

Appendix A - Options Appraisal for Music Centre

Historical Context

Until 2017, the Music Centre ran from the Music Service's base at Northfield Academy. There were a number of groups running on weeknights and Saturday mornings. Most groups operated at different levels, for example there was a Junior Brass Band, Intermediate Brass Band and Senior Brass Band. This meant that children and young people could progress and always had an appropriate group to perform with. The senior groups had an audition process for pupils, and pupils progressed through groups by instructor recommendation. These groups ran in addition to the school-based groups that instructors ran at lunchtime and after school.

Northfield Academy had been chosen as a base because this was an area of the city where low numbers of children were engaging in instrumental tuition, it was within reasonable traveling distance from most areas of the city and it had spare school capacity to enable storage of equipment. Children were bused to Northfield Academy by Children's Transport. There is no evidence that the location of the Music Centre at Northfield Academy encouraged local children to attend as no children from schools in Northfield Academy Associated Schools Group attended.

Children from across the city (beyond those accessing the Music Service) were invited to participate in the Music Centre. Children who received instrumental tuition from the Music Service were able to attend for no additional charge (it should be noted that this was prior to the Scottish Government introduction of free tuition for all so the pupil would have been charged c.£400 a year for tuition, plus instrument hire, unless they were registered for Free School Meals). Children from private schools and those attending Aberdeen City schools who received private lessons paid £100 per annum to attend the Music Centre. A small number of children from Aberdeen City Music School (ACMS) also attended and they were also charged for attendance.

Attendance fluctuated. Over the 2016-17 academic year there were 300 learners attending the Music Centre. One third (100) attended private schools, 20 attended Aberdeen City schools but received private tuition rather than Music Service lessons, and 6 attended from Aberdeen City Music School. By 2018-19 the number of attendees had reduced by 50% to 147 learners attending, including 3 from private schools and 11 who received private tuition. At this point no learners attended from ACMS.

The Music Centre was staffed by Music Instructors who claimed overtime and external staff who were paid on an ad hoc basis. The cost of the additional hours claimed, or paid to those enabling the delivery of the Music Service, was approximately £50,000. The cost was not budgeted for creating an on-going financial pressure for the education service. In 2016-17 transport costs were £17,554.57 and these costs were covered by the Children's Transport's own budget.

Music Service Staff could choose whether to be involved in Music Centre activities. A small group of staff were involved in several ensembles, whilst others supported one ensemble per week. Around 50% of Music Service staff were not involved in the delivery of any ensembles. The ad hoc nature of the staffing arrangements at the

time led to some ensemble rehearsals being cancelled at short notice and some ensembles merged together in order to mitigate this risk. This is likely to have led to the reduction in the number of children and young people attending.

In 2017 a review of the Music Centre took place in an attempt to address the cost pressure and find a sustainable solution. The model adopted at the time was a 'Time Off In Lieu (TOIL)' arrangement which allowed Music Instructors to run ensembles one evening per week in return for time back during the school day. This arrangement allowed for ensembles to run, but reduced instructor capacity in schools due to the TOIL being taken during the school day. This essentially removed the provision of a Music Centre on a Saturday and could have contributed to the decrease in attendees.

This arrangement was in place until the Covid-19 pandemic started. During the pandemic some Music Instructors ran ensembles digitally and this was greatly appreciated by learners and parents.

A review of the impact of previous models

Model 1 (pre-2017): Music Instructors holding Music Centre contracts and claiming Music Centre hours via supply claim forms .

The **positive impacts** of this model were:

- A number of ensembles were held on a weekly basis and there were groups targeted at learners working at most levels, with the exception of beginners.
- Learners were transported to rehearsals via a bus service arranged by Children's Transport. The bespoke nature of this route allowed learners from across the city to attend.
- The ensembles were well established and performed to a high standard
- Provision on a Saturday was popular.

