

## Summary of written and verbal responses

On 24 September 2010, in response to the Secretary of State for Education's commission to carry out a review of music education, Darren Henley issued a public call for evidence. He invited people and organisations with an interest in music education to respond to the following questions:

- What is it that works best about the way music education is currently delivered?
- What is it that could / should be working better in the way that music education is currently delivered?
- What would be the ideal way to ensure that every child learns a musical instrument and learns to sing?
- If we had a blank sheet of paper, what would be your view of the ideal funding and delivery structure for music education?
- Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

At the closing date of 1 November 2010, 900 individuals or organisations had submitted written evidence. In addition, 72 people representing 55 organisations provided verbal evidence at a series of meetings.

Of the written responses

23.5% came from schools and teachers

17.6% came from music services

11.6% came from organisations / individuals involved in music education

2.4% came from the music industry

16.8% came from parents and carers

27.9% came from others with an interest in music education

A full list of respondents to the written consultation is contained in Annex 7.

The open nature of the questions meant that nothing that was said had been prompted by the wording of the questions – the comments reflected in this analysis are unsolicited and therefore what occurred most readily to respondents.

Again, the open nature of the questions, and the resulting wide variety of comments, make collation and reporting of responses an inexact science. The following, therefore, provides a broad commentary on the kinds of issues and comments that were made both in writing and verbally rather than a precise and quantifiable analysis of tick-box type responses.

Not surprisingly, those who responded share a belief in the importance of music and are passionate about it. Many comments are the result of people's personal

experiences and local knowledge. Many spoke about *what* people want to see happen, but not many about *how* it can be made to happen effectively everywhere.

### **Positive comments on the current system**

At its best our music education is world class.

Music Services received overwhelming (but not universal) support.

We have a high quality and highly committed workforce.

Funding for music education is ring-fenced.

There is an entitlement for all through the national curriculum.

Sing Up (the National Singing Programme) and Wider Opportunities (whole class instrumental tuition) have had a big impact in schools.

There are opportunities to learn an instrument with provision for the most interested, gifted and talented with progression routes in and out of school right through to the Music and Dance Scheme and the National Youth Music Organisations with graded examinations to mark progress.

Partnership working is a strength, providing a wide range of diverse opportunities including involvement of professional musicians – a mixed economy that allows for young people also to have a say and for them to include their own music making choices.

### **Negative comments on the current system**

Provision is too patchy, and there is a particular problem with unequal funding and insufficient funding.

Resources from other sources are not levered in and front line delivery is not seen as having sufficient priority for funds.

There are too many initiatives, with delivery not being streamlined enough and strategic priorities not being sufficiently clear. Equally, there are too many 'one off' projects, indicating that high quality, sustainable experiences are what is needed.

The National Curriculum is not being delivered and Primary class teachers do not have appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding to deliver it well.

The quality and quantity of Initial Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development is insufficient.

The quality of individual instrumental teachers varies.

Pay and conditions do not allow for Quality Assurance or Continuing Professional Development.

KS3 is a problem, especially 'levelling' (catering for the variety of experiences and standards reached by students before they enter KS3). There is a lack of opportunities for progression and transition is not handled well.

Partnership working is not strong.

### **What needs to change**

There is much good work going on already but it needs to be more strategic, more focussed and with greater clarity regarding what is required with overview planning nationally and locally.

To enable young people to benefit from music education, learning an instrument and singing, the programme needs to start young; be part of the core curriculum; include Wider Opportunities and Sing Up, (preferably combined into one programme); targeted at those with particular needs; and with progression routes for those who show particular interest and/or ability.

The links between the various aspects of the programmes need to be clear, with a diverse range of opportunities made available through a network of local broker arrangements.

Some respondents questioned whether every child *should* learn a musical instrument. There is agreement that all children should have the *opportunity* to learn an instrument and many mentions of keeping this affordable. Wider Opportunities is referred to positively by many – particularly teachers and heads – but this may only be where it is felt to be working well.

There should be good quality general music learning, followed by taster experiences and then the opportunity to learn an instrument with Sing Up/Wider Opportunities being combined into a single programme which is part of a core entitlement for all.

There are strongly held views, expressed by a very small minority, that 1:1 tuition is best.

There is a strong call for specialist teaching in the primary school.

The head teacher, school leadership team or senior management team are crucial to the success or failure of music education.