption that the economies of scale outweigh the importance of local input and the ability of people to interact with their own housing association. How do you counteract a suspicion that having larger hubs, and smaller numbers of them, is better for Whitehall rather than actually better for the local area, and it is just because it is more convenient for you and the civil servants in the Department?

Damian Hinds: When you are talking about scale, you can always make a case that it should be moved in one direction or another. An important point here is that we are talking about lead organisations, not about delivery partners, and of course the lead organisations will have relationships—partnerships—with many other organisations operating at local and school level.

Q60 Andrew Lewer: You may not know the answer to this question, Minister, but Jenny Oldroyd should. This is not just about the number of hubs but



the way they operate. What level of consultation took place with independent education providers about the partnership work they do quite extensively in the music space?

Jenny Oldroyd: Can I go back to your previous question first and say a little more on that, and then I am happy to come to that point? It is worth reminding ourselves that this process began with independent research that looked at hubs that were operating across more than one area and at what the delivery in those areas was like. The research found that operating over more than one area did not mean that hubs experienced reduced input from delivery partners, but that it freed up management responsibility. We saw more sharing of specialist roles across different areas, so access was more equitable across those areas, there was more sharing of best practice and more resilience in those hubs to staff changes or to other changes, and partners outside the music hubs found those music hubs easier to engage with. That information came from an independent report that was commissioned by Arts Council England before the process of consultation was undertaken.

Q61 **Chair:** Primarily that was taking place in large urban areas—quite different in characteristics and demographics from the average music hub.

Jenny Oldroyd: That is why we undertook a process of consultation. It was a two-stage process of consultation that Arts Council England took forward. The first one set out the kind of guiding principles and the big-picture geography, the geographical choices. A second phase went through and made changes—some of which you have referred to today—listening to the results of the first stage of consultation. That took us into a place where we accepted that in some circumstances it was appropriate to have single local authorities, and in others, geographical changes that would have seen existing hubs being broken up were not appropriate, so existing hubs were kept together in the new model. That process has gone through multiple stages to try to respond to geographical need. What also came through in the consultation was the need to give time for those new partnerships and relationships to embed, and that has also been clear in the discussion today.

Q62 **Andrew Lewer:** What about the independent education sector and your consultations with them? The independent education sector's music partnerships are key to the work they do in the communities.

Jenny Oldroyd: The focus groups and their survey was responded to across the board by schools and by independent music organisations to make sure that we got the breadth. That was reflected in focus groups, too.

Q63 **Andrew Lewer:** It always seems—not just with this decision—that decisions come from the centre, however they are consulted upon, and are announced to local areas, rather than the centre going to a local area and saying, "Are you happy with the way things work?" For example, they may have organically expanded in Greater Manchester to cover the



whole Greater Manchester area because that is what they do, whereas in Northamptonshire or in Shropshire, they just want to stay where they are. If that is what local people, the experts and the people embedded in those communities want, why do you not let them do it their way?

Jenny Oldroyd: Maybe I can track back further. Before the National Music Hub for Education, there was a call for evidence to understand music as it was then and what might be most helpful going forwards.

Q64 **Andrew Lewer:** There has been no full evaluation of the impact of music hubs since they came in in 2011, so why change the structures without an evaluation of how the ones that were set up in 2011 have worked?

Jenny Oldroyd: To some extent, some of the things that I have mentioned have given us the opportunity, not for an independent evaluation, but to feed evidence into this process, and there have been annual reports on the performance of music hubs. As we go forward, we will also be looking at independent evaluation.

Q65 **Gen Kitchen:** I want to come in on the focus group section. Earlier today, we heard, from the focus groups and the consultation process, that most recommended 80-plus music hubs. There are over 118 now and a reduction to 80 would have already been quite significant, but going to 43 or 44 is almost a 60% reduction. Where has that number come from? I have trod on someone else's question, but you were on the topic.