The **challenges** of this model were:

- A small group of Music Service staff ran the majority of rehearsals, and their participation was voluntary. These staff were the most experienced. If they were unwell or chose to no longer participate there were issues in ensuring that the ensembles they were involved in continued. There were challenges in encouraging Music Instructors from all disciplines to be involved.
- The cost of the salary payments (£50,000) was not budgeted for and this was unsustainable.
- The transport costs for the 2016-17 financial year were £17,554.57. It should be noted that the provision of Music Centre transport falls outwith the school transport remit.
- The proportion of learners from city schools in some ensembles was low in comparison to those coming from private schools.
- Some instructors had greater understanding of the provision due to their helping to operate the groups resulting in some pupils being better signposted to the opportunity than others

- Only one child attended from Torry, no children attended from Northfield or from St Machar suggesting that the model was not attractive to those living in areas of deprivation.

Model 2 (2018-2020): Music Instructors running ensembles after school and claiming the time back via a TOIL arrangement

The **positive impacts** of this model were:

- Ensembles were able to run on a weekly basis and these were attended by learners across the city.
- The £50,000 cost pressure was removed
- Less ensembles were cancelled due to a lack of instructor
- The TOIL arrangement meant that Music Instructors had an additional element of flexibility in their timetable which was positively received.

The **challenges** of this model were:

- Music Instructors could only run one group each, where previously they had been running several groups. This meant it was challenging to run the same number of groups and there was a reduction in the range of groups offered.
- Transport costs for the 2018-19 financial year increased to £28,155 and this was not budgeted for. These were higher than the 2016-17 financial year as there were buses required from more schools. It should be noted that the provision of Music Centre transport falls outwith the school transport remit.
- The overall capacity of the Music Service was limited by the TOIL arrangement due to the reduction of time that Music Instructors had in school
- No increase in attendance was realised from those living in areas of deprivation.

Analysis of the current policy landscape

The Scottish Government have introduced a policy of free music tuition since August 2021. The Music Service reviewed the distribution of provision across the city and introduced a new model of Music Instructor allocation to schools to coincide with the policy change. This has allowed tuition to be offered on a more equitable basis. Bespoke projects have been created to increase participation in schools where there has been a traditionally low number of pupils learning a musical instrument. The current model places Music Instructors into one of three locality groups, which provides more opportunities for collaboration when delivering opportunities for pupils. This model has reduced staff travel time and increased pupil contact time.

The Covid-19 pandemic restrictions meant that ensemble activities could only happen online for two years. This meant that new and existing pupils have had limited opportunities to play together, and it will take time to build up their skills and confidence again. Music Instructors are currently expertly leading the establishment of ensembles in localities with their time accounted for in their working time agreement. No further resource is required to maintain this.

As a result of the pandemic new learners could not start their instrumental lessons for some time and we now have an unusually large group of learners working at a beginner level. This will require to be taken into account.

There is a strong desire within the Music Service staff team for Music Centre ensembles to continue, and a wish for it to be understood that it will take time to build up activities to previous levels.

Developing a visions and aims to help inform options

An options appraisal has been undertaken to help inform the recommendations presented to Committee.

The Music Centre is a strand of the Music Service. It involves children and young people who receive instrumental tuition coming together to make music in an ensemble (group) setting. Their work in these ensembles is celebrated through performances at various points in the year.

A vision and high level aims can be helpful to steer development and on-going evaluation. The proposed vision and aims have been developed following a review of the historical context, consideration of the current policy context and from engaging with the focus group of young people who access the Music Service.

Proposed Music Centre vision: To create opportunities for children and young people to make music in ensemble settings.

Proposed Aims:

- To enable children and young people at all stages in their learning to develop their ensemble and performance skills.
- To provide a platform to celebrate the musical achievements of children and young people.
- To empower children and young people to lead and shape the opportunities available.
- To provide easily accessible opportunities for children and young people to work alongside their peers from other schools.
- To develop progression pathways for all learners and the opportunity for older/more advanced pupils to inspire younger learners.

The options for consideration

The following options have been developed in conjunction with Music Service staff. The options have been shaped to enable delivery of the vision and aims and will enable the tracking of performance against them to support on-going evaluation activity.

All the options below consider the continuation of ensembles at school and locality level, and the need to take a joined-up approach between these ensembles and the central Music Centre ensembles.

It should be noted that central ensembles provide the best opportunities for the more advanced learners to play together with their peers in a large ensemble. In time periods where these ensembles are not running Music Instructors would endeavour to find appropriate opportunities for advanced pupils within their localities. These opportunities could include chamber music, solo performances and short project based work.

Option 1

The school year is split into sections to allow staff to be involved in both locality and central ensembles. This would allow workload to be manageable.

In Term 1 and 4 ensembles would be run in localities only. This would allow new beginners to build up their ensemble skills and confidence in their own localities before working with those from across the city when they have reached a more advanced level.

In Terms 2 and 3 central ensembles only would take place. Learners would come together after school at a central location. The central ensembles would cater for learners at all levels.

	Locality ensembles	Central ensembles
Term 1	YES	
Term 2		YES
Term 3		YES
Term 4	YES	

Option 2

This option would allow for ensembles to run in localities on a weekly basis. Bespoke opportunities for more advanced learners would be developed at locality level where possible.

There would be two weekend courses per year with a focus on children across the city playing together. These weekend courses would include a focus on the most advanced learners so that they have opportunities to play with others at a similar level.

Music Instructors involved in the weekend courses would receive Time Off In Lieu for running these courses, to be taken at a time agreed with the Music Co-ordinator.

	Locality ensembles	Central ensembles
Term 1	YES	
Term 2	YES	Weekend course
Term 3	YES	
Term 4	YES	Weekend course

Option 3

Locality ensembles run on a weekly basis through the year. Central ensembles happen in the run up to two annual concerts.

Staff raised a concern that there is not enough time in the Working Time Agreement to allow this to happen, however we could develop an alternative system for reporting which would free up a significant number of collegiate hours to allow for this option to be viable.

	Locality ensembles	Central ensembles
Term 1	YES	
Term 2	YES	In the weeks leading up to a Christmas concert.
Term 3	YES	In the weeks leading up to an Easter concert.
Term 4	YES	

Option 4

In Terms 1-3 ensembles happen on a weekly basis in schools and localities. Locality concerts happen twice a year. Advanced learners are offered bespoke opportunities in localities. In Term 4 there would be a weekend course for more advanced learners to come together in a central location and work intensively before putting on a concert.

	Locality ensembles	Central ensembles
Term 1	YES	
Term 2	YES	
Term 3	YES	
Term 4		Long weekend course targeted at more advanced learners

Option 5

Beginners rehearse in localities in Terms 1 – 3. Twice a year they come to play together with all other pupils as part of a large ensemble and perform in a concert.

Advanced learners rehearse together in a central location during Term 1 – 3 and perform at concerts twice a year.

The beginner and advanced groups would not run during Term 4. This would allow more advanced pupils time to focus on their examinations and would free up instructors to work on a project basis with beginner learners in order to give them time to develop their basic ensemble skills ahead of the next academic year.

Beginner groups and advanced groups are rehearsed by separate groups of staff (ie. a Music Instructor would be involved in a beginner group or an advanced group).

	Locality ensembles	Central ensembles
Term 1	YES	YES
Term 2	YES	YES
Term 3	YES	YES
Term 4	Bespoke projects	

Learner experience

The table below shows the learner experience for each of the five options for beginner learners.

Option 1	Participation in a locality ensemble in Terms 1 and 4, and central ensembles in Term 2 and 3.
Option 2	Participation in locality ensembles in all terms. No participation in central ensembles.
Option 3	Participation in locality ensembles in all terms. Participation in central ensembles in the lead up two concerts.
Option 4	Participation in locality ensembles in Term 1 – 3. Concerts in localities.
Option 5	Participation in locality ensembles in Term 1 – 3. Participation in central ensembles in the lead up to two concerts.

The table below shows the learner experience for each of the five options for more advanced learners.

Option 1	Central ensembles in Terms 2 and 3
Option 2	Weekend course in Terms 2 and 4
Option 3	In Terms 2 and 3 in the weeks leading up to concerts
Option 4	Weekend course in Term 4
Option 5	Participation in central ensembles in Term 1-3.

Assessment of options against aims/objectives

Each option has been scored from 1-5 (with 5 being the strongest) on its potential to deliver the aims/objectives of the Music Centre

Option	Cost effective	Equitable offer	Opportunities for beginners	Opportunities for advanced learners	Opportunities for CYP to work with peers from across the city	Impact of any TOIL on teaching	Impact of model on school ensembles	TOTAL
Option 1	5	5	5	4	4	5	2	30
Option 2	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	32
Option 3	5	5	4	3	3	5	5	30
Option 4	5	5	3	3	2	3	5	26
Option 5	5	5	4	4	4	5	2	29

Assessment and analysis of each option

Option 1 allows for all staff to be involved in both locality and central ensembles. All learners are offered the opportunity to come together with peers from across the city for two terms per year. Concerts are able to be offered across the year in both localities and city-wide concerts.

A disadvantage of this option would be the impact on locality ensembles as they would not be able to run year round. This would cause a reduction in the time available for well-established and successful school and locality ensembles and this makes the option un-viable.

Option 2 allows for ensembles to be run at a locality level throughout the year. This would be supported by school staff. Running two weekend courses allows advanced learners to come together for an intensive weekend twice a year, with associated concerts. The disadvantage of this option is that advanced learners do not have the opportunity to come together on a regular basis, and opportunities for them are more limited between the intensive weekends. However this could be resolved with additional funding, as described below. This option was the strong preference of the majority of staff.

Option 3 again allows for ensembles to be run at a locality level throughout the year and an opportunity for learners across the city to come together in the lead up to two concerts. The disadvantage of this option is that it allows less rehearsal time for advanced learners to learn and play together in comparison to year round weekly rehearsals.

Option 4 allows for locality ensembles to be run in Term 1-3, which would be in line with the expectations of school staff. There would be one weekend course for advanced learners in Term 4. This disadvantage of this option is the offer for advanced learners throughout the year.

Option 5 allows for locality and central ensembles to run during Terms 1-3, and this would offer regular learning opportunities out of all of the options. The flexibility in Term 4 could be used for a variety of bespoke projects to support learners where needed most. The challenge with this option would be staffing, and staff felt this option would be unviable as they would be spread too thinly and locality ensembles may be impacted.

Recommendation

The service recommendation is that Option 2 is the preferred option as this allows for ensemble rehearsals to be maintained in localities at current levels, and for staff to continue to provide the same level of support to these well-established ensembles. Intensive weekend Music Centre rehearsals would allow for children and young people to come together to develop their ensemble skills with others from across the city in a focused environment and to build friendships. This option was the preference of Music Service staff.

Seek an additional £20,000 through the Council budget meeting to extend Option 2:

With an additional budget of £20,000, further opportunities could be created for pupils which would enhance the model presented as Option 2.

Alongside the two intensive Music Centre weekends, four Music Centre ensembles could run on a weekly basis for two terms of the year. These ensembles would allow children and young people to have more time together to develop their musical skills which would allow them to tackle more challenging repertoire and potentially participate in more concerts and events.

The ensemble structure would be planned annually to reflect the cohort of children and young people in the service at the time, for example if there were a particularly high number of beginner brass players one session, a beginner brass band could run. The Music Service would also seek to develop a Youth Orchestra, and this would become the service's flagship ensemble and would act as a stepping stone for young people who wish to join a national ensemble (e.g. National Youth Orchestra of Scotland).

The service would ensure that ensembles created would be inclusive, collaborative and inspirational. The service would seek to plan these ensembles together with young people, and they would be designed to ensure that as many children as possible can take part and that there are no barriers to participation. There would be clear progression pathways between ensembles, with younger children given the opportunity to hear and play alongside their older peers. There would also be the opportunity to work in partnership with external organisations to create new pieces of music together with composers and young people.

Staff would need to receive additional payments for their time running these groups as it would be in addition to their 35 hour working week. These additional payments would reflect the time needed to plan and deliver high quality rehearsal and concert opportunities.

Rehearsals would take place in carefully chosen locations to try and ensure that transport to and from rehearsals is not a barrier in young people attending. Young people are able to access free travel on public buses, but we may need to arrange additional transport in some areas where travel on public buses would be complex.

There may also be additional cost for cleaning and janitorial services where rehearsal venues would be need to be opened and cleaned outwith normal opening hours.

An outline budget plan is:

Item	Cost
Staffing	£15000
Transport	£2500
Cleaning/janitorial time	£2500