

# Sounding Board

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the journal of community music



**MUSIC EDUCATION IN WALES**  
**Not much good news in a recent review**

**EMPOWERING OLDER PEOPLE**  
**How to work in a non-patronising way**



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# JOIN! Sound Sense

## Supporting community musicians

Sound Sense supports individuals and organisations who help people make music in their communities – by leading music workshops and teaching – through a range of actions and services.

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### Current funders



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### Professional development and networking

At professional development events run or supported by Sound Sense – held across the UK – people can develop their skills and increase their knowledge. They get advice, debate practice and share experiences. And they network.

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### Information, advice and contacts

Sound Sense supports those running music projects for all ages and communities. Our website provides information about sources of funding for projects, advice on how to contact skilled community musicians, and gives guidance on issues such as child protection. And much more.

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### A partner in



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### Raising awareness

Community music work can help address many of the big issues facing society. Sound Sense plays a key role in reporting on projects that deal with major issues. Our research reports, information packs and journals, and advocacy activities enable those working in community development, regeneration, health, and education to see the benefits of community music in their field of work. Meetings with government ministers and civil servants ensure we keep community music on the agenda of national politics.

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### Membership

Sound Sense members get even more benefits, including

- *Free public liability insurance* We've got members covered!
- *Free advertising of community musicians' services* To thousands of people every month
- *Exclusive information on jobs and funding* Members can get ahead of the competition
- *Free journals* Including Sounding Board for the latest debates
- *Individual information and advice* Supporting community musicians
- *Discounts on professional development events* Saving money
- *Access to criminal records checks* Helping community musicians stay safe
- *National recognition* A respected voice for community music work.

*For details of how to get the benefits of Sound Sense membership*

*E: [membership@soundsense.org](mailto:membership@soundsense.org) or W: [www.soundsense.org](http://www.soundsense.org)*

# A land with less music

A review of music education in Wales was published last December. But can it make up for years of stagnation? **ANITA HOLFORD** describes a desperate situation

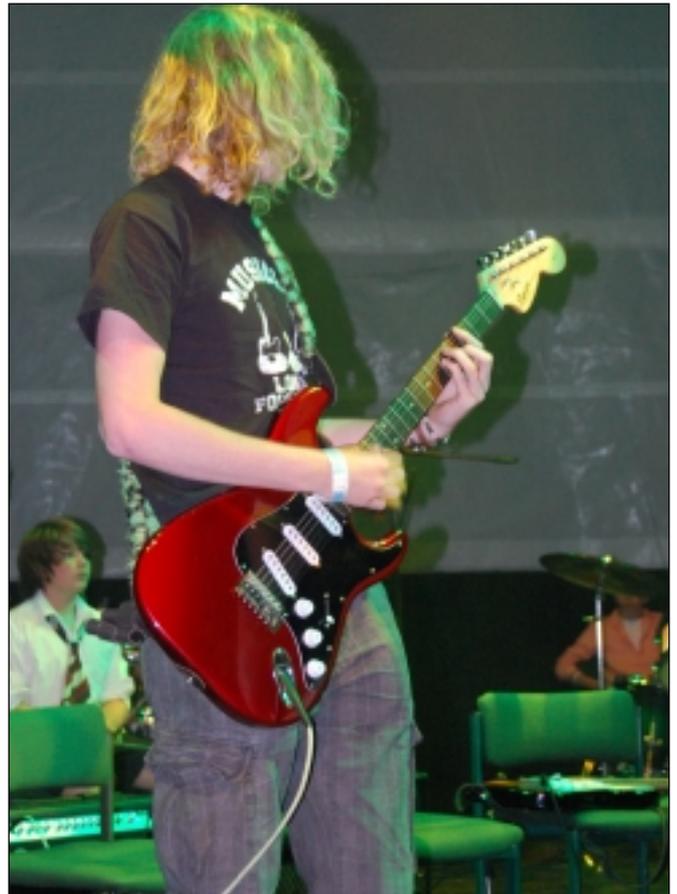
If you're at primary school in Wales at the moment, your likelihood of being able to participate in music will depend on where you live and how much money your parents have. In the worst-case scenario, you'll only occasionally make music in class – your teacher won't be very confident, so will tend to avoid it. And there's no chance for you to try out different instruments because there aren't any, or they're in a cupboard waiting for a time when there's money to repair them.

If your parents can afford it, or think it's a priority, then you may get the chance to learn an instrument through a music service – though it'll cost as much as £80 a term – or through a private tutor. If you want to try a range of instruments before you decide, forget it: there's no Wider Opportunities type-scheme as in England, despite some misreporting that there is.

You may be lucky enough to be in a part of Wales where there is high quality, rich, and varied provision for free or at reasonable rates – thanks to enlightened local authorities, or music projects funded by grants. But otherwise it's the proverbial postcode lottery of patchy provision. It makes a dismal story of certain local authorities snaffling away money for children's music making in order to balance the books. And if the music education world in England is "fragmented and uncoordinated" as Henley reported (see *Sounding Board* 2010 issue 4) it's even worse in Wales.