Jenny Oldroyd: I think there were different views among different audiences responding to the consultation. Whereas the existing music hubs preferred an option around the 87 mark, some of the organisations that were perhaps on the margins of those relationships saw the advantage of larger geographical areas. We have tried to balance some of those demands, making sure that we understand the contributions of people who are at different places in the system.

Q66 **Jess Phillips:** Like who?

Jenny Oldroyd: Sorry, I do not have a list in front of me, but I am sure we can supply it afterwards.

Q67 **Jess Phillips:** What sorts of organisations said that?

Jenny Oldroyd: There were charities involved. Those delivering music services locally and schools were involved. There were all sorts of different organisations, and I would be happy to supply a list.

Q68 **Jess Phillips:** Also to the point of economies of scale, I am new to this Committee and maybe everybody knew that there were maths hubs. My son is literally sitting his maths A-level right now. I do not know about the hub. What economies of scale are there? Literally break it down to me.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Damian Hinds: If you are running continuing professional development, —there are many different sorts—and are able to do that over a large number of people, there is a simple economy of scale.

Q69 **Jess Phillips:** So basically if you were training teachers in safeguarding, let's say, you would just be able to do all of Kent and Medway together in one room, rather than doing it twice.

Damian Hinds: Not necessarily. You might be able to offer them more of a choice of dates because you had a bigger scale. We are getting into some quite specific examples, which I am very happy to do.

Q70 **Ian Mearns:** The thing is, Damian, there are economies of scale and there are diseconomies of scale.

Damian Hinds: Also true—which is my point about balance, to be fair.

Q71 **Ian Mearns:** I am aware that, when confronted with a potential geography, the local authorities in the north-east of England came together and formed a consortium, but it is a hundred miles from Darlington to Berwick and you do get diseconomies of scale when trying to organise training on a geographical area such as that.

Damian Hinds: Of course, and again these are the lead organisations that we are talking about. This is not the same as saying that in different parts of that part of the north-east, there will not be provision on the ground. I think that is an important distinction to make.

Q72 **Chair:** Is there not a tension there, though, in relation to the economies of scale you could generate by moving to a regional model? If you go to a lead partner model and you require them to work with all the other partners on the ground, they cannot necessarily generate those economies of scale, and so when it comes to flat funding, it is very difficult for them to deliver a high-quality service over the larger area that they are taking on, because they have to work with the established partners and they have to carry all the overheads of those established partners. That comes back to the point about whether some of these structures are being set up to fail, in that we are asking them to do more with less, but we are also asking them to do it in a way that carries the cost of all the existing partnerships on the ground.

Damian Hinds: Again, the distinction is to be made between the lead organisations and the partners who deliver—that is not to say that there will be no change in who the partners are who do the delivery. These are going to be the lead organisations, and they must of course work out in their area how they are going to organise things from September. Bear in mind we have only just had the full announcement on who the organisations will be. There will of course be a certain amount of formation from this point.

I do not think we are going to have a debate about whether the concept of economies of scale exists. Mr Mearns makes a very relevant point:



there are also diseconomies of scale. With something like music hubs, I totally recognise that of course you are trying to balance those—economies of scale are not the only reason, by the way, and I can come back to some of the others. It is not the only one, but it is one of them. It is about trying to balance that against the local responsiveness in what is a people business. Although you may have different delivery partners doing it on the ground, of course it is very important that relationships are built and that this lead organisation understands the needs of the whole of its area and the diversity of schools within it.

Q73 Chair: On that point, though, about the measurement of quality of outcomes, you talked about overall aspirations for the national music plan, and we have heard a lot of support for the aspirations of the plan, but how do we ensure that there are measures of quality in terms of how this is now evaluated? We also heard quite a lot of criticism of previously being focused purely on participation versus quality and progression, and a lack of key metrics and benchmarks in terms of where we are now. How do you propose to address that?

