

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Ariannu Addysg Cerddoriaeth a Munediad ati / Funding for and Access to Music Education
CWLC(5) FAME17
Ymateb gan Gwasanaeth Cerdd Rhondda Cynon Taf – Grŵp Cyngori Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol / Evidence from Rhondda Cynon Taf Music Service – Advisory Group
Additional Information

Rind fenced funding

The suggestion to make music services statutory for local authorities is a good idea. The problem for schools is affordability. Many schools in RCT now pass some or all of the cost of buying in the service onto parents. Obviously this makes it unaffordable to many families.

In the schools where they pass on the whole cost, head teachers often opt to get in a private company to provide the lessons as the school no longer has to handle the money or do the administration. Whilst it is good that the pupils are still getting the opportunity to learn, we see very few of these pupils being encouraged to join local ensembles or being fed through to the national ensembles.

Database of Musical Instruments

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, we have already implemented a detailed database of our instruments. We hire these out for a small yearly fee and our system helps us to administrate this. The software package is part of and works in partnership with a county wide system, Capita. This has been implemented at a considerable cost to the Music Service and so it would seem illogical to move to a different system that does not fulfil our needs. Our software can access individual pupils home address details etc for sending renewal invoices – when a school clerk updates a pupils address when they move home – it automatically updates our system. RCT did buy the same system as Gwent a number of years ago and found it to very admin heavy and the company offers less support than our current one.

RCT Music Service has been allocated storage space and have been given the time and support to log all of our instruments. The problem many services would face is 1. Where do they store their instruments and 2. It takes time to process and tag instruments – staff on the ground don't have this time.

As it stands, Music Services are happy to share instruments when required. To have a national database would involve the cost of buying and implementing a system that all services can agree on – but some already run their own successfully. Space would be needed in each county.

From an RCT perspective, instrument availability is not our biggest hurdle to providing instrumental lessons. A lack of funding and the low priority some schools place on music is what is leading to the decline in children having access to lessons. The time, effort and money to implement a nationwide instrument database would be better spent at the chalk face – providing staff to schools.

Support for Co operatives

To work in partnership would have many positives – share expertise, more flexibility timetabling staff, ease of covering staff sickness, combining ensembles for new and exciting opportunities etc. However – almost every music service has different pay and conditions for its staff. Asking tutors to do the same job when the person next to them is being paid on a different (higher) rate of pay could lead to resentment and poor levels of morale. Music Services also charge differently in each authority, the difference can be as much as £25 an hour. I think music services should be encouraged to work together but if the future is to ‘combine’ music services. The terms and conditions of staff, charges to school etc in those areas would need to be comparable or standardised.