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We are writing in response to the recent report by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee *Hitting The Right Note* and the Welsh government's response to the report, ahead of the debate scheduled in the Senedd for 24 October.

***Making Music** is the UK wide organisation supporting, celebrating and speaking on behalf of the leisure-time music sector, with a membership of around 3,500 music groups (169 in Wales) comprising about 190,000 individuals (9,200 in Wales). Available data suggests we represent around 20% of the sector, pointing to the likely number of over 800 such groups in Wales, involving more than 45,000 individuals.*

Adult leisure-time musical activity has in much recent research been proven to be beneficial for individuals' physical and mental well-being and making a major contribution to place-making for residents and businesses as well as connecting generations and socially or culturally diverse groups of people in communities.

In financial terms, participation or engagement with music for adults with particular physical or mental health issues has been proven to reduce demand for health and social services and prescriptions. The case has been made to, and has been accepted by, the NHS that this kind of activity directly positively impacts pressure on the health service. It is also now generally acknowledged that such participation can prevent problems arising in the first place, particularly in terms of loneliness and mental health, and builds personal and community resilience.

***Hitting The Right Note** is therefore a welcome and timely investigation into the funding and access to music education and we are delighted that the Welsh government recognises the importance of this topic.*

The impact of music education is significant, for sure, in terms of the professional music sector, but additionally in terms of the leisure-time music sector. The two are connected, naturally, as professional musicians teach, lead, accompany, compose for, sing and play with leisure-time music groups.

But the ultimate significance of music education far exceeds the remits of the Cabinet Minister for Education, or of the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, affecting also the portfolios of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, of the Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, of the Minister for Housing and Regeneration, and more, due to the benefits associated with engagement in music for both adults and children.

It is therefore disappointing that the Welsh government rejects **Recommendation 2 (National Plan for Music)** of the report on the grounds that this work would cut across several Ministerial portfolio areas.

In our view, that is precisely why this plan is urgently needed, to highlight the significance of music - and the widest number of the population engaging with it - for a whole range of policies and desirable outcomes, including that of a healthy population, thriving communities and civil society.

We understand the Cabinet Minister for Education's argument that such cross-portfolio work would take more time than a plan for Music Education alone which would sit squarely within her remit. But only such cross-departmental work will reveal the true extent of the beneficial outcomes which can be delivered by universal and equitable access to music education.

This work would not stop the Welsh government immediately implementing policies to ensure such access. We believe that **Recommendation 1 (national body to coordinate/direct music education)** in some respects is not far-reaching enough. A national body such as National Youth Arts Wales is indeed needed to run national youth ensembles in all musical genres.

But in terms of music education, there is a simpler solution than the one proposed by the committee's report: **give every child access to free instrumental tuition as part of the school curriculum.**

We are disappointed that as a national government you appreciate the importance of music education, but avoid drawing the logical conclusion from that by allocating it the necessary investment, instead passing the buck back to local authorities. ***Music education should be statutory, free and part of the national curriculum in Wales;*** there would then be no question that it needs to be properly resourced, in the same way that Maths, Welsh, History or PE are.

In our view, **Recommendations 9 and 10 (instruments; Estyn inspection criteria)** naturally harmonise with and support universal free access to music education in general and instrumental tuition in particular and we warmly welcome the Welsh government's support for these.

It is our contention that **Recommendation 14 (national ensembles reflective of diversity of population)** would be entirely unnecessary if every child had equal and free access to music education and instrumental tuition in school as part of the curriculum. Such access would naturally ensure that talent, not parental privilege, guarantees the path to excellence and the top of the youth ensemble pyramid.

It is telling that so often these debates are framed around cost, a word which implies a drain on a budget, a negative. ***Paying for universal and free access to music education and instrumental tuition for all under-18s is not a cost – it's an investment.***

An investment towards the health and well-being of the whole population, a mitigation of the effects of poverty, isolation and old age (amongst other things) on social care and health services, an investment in communities, ***an investment in the future of Wales.***

Cost implies a minus without a plus. We expect ***investment to be recouped and bring profit*** – and that is certainly what you would and should expect if you were to wholeheartedly commit to investing in young people's music education.

Please do not hesitate to call on us to supply further evidence or testimony to the Committee, the Welsh Assembly or the Welsh government. We would be delighted to help if we can.

Yours sincerely,



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