Damian Hinds: We are looking at developing performance—I am not going to say KPIs, because this does not lend itself perfectly to that sort of concept, but we are looking at developing appropriate measures like the amount of teaching time that there is for music, in the early years, how many children at that stage are reaching an early learning goal for musical expression, and obviously the number of children who enter qualifications of one sort or another. A lot of it is ultimately qualitative, and Vicky Ford, when she was here, talked about what are sometimes called soft skills. I think there is nothing soft about soft skills, but she mentioned all the benefits that can come from taking part in making music, either individually or collectively in ensemble. Those benefits, which I think are enormous, are very difficult to measure. Some of the proxy measures we use are children's keenness to be involved, and the amount of time that schools judge is right to give to music education and music participation. Of course, we are going to have an independent evaluation of hubs specifically over three years.

Q74 Jess Phillips: I am still not entirely clear, in terms of economies of scale, that reducing it to 43 is about anything more than that we could have better training meetings, but we will come back to that no doubt. The music hub investment programme held several stages of the consultation. You have talked about how it had to be balanced, and you have offered to provide a list of people who said the alternative—literally all the evidence we have heard.

Jenny Oldroyd: I covered a list of the types of organisations that responded to the consultation.

Q75 Jess Phillips: Okay. What feedback did you receive from these consultations, and what changes were put in place following that feedback?



Jenny Oldroyd: I think I have covered some of this already. The first consultation covered the models at a high level. That consultation took us towards a model essentially in the middle ground. The consultation focused, it is worth saying, on the geographies, but also on the process of change, and we have talked a bit today about it taking time to embed partnerships and to build those local relationships. The consultation also reflected on the process and made sure that time is given for those partnerships to develop once they are in place.

The second consultation reflected some of the nuances of geography and made some of the changes that I have identified, around making sure that we were not sticking so hard and there was no hard and fast rule on there being multiple local authorities in each hub, and allowed for some single local authority hubs. It also took us down the road of making sure that we did not break up existing music hubs, but they were moved into the wider geographies without being broken up themselves.

Q76 **Jess Phillips:** What feedback have you had since 7 May?

Jenny Oldroyd: We are two weeks into that period. It is a settling time. There has not been a further consultation since, but Arts Council England are leading those conversations with the hubs on the next stage of the journey of settling funding agreements.

Q77 **Gen Kitchen:** You said the first consultation said that they would need time. We have heard from Greater Manchester that it was maybe a 10-year process or longer. Music hubs found out, non-publicly, whether they were the lead organisation in April. That is five months to create a system that should be up and running for September. We have heard evidence this morning that some lead organisations are not creating that partnership environment, so people are worried about a cliff edge in certain areas. When you said that you had feedback around time, did you not take that feedback into consideration? What was the rationale behind giving people five months?

Jenny Oldroyd: It will take time for those partnerships to reach maturity. That does not mean that they need 10 years to get started and to start working with those models.

Q78 **Jess Phillips:** Are they going to be ready by September?

Jenny Oldroyd: We have tried to leave time for those models to draw data down and take that into the main hub lead organisations for the future to start to build those partnerships, so that they are ready to start operating from September. I do not at all pretend that you can squeeze that 10-year journey of maturity into that five-month period. The five months is about being operationally ready to start.

Q79 **Jess Phillips:** What support are you offering the ones that are new that have to start up in September?



Jenny Oldroyd: Arts Council England are working directly with all those organisations. They are working with them to help them develop local plans for music education. We have talked quite a bit today about the need to make sure those partnerships reflect local areas. They will be working with the hub lead organisations to develop those plans so that they are ready to start in September.

Q80 **Jess Phillips:** Excuse my forwardness in saying that almost everybody said that nobody listened to them in the consultation so far. Who has not filled in a Government consultation when they already knew what the answer was before the consultation had started? There but for the grace of God go I. Why is there a disconnect between you saying that you did loads of listening to everybody in the consultation and literally everybody saying nobody listened to them?

Jenny Oldroyd: You have heard from quite a small number of the hub lead organisations today. I am not sure that they necessarily reflect the full views across the piece. Of course some of the benefits were seen by organisations that were less engaged with the hubs. The consultation responses are a matter of record and the Committee can see them.

