

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	23 rd September 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Digitisation of the Music Service
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/21/2 19
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Shona Milne
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At the Council Budget meeting of March 2021 officers were instructed to report to the Education Operational Delivery Committee on how the Music Service could use digitalisation to offer a more affordable offer to families and extend the reach of the service. Members were also keen for Officers to explore opportunities for collaboration. This report responds to that initial instruction and also updates on national policy changes.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 notes the establishment of a universal offer available to all children and young people;
- 2.2 notes the general move to group lessons for learners in the Broad General Education;
- 2.3 instructs the Chief Education Officer to consult with pupils, parents and instructors in order to determine the scope of a digital anytime offer to be made available to our learners;
- 2.4 instructs the Chief Education Officer to track uptake to help evaluate the changes in service delivery; and
- 2.5 instructs the Chief Education Officer to present an evaluation of the impact of the changes to Committee within one calendar year.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 In March 2021 Members instructed the Chief Education Officer to explore how digital could be used to extend the reach of the Music Service. The aspiration was to develop a more affordable offer to families who wished their child to engage with the service.
- 3.1.2 Members also encouraged the Chief Education Officer to explore options for collaboration with other Local Authorities if this had potential to extend the offer available to children and young people.

3.2 MUSIC SERVICE DELIVERY OVER THE LAST 18 MONTHS

- 3.2.1 During the pandemic music instructors have been unable to provide pupils with face to face input due to restrictions put in place in national return to school guidance. Lessons have been delivered through video links and placement of assignments in a digital classroom. Parents were not charged for Music Instruction during the first period of lockdown due to the many restrictions in place but were charged a reduced rate from January 2021. This reduced rate reflected the continued restrictions around face to face delivery.
- 3.2.2 The Music Service digital classroom continues to be available providing pupils with a reference point when practising. Despite the restrictions this approach was well received by some pupils who for the most part continued to make good progress. One parent noted that *'My son has been learning the cello for the last three years and has enjoyed it very much. Thank you to the instructors for all the hard work put in to online learning over the past year. He has enjoyed the opportunity to continue making music online with his friends.'*
- 3.2.3 Another noted that, *'My son was very engaged with his trombone throughout all of lockdown, due to the efforts of X with his online provision.'* Consistency was recognised by another, *'I appreciate the consistency that my children have had with their lessons throughout both lockdowns.'*
- 3.2.4 The period of school closure and the restrictions were not ideal for all young people, parents however appreciated opportunities being made available. *'Even though ensemble rehearsals could not happen in person, X ensured that online performance opportunities were available for my daughter.'*
- 3.2.5 *'From our perspective, the support my children have had from their music tutors has underpinned their well-being and progress through both lockdowns. The relationships have strengthened through remote learning and the patience and encouragement shown has made a substantial difference. My children were delighted to finally be able to see some of their tutors face to face very recently.'*
- 3.2.6 In order to make a comprehensive digital offer The Music Service invested time in populating increasing amounts of digital content. This included creation of a Google Site which has sections for each instrumental team and videos created for learners by Music Instructors. This resource has potential for further development to support learners as we move forward.
- 3.2.7 One key strength developed over the last 18 months has been whole class singing when singing was not allowed in schools. The service was able to deliver whole class singing when children were at home with multiple classes at once, which meant more children could engage than during an 'in person' session. This approach was highly efficient in terms of Instructor resource and offered an easily accessible universal offer to children across the City.
- 3.2.8 Big Noise have been working in Torry since 2015. During lockdown Big Noise produced short videos to support early skills in music for sharing across the city as part of the universal offer to all teachers and learners. The videos

provide 5 minute introductions to different beats and rhythms and are designed to be used as whole class teaching resource. These are to be piloted in August 2021 with a view to rolling out the offer to all schools in the second term. Officers are considering how to ensure that this offer is seen as part of the Music Service Google Site.

3.2.9 Many children and young people across the broad general education have really benefited from the service over the last 18 months although there are clear indications that some pupils prefer face to face delivery. Pupils undertaking accredited courses found remote delivery more challenging.

3.3 WHAT DOES THE DATA TELL US ABOUT OUR DELIVERY?

3.3.1 In June 2021 only 461 of the 1431 pupils registered for tuition were engaging with the service. Some learners found recorded lessons challenging and preferred immediate feedback rather than feedback posted on their Google classroom. During periods when the school buildings were closed some families wanted to limit online learning and made the decision to drop out of instrument tuition. This was understandable given the circumstances and this position may change over time.

3.3.2 When families request that instrumental tuition ceases they have the option to provide a reason for stopping. In 2020-21, 159 of the families who stopped tuition provided a reason and this is shown in the table below. A comparison with data sets from previous years shows a high level of consistency in the reasons given for stopping.

Reason for stopping	Number of pupils	% of pupils ceasing tuition
Pupil felt that they were missing classroom learning in order to attend their instrumental music lesson	43	27%
Pupil didn't enjoy online learning	34	21%
Pupil did not have enough time to learn an instrument	26	16%
Pupil lost interest in learning an instrument	19	12%
Pupil left school	16	10%
The cost of tuition was too high	12	8%
The standard of service was not good enough	6	4%
The pupil will be changing to private lessons	3	2%

3.3.4 It is clear that on-line delivery didn't work well for 34 children and they chose to cease their instruction. The vast majority of pupils ceased lessