



Making Music
The National Federation of Music Societies
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The Duchess of Kent *Patron*
Debbie Wiseman OBE *President*

**SUPPORTING AND
CHAMPIONING
LEISURE-TIME MUSIC**

Oliver Dowden MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament St, Westminster
London SW1A 2BQ

15 July 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing **to ask you as a matter of urgency to allow amateurs to resume musical activity following the same guidelines you have just issued for professionals.**

DCMS research of 2008 suggests there are around 15,000 music groups in the UK; Making Music's data estimates 855,000 amateur participants in those groups. These are adult leisure-time groups; if you count church and school choirs and ensembles as well, you could easily add another 30,000 groups and another 1.7m people.

All of these people – young and old, in schools, churches and in the community, including the flagship national youth ensembles – are now prevented from making the cautious and staged return to activity they were preparing, by the latest guidance published by DCMS.

No justification is given for this distinction between professionals and non-professionals:

Are we considered to be incapable of assessing and managing risks? 86% of groups are charities, governed by a board of trustees, used to running their organisation and taking care of the well-being of participants. Groups are for everyone, so are likely to include a cross-section of professionals (including doctors!) well able to interpret and act on guidance. Youth and school group managers of course are highly experienced in safeguarding.

Perhaps the sector is thought negligible in its financial impact, but actually it is an essential part of most musicians' living (the sector spends £86.4m a year on professionals) and an essential part of a venue's sustainability, through regular hires for rehearsals and performances. Spending by the sector also includes music publishers, associated trades (staging, uniforms, marketing, print, photography), hospitality, touring etc..

Why are we asking for this, and why is it urgent?

Amateurs can be young or old, adults or children, and like everyone have suffered a blow to their mental health during lockdown.

The guidance is now preventing children from rejoining their choir, young people from exorcising the pandemic in their band, adults from getting their weekly dose of de-stressing, and lonely grandparents being held back from their only chance at social connection.

We know of countless cases – even before coronavirus – when participants told us that their choir, their band was a lifesaver, that they couldn't have got through a significant life event, such as a bereavement, for instance, without it, that the group is what keeps them going.

That is urgent. Even a small prospect of activity, however limited, will help.

But it's as urgent for the professionals that we return to being able to engage them as soon as possible as conductors, accompanists, players, soloists. The SEISS finishes in August when their income from the amateur sector will not be restored yet, certainly not if this guidance continues to forbid activity.

And venues are keen for us to return, at least to rehearsals in the first instance, so they can start building up their income again.

Our audiences, too, around 7.6m of them a year, will be keen to see us back – we are their friends, their family, their community, we are the music they first turn to in their neighbourhood.

As a sector, we are utterly committed to the safety of our participants and we believe there is no reason for making separate rules for professionals and amateurs.

The musical activity we represent is part of the fabric of English culture and life – and your actions now are crucial to ensuring its survival.

As organisations, our colleagues and I stand ready to offer you and your team insights where helpful, and to support music groups with guidance, templates and help, if you let us move forward in line with the professionals.

We invite you to join a choir or instrumental group as they meet online or to discuss this matter with your colleagues from the Parliament Choir, including Sir Bernard Jenkin.

Cc Caroline Dinenage MP, Minister of State for Digital and Culture

Cc Baroness Barran MBE, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Civil Society and DCMS)

Yours faithfully,



Barbara Eifler,
Chief Executive, **Making Music**

PLEASE SIGNATORIES ON NEXT PAGES



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Robin Simpson, Chief Executive, Voluntary Arts

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Katharine Hogg, President, International Association of Music Libraries (UK and Ireland)

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Catherine Arlidge, Artistic & Education Director, National Children's Orchestras of Great Britain

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