**The situation has been deteriorating** for more than five years now, ever since the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) Music Development Fund (MDF) was slashed and ring-fencing removed. The fund was set up in 1999 to reverse a previous decline in music services during the 1990s (see box) and it clearly worked. An evaluation by Estyn, the education inspection body, reported more pupils taking part in music and taking music GCSE, a wider range of activities being offered, and impacts being felt beyond school. But the report also highlighted the problems music services now faced: nearly all local authorities had made cuts in their music service provision, and in some cases, specialist tuition had stopped altogether.

In the same month the report came out, Helena Braithwaite



Music for some; How might musicians such as this Community Music Wales participant fare under a review of funding?

MBE, former music advisor for South Glamorgan county council (also BBC National Orchestra of Wales's first education officer), organised a letter to the first minister Rhodri Morgan. It was signed by more than 30 of Wales's most prominent teachers, music leaders, and performers, including Bryn Terfel, rock band Super Furry Animals, Kathryn Jenkins, Karl Jenkins, Alun Hoddinott, harpists Catrin Finch and Elinor Bennett. The letter condemned the abolition of the MDF, said that the signatories could not sit by while youth music in Wales "stagnates and dies", and called on WAG to write a "music manifesto for Wales."

Initially, they were told that their concerns were a matter for local authorities not WAG. "Nothing happened for a couple of years," says Braithwaite. "Until Jane Hutt, then education minister, agree to meet with us. We said we needed two things: some form of singing strategy in primary schools; and a detailed review of music education in Wales, because provision across the country is so uneven."

Three years after the original letter, in September 2009, the

## Music Services funding in Wales

### Late '80s/early '90s

- The eight Welsh counties were reorganised into 22 unitary authorities – smaller counties found it hard to provide similar levels of music services.
- Local financial management of schools was introduced – smaller budgets for music were delegated to schools and weren't ring-fenced, leaving LEAs and schools to use the money for other purposes.

### 1999-2003

- £8m Music Development Fund established with funding from WAG and ACW. Given to Local Authority Music Services over four years, and ring-fenced.
- 30,000+ were helped to gain access to regular music provision and a further 38,000 were involved in workshops, masterclasses and special projects. In one local authority, the proportion of pupils receiving music tuition more than doubled to 28%.

### 2004-5

- Fund extended but cut by 40 per cent.
- Money was transferred to local authorities and ring fencing withdrawn.

### 2009-11

- Review of music education announced – scheduled to be published March 2010.
- CànSing was launched as a two-year, £500,000 pilot programme, to provide training and materials (online and off) to help primary and secondary teachers to teach singing.

### Dec 2010

- Review of music education finally published, along with WAG's response.

Minister announced that WAG had commissioned a review of music education for 3-19 year olds within and outside the curriculum. The review was led by Emyr Wynne Jones, school improvement officer for Carmarthenshire county council. Membership of the advisory group included teachers, representatives from higher education, music services and youth orchestras, Urdd Gobaith Cymru (the organisation for young Welsh speakers) Arts Council of Wales (ACW), Estyn and WAG.

**The review was submitted to WAG** in early June 2010 although it took until December for WAG to publish it. It gives a clear and strong message about the effects of the lack of strategic direction and under funding, pointing to huge inequalities in provision, fragmented and over-complex delivery, no national entitlement for access to instrumental/vocal tuition and related music-making opportunities, and according to ACW a widening gap in participation levels between social economic groups ABC1 and C2DE. It recommends – and outlines – “a

national vision to address the inequalities and uncertainties and achieve greater co-ordination and coherence.”

So far so good. The vision that the review proposes (and WAG has accepted) also ticks all the boxes from a community music perspective, mentioning entitlement to a “broad range” of musical experiences, an “effective structure of co-ordinated partnerships,” and a “flexibility of approach to cater for the diverse range of abilities and interests of children and young people.” It also recognises that there's a “lack of co-ordination and joined-up thinking between statutory providers and community organisations,” and a need for “a more strategic approach that also recognises demand.”

The report doesn't, however, suggest how these things might be addressed, or who should, or could, be involved. The focus and substance of the review is very much on music services and the

national youth ensembles, with the rest of the input largely from classical music organisations (BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Welsh National Opera, Sinfonia Cymru) and other major players such as Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

In terms of involving people from non-formal music education, Community Music Wales was approached directly for written information, as were trac (the folk development agency for Wales) and Tydfil Training Consortium (who briefly ran a YMAZ), but this was as far as it went. Independent community musicians, community arts organisations, youth service and voluntary sector representatives working in music are notably absent.

As Emma Coulthard, music development officer for Cardiff County and Vale of Glamorgan music service, points out: “The review was helpful in showing that there's a lot of disparity here.

But it isn't fully representative of the whole music education community.” Cardiff council is one of the few that has retained the MDF in its base budget, which is used for a specific music development strand of work. Activities on offer range from rock and pop, samba and steel pans to singing festivals,

music therapy and wider opportunities-style, whole-class instrumental work, and funding has also been secured from commercial partners. Coulthard believes that the review doesn't go far enough in encouraging other music services to adopt a broader approach, and opening the way for new partnerships: “It doesn't put in place anything that's going to create change. . . I'd hoped that out of the reviews in Wales and in England people would look really honestly at how music education is facilitated across the board, because instead of restructuring, the system has been hobbling on, just making small adjustments.”

There's a particularly strong focus on supporting the national youth ensembles (brass, choir, jazz and orchestra) and the pyramid system on which there are based – local ensembles providing the foundation for the most “able and talented” musicians to go on to join national ensembles. But this isn't the way music works. “It's

**Even if the Welsh Assembly Government does take action on the music review, without a fuller picture of music education it remains to be seen whether real change will come**

assumed that the national ensembles are the pinnacle of achievement for all young musicians,” says Coulthard. “In Cardiff, the numbers involved in keyboard, guitar, electric guitar and world music are rising rapidly and it’s important that these pupils have an equal opportunity not just to access, but to achieve the same level of excellence as those who choose the more traditional genres.”

Emyr Wynne Jones is aware of the gaps in who was consulted: “I think we would accept that we didn’t consult as widely as we’d have liked to have done. We were working within limited resources and a limited timescale. We would definitely have liked to have consulted more widely and to look into things in more detail.”

Although the focus is on safeguarding music services, one of the review’s boldest recommendations is to “rationalise the number” of services to “safeguard funding for learners and improve equality of access.” Currently, 10 local authorities in Wales have their own music service; 11 operate shared music services for up to four authorities and one (Powys) has no music service. As Jones points out: “This perpetuates the inconsistencies. Wales is a small nation, yet we have 14 different models of music services.” He believes that new models of working in education in Wales (four regional consortia have been set up to improve standards and make best use of resources, including looking at ways to share or coordinate aspects of their music services) will make it easier for those outside the traditional structures to make their voice heard. There’s likely to be one music representative per consortium who will network and co-ordinate for that area, which he believes offers an alternative to the regional music education hubs model proposed for England.

**WAG’s response was published** at the same time as the review. It appears to accept most of the recommendations – but there are very few concrete commitments, and no suggestion of any form of overall plan or strategy. Says Braithwaite: “I was disappointed. The response from WAG was shocking. At the moment, it seems unlikely that anything will come from it. The MDF showed what a relatively small amount of funding can achieve. It enabled music services to broaden their provision, and involve different genres, practitioners and ways of working. It would be tragic if we weren’t able to give the same opportunities to our young people as they have in other parts of Britain.” With no official press release accompanying the report, and almost no media or bloggers reporting on it, it seems the assembly wasn’t

## The recommendations - and WAG’s response (in few words!)

- Adopt and implement the vision for music education for 3- 19 year olds. *Yes*
  - Establish a National Music Education Forum. *Not yet*
  - Create a web-based one-stop shop to provide information and improve communication between everyone involved in music education. *Not really*
  - Increase opportunities for music education in primary initial teacher training, induction and early professional development. *Will consider*
  - Support the development of professional learning communities and continuing professional development. *Being done*
  - Rationalise the number of music services, to safeguard funding for learners and improve equality of access. *Yes*
  - Work with National Youth Arts Wales to maximise the national ensembles’ potential to raise Wales’s profile internationally. *ACW and Wales Arts International’s responsibility*
  - Find an equitable and sustainable means of supporting the pyramid principle and National Youth Arts Wales ensembles. *ACW’s responsibility*
  - Establish a national bursary for more able and talented young musicians. *No*
- Regularly evaluate music education to ensure the vision is being adopted. *Possibly*

keen to draw attention to the review either.

Jones’s biggest concern is the lack of action from WAG: “By the time the report was in the public domain the information was already around 12 months out of date, and it described a deteriorating situation. The picture is much worse now. So the recommendations are now trying to build from a much lower point. When Jane Hutt gave us the remit, she said we would need to work within existing resources, and we did – we didn’t ask for more money. But now something needs to be done to arrest the decline while these recommendations are being implemented. We now need money in the short-term – otherwise music will become something only available to those who can afford it.”

With education assessments placing Wales below average compared with other countries, schools, local authorities and WAG are desperate to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. Will they recognise that music has a part to play? In this scenario, perhaps fighting to save the status quo is all that can be hoped for. But as Emma Coulthard says, “It’s not just about money, it’s about the philosophy of music education and what it’s trying to achieve, and about bringing together all the stakeholders to make the best of all of their areas of expertise. Music services are a tremendous resource that could form the basis for new ways of working.”

A few months ago, Emyr Wynne Jones commented in the TES: “The key issue for us now is ensuring something happens as a result of this report. . . It’s encouraging that the minister has accepted most of the recommendations, but it won’t mean anything unless action is taken.” Even if WAG does take action, without a fuller picture of music education in Wales it remains to be seen whether a real change is going to come.

## links and web resources

Review documents <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2010/101209music/?lang=en> or <http://tinyurl.com/6yqnyu5>

*Estyn report, April 2006:* An evaluation of the use made by local authorities and schools of resources made available by the Music Development Fund in Wales

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