Q81 **Chair:** In terms of the partnership working, we have heard concerns about one local partner with a strong performance record who had not been chosen as a lead partner, and the only contact they then had with the lead partner was a request for data. Surely that is not what you want to see. What can be done about that to ensure that there is a proper partnership discussion going on in areas such as Kent and Medway?

Jenny Oldroyd: We also heard a really good example where that partnership was brokered before the application process, so they went in as equal partners to that process. That example is not isolated. There have been some good examples of that partnership working. We are two weeks beyond the point at which these announcements were made. Hub lead organisations are getting information from Arts Council England to help and support them in the process of going out and building those partnerships. I would not at all expect us to be in a place of formed partnerships and clarity for the future two weeks into this five-month process.

Q82 **Chair:** Is there any extra support that either the Department or the Arts Council should give to delivery organisations on the ground who have the capacity to deliver here and need to be plugged in with the new lead partners?

Jenny Oldroyd: That support will come through Arts Council England officers who will engage with the hub lead partners to plan for the future.

Q83 **Mohammad Yasin:** Minister, there have been many concerns about the level of funding available for music hubs. Are you satisfied with the funding? Do you think that it is sufficient for the programme to meet its aims?



Damian Hinds: You are quite right that we want to and must be ambitious for what we do in music and the arts more broadly. You can always make a good and compelling argument for spending more money on any of these things. Of course, music is a curriculum subject and primarily it is about school resources. In addition to that, we do spend £79 million on hubs and there are various other funding items as well. It is a lot of money. We want it to be used as effectively as possible to support schools.

We know that participation in things such as whole class ensemble teaching is at an encouraging level. There is a capital funding pot coming of some £25 million to increase the supply of musical instruments. There are already a lot of musical instruments available through the hubs for children to access. Yes, I think all the activity that the hubs support is good and it is healthy, and I want to grow it further. I want as many children as possible being involved in making music themselves or in groups.

Q84 **Mohammad Yasin:** The Music Mark, a membership organisation for music education, says—these are their words, not mine—that the funding to deliver the national plan for music education is “stretched to breaking point”. There has been no inflationary increase of the total music hubs grant since 2018-19. How do you defend that?

Damian Hinds: Whenever we talk about anything to do with educational funding, I fully recognise that there are challenges. There are challenges in managing budgets to do all the things that we want to do in school, including with music. We do also have record levels of school funding, including in per-pupil real terms. We have funding for schools of £60 billion for next year. The money that comes through the music hubs is in addition to schools’ own budgets. Schools also contribute, by the way, to hubs, and there are also parental contributions that add to that £79 million figure. But yes, I totally understand why, first, there are challenges managing with the resourcing that organisations have, and also that of course they—and we all—always want to be able to do more.

Q85 **Mohammad Yasin:** Do you think that the national plan for music education is at breaking point?

Damian Hinds: No, I do not. I think the national plan for music education is an ambitious, forward-looking document that we have to deliver on. With the aspects that we have in place and the excitement there is around making music in schools, I think we have every reason to believe that we can.

Q86 **Mohammad Yasin:** We all know that the funding has not increased with the inflation rate. Are there any plans in the future to increase funding in line with inflation and pupil numbers?

Damian Hinds: You will know that we do funding for everything in this country, regardless of who is in Government, on the basis of periodic spending review period budgets, and there will be a new spending review



before too long. That will determine what is in the spending plans of HM Government for the period from 2025 onwards.

There is already a considerable amount of subject support that goes into music education. It is a unique subject in that sense—in the degree of that—and I think it is absolutely right that it should be. It is indeed a unique subject and there will always be a strong case to be made for supporting music education and music participation, and indeed for individuals who can progress into professional musicianship.

Q87 Mohammad Yasin: The question was: will the funding increase with the inflation rate in the future?

Damian Hinds: Yes, I thought I did sort of address that by saying—in a slightly roundabout way, but—

Q88 Mohammad Yasin: Can you be clear, please?

