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Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Education  
Department for Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

8<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Music Education Hubs and Cultural Recovery**

We write to you today as a group of Music Services and Music Education Hub lead partners, charged with delivering the promises of the Government's National Plan for Music Education, to raise concerns regarding the on-going impact on our operations and finances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. We are delighted that the Cultural Recovery Fund was established to 'help maintain England's cultural ecology by supporting culturally significant organisations' and were pleased that Music Education Hubs were invited to make applications to this fund. Some of our colleagues have taken advantage of that offer. We are writing, however, as the second round for application closes, to explain that whilst we are not applying to the fund at this time, we have concerns about the future viability of our organisations.

Music Education Hubs have led the way with digital innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic, quickly moving existing programmes online and creating new opportunities. This has enabled us to continue supporting thousands of young musicians during lockdown.

However, the pandemic has had a significant impact on our operation, as the blanket ban on face-to-face delivery by Music Education Hubs from March effectively forced us to cease trading. Whilst online provision may have generated some revenue, it has been a fraction of the usual traded income, which constitutes the majority of our annual budget, having a devastating impact on our organisations' finances.

Despite some Hubs utilising the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to cover staffing costs usually covered by traded income, most Hubs are predicting significant losses at the end of the 2020-2021 financial year.

We have not applied for further support from the Cultural Recovery Fund, at this time, because we do not identify ourselves as being "at imminent risk of failure". However, the significant challenges that we will face in this new academic year could mean that we will find ourselves "at risk" in the near future if:

- the costs of development of alternative delivery models continue to mount,
- schools will not allow us on site to restart activity, despite Government guidance,
- out of school programmes continue to be severely limited by group size,
- there are ongoing costs for PPE and mitigation measures,
- and, most significantly, if there are further lockdowns locally or nationally, which would further prevent traded activity from taking place.

With the end of the Job Retention Scheme, Local Authority COVID grants and other additional areas of support, our future is based on the ability to resume traded activity. If this is not possible, we will then find ourselves in danger of financial failure. This is compounded by the fact that the National Music Grant for Hubs has not been confirmed by DfE post-March 2021.

We are raising an early warning flag to the Department for Education that Music Education Hubs may need additional financial support within this academic year, to ensure that the expertise of our workforce, our organisational infrastructure and a decade's worth of Government investment in music education is protected. We are asking that music education organisations, who find themselves in our position can be assured of future support, if needed, similar to that currently being offered through the Cultural Recovery Fund.

Thank you for your time, we look forward to working with you through these challenging times to support pupils and the education workforce.

Yours sincerely,

**Charly Richardson**

Chief Executive Officer

**Lewisham Music**

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CC: **Nick Gibb, MP**

**Department for Education**

**Arts Council England**

**Music Mark**

### **Supporting signatories**

**Dame Joan Ruddock**

Chair of Lewisham Music Board of Trustees

**Peter Smalley**

Chief Executive

Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Trust

Lead partner for Northamptonshire Music Education Hub  
and Rutland Music

**Alison Bell**

Hub Lead

Norfolk Music Hub

**Laura Worsfold**

Chief Executive Officer

Severn Arts

**Sue Wakley**

Hub Manager

Milton Keynes Music Hub

**Dan White**

Chief Executive  
Wandsworth Music

**Stuart Whatmore**

Head  
Tri-borough Music Hub

**Ian Bangay**

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**Elisabeth Wigley**

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