Damian Hinds: Mohammad, to be super-clear, there will be a Budget, a spending review, and the Department for Education will make its bids. We always make strong, ambitious bids for funding for all aspects of education. Other Departments make their bids as well. Ultimately, we get a spending review settlement set out. What I was trying to say, notwithstanding all that, is that there is clearly a very good case to be made for investment in this part of what we do.

Chair: Just on that, three things strike me as key priorities for the Department. One is attendance, and we know that engagement in music and other activities can make a big difference in children's attendance. The Prime Minister has set a big bar by mathematical performance, and there is a strong correlation between musical engagement and mathematical performance. In other areas, we have increased, over the last decade, funding for sparsity, for instance. We have heard that one of the big concerns of music hubs serving sparser rural areas is that there is no differential in the funding on that basis. In fact, when it comes to sparsity and increasing pupil numbers, they therefore face a challenge. Surely there is a logic, therefore, for the Department to be considering bids to the Treasury when it comes to this at the next spending review.

I will leave that there, Minister. I know you cannot pre-empt those things. Mohammad, do you want to come back on the capital?

Q89 Mohammad Yasin: Yes. We have heard criticism of the capital grant funds for musical instruments, and in particular, that the money cannot be used for repairs. Why is that and do you plan to change it in the future?

Damian Hinds: Look, it is capital money. It is investment in musical instruments. There is some give in that and it can include some musical equipment. We are very keen that we have adaptive musical instruments available for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Although music technology, of course, has an important place in music and that is why some related equipment is right, it should not be going



into general technology. It is a fund to increase the stock of musical instruments.

Q90 Chair: Jenny, can I come back on the detail of that? We have heard a lot of concern in terms of the practicalities, in that one of the most cost-effective ways in which music hubs can protect or increase their stock is by repairing existing instruments, or indeed adapting them for meeting disabilities, and yet, the rules around the capital requirements seem to make them rely on their revenue funding for those activities. Why is that?

Jenny Oldroyd: The rules of capital funding are that the purchase has to last at least a year—it has to have at least that lifetime—and there is a minimum threshold of spend. That is not unique to music; that is just the difference between capital and revenue funding.

We have talked a lot about the repair and maintenance of instruments. We are not against that. That absolutely can be done through revenue funding, as it is done now through revenue funding, but we are not allowed to try to count revenue funding as capital in this grant. This is an additional injection into our musical instrument stock, over and above the support that we give through revenue funding. We have seen some great examples of repair happening. The team have been out to different local authorities to see some of the work that is done there. We are absolutely not against it. Please keep repairing those musical instruments.

Q91 Ian Mearns: Could I ask, therefore, if a music hub had some musical instruments that they needed to have repaired, could they give them to a music repair outlet and then buy them back at the repair cost?

Jenny Oldroyd: I am not going to answer that question—if you will allow me to pass. I am sure they would talk to their accountant about the rules at that point.

Q92 Chair: We have also heard some quite serious concerns, though, that this may unfortunately incentivise more expensive providers at the expense of less expensive providers or indeed buying instruments second-hand, which might be perfectly workable. Are those things that you can look into in terms of the working of the scheme?

Jenny Oldroyd: We will be establishing a supplier framework to make sure that we have high quality and longevity in the musical instruments that are available and to make sure that they offer value for money, with the buying power across the framework. There will, of course, be exceptions allowable to that framework where the circumstances mean that the right instruments or equipment are not available through that framework. However, the rules of capital and revenue are fairly well established.

Chair: Gen?

Gen Kitchen: No, it is fine. It has been answered.



Chair: In that case, I want to touch on the concerns that we have heard relating to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. There are multiple levels of concern. We have heard that this is not a new problem; it has happened over a long period of time. More teachers in the music hubs universe have moved out of the teachers' pension scheme because of cost pressures.

In my experience, having looked at TPS issues from within the Department, there is always a frustration that it ends up costing the Department more to fund the TPS in the public sector if other organisations are driven out of it. So surely the Department's main incentive should be to keep as many people in the TPS as possible, and that that ought to be there.

I understand that there has been a letter to say that you will provide some funding to keep people in. We have heard concerns that that may not go far enough. Particularly for some of the local authority-run schemes, it does not necessarily meet all their costs. However, for those who have already left, where does that leave them? Do they miss out? We have heard that the consultation processes are already well under way. How do we make sure that there is a fairer and level playing field that means that teachers who are supported by the national plan for music education and music hubs have a decent chance of being part of the teachers' pension scheme?

Damian Hinds: You are quite right, Chair, that we have put in place protected funding differentially for local authorities and non-local authority provision, based on the fact that there is a legal requirement that teachers employed by a local authority are in the TPS. The funding protection is up until the end of the financial year. As we were just talking about, what happens after the end of the financial year is a matter for future spending reviews. For the non-local authority provision, we have provided extra funding until this August, the start of the new academic year.

Of course, we need to understand fully what the financial pressures are, and we are going to be doing some work to understand that more fully. One should not infer from that that we will necessarily do something different, but it is very important that we understand, as I say, what that financial situation is. The non-LA hubs are, of course, not in the same position of having that legal requirement to be part of the TPS.

Q93 **Chair:** Therefore, the expectation would be that if a non-LA hub is the lead hub in an area, after August, teachers supported by that hub—even if some of them might have been local authority teachers before—might be taken out of the TPS.

Damian Hinds: I do not think we should infer anything like that directly. The TPS is an expensive pension scheme. It is one of the best pension schemes in Europe, from the point of view of the individual, because it has a high employer contribution. You mentioned the point that it costs HMG more if there are fewer people. To some degree that is true, but



over time the dominant cost in the TPS is the actuarially calculated liability. As people live longer—thank God for it; it is a wonderful thing—it means that when you have what is already a generous defined benefit scheme, it becomes considerably more expensive, but also a better benefit to the individuals concerned.

Q94 Chair: When you have a challenge with recruitment and retention, particularly in some of those areas, surely that is a benefit that you want music hubs to have at their disposal to be able to attract the best teachers.

Damian Hinds: Overall, in the education world, the TPS is an important benefit for teachers. It is very important that we are able to communicate fully its value. I know that we are wandering slightly off-topic but if a new graduate coming into teaching, as well as looking at the starting salary for being a teacher versus some other job, looks at the imputed value of their pension, it adds a considerable sum on top. That also applies to those who benefit from the TPS as part of a music hub.

It is quite unusual these days to be in a defined benefit scheme of the type of the TPS, and obviously quite a lot of people involved in education in the wider sense are not necessarily in the TPS. We should not infer that people will inevitably leave, or that there will be consultations about coming out of the TPS.

Chair: Those consultations are ongoing with a number of others.

Damian Hinds: There will be some, yes—I recognise that. We are going to do some work to understand what the financial pressures are and what the situation is.

Q95 Gen Kitchen: In preparation for this hearing, I spoke to my local hub, which has successfully had an Adjournment debate around the teachers' pension scheme—particularly about the inequality as a charity. They have some people who were on it. They are now looking at how they cut staff to either take it on or take it off, and how they are going to fund it. It is clearly going to reduce the quality of teachers, which reduces the quality of output. What is your answer to that?

Andrew Lewer: Could I just add to Gen's excellent point? This model was promoted by the Department. It was not promoted on the basis of hubs taking it on and saying, "Yes, we will do this because that means we will not be able to treat our people in the same way as people are treated in other models". You cannot encourage people to be autonomous, creative and independent and then say to them, "But the funding will not follow it so we want you to take this path", but then the people who take it will not be in the teachers' pension scheme and those who stay stuck in the previous model will. So why would anyone want to do it?

Damian Hinds: No, Andrew, we are not saying that. The funding for the hubs is a block grant type of system. It is true that since then the reassessing, the recalibration—whatever the correct word is—of the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

employer contribution rate on the TPS has changed. We are going to make sure we look at that, analyse it fully and fully understand it. It is also true that the type of benefit that you get through one particular type of pension scheme, people in other occupations do not get or they get it through salary. There are all sorts of different permutations. We want to understand what the pressures are.

Q96 **Chair:** You want to understand what the pressures are. Obviously, it would have been good to understand what the pressures are before you went through this process of reforming the hubs.

Damian Hinds: Robin, they did happen at the same time—the TPS revaluation was happening in parallel to this process.

Q97 **Chair:** You have a monitoring board for the national plan for music education. Have you had reports back from it yet, and are you satisfied that the plan is on track to meet its targets?

Damian Hinds: We have had reports. I think they have met four times. They are a very good and very committed monitoring board, who also hold our feet to the fire quite rightly. We are cautiously optimistic about progress against the plan, but there is always more that we need to do. We know that we want an hour of quality music a week in key stages 1 to 3. We are at about that level on average in key stage 3, so in lower secondary school, but we need to do more in primary schools.

We have good numbers of children doing whole-class ensemble teaching and other types of tuition. As we said at the start, we will always have ambition to go further.

Q98 **Chair:** What is that ambition? What metrics can you set out for us in terms of the quantity and the quality measures that you will use to judge the success of the national plan?

Damian Hinds: The single biggest one is the hour a week. From a headteacher's point of view, there are always difficult decisions to be made about the marginal allocation of time in the curriculum. However, if we can get that hour delivered consistently, that would be the single biggest thing, but there are many other things as well about participation. We want healthy numbers of children doing qualifications at the end of secondary school. At the other end of the scale, we want to make sure that music is widely embedded in early years education to develop that really early love of music. We want to make sure that children, whatever their background, can have access to learning an instrument, singing in a choir, playing in an ensemble. I think Vicky Ford was joking about the Eurovision song contest, but there is a sense of different types of elite progress and measuring them.

Of course, in this country we have one of the leading music businesses in the world, and we want to keep supporting that, as well as supporting children's cultural enrichment and education.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q99 Chair: This Committee has always taken a strong interest in the challenge of closing the attainment gap, removing the barriers of disadvantage. You will have heard some of the concerns about children who may have a limited opportunity to experience an instrument and participate in an ensemble, but then do not have the opportunity to see it through, to progress. Isn't measuring progression—particularly for those cohorts, particularly for pupil-premium children—an important part of what the Department needs to be doing?

I am aware that the Arts Council sits on huge amounts of data in this space. How much attention is the Department paying to that data in terms of what the music hubs are achieving already and what more they can achieve?

Damian Hinds: There is the data and then there is the actuality. What we actually care about is: is it happening? The data is a way of tracking that. We want to make sure that pupils of all backgrounds can access all the things that you mentioned. The pupil premium can be a way of supporting that ambition, but so can the loan scheme. Children in care, of course—looked-after children—have entitlement to free music tuition.

We are about to announce the details of our new progression fund. That is for a relatively small number of disadvantaged children, but I think it is a really important project. We also look at the backgrounds of the children who come on to the music and dance scheme, which is an intensive, high-end programme. Yes, of course we will want to look at overall data on participation.

Jenny Oldroyd: Arts Council England has published annual reports on the hubs' performance. They undertake regular surveys, and some of the results of the surveys will be published later this year. So there will be more data coming out on some of those goals, particularly on teaching time, later this year. That is in addition to the work that will happen through the monitoring board to develop an impact framework, which, as the Minister explained, uses both qualitative and quantitative data. It will look at the impact of demographics as well as geography, and that is in addition to the independent evaluation. There are three strands to understanding the performance of the hubs and the progress on the plan.

Q100 Chair: If a hub in one area falls badly behind on those metrics, what can the Department or Arts Council England do about it?

Jenny Oldroyd: Arts Council England will lead the management relationship with the hub lead organisations, and you would expect them to have conversations about performance as those indicators show how hubs are doing.

Chair: Thank you; it has been a useful session. We will be writing, I think, to the Department on a number of follow-up points, but we are grateful for your time today, Minister. Thank you to everyone who has given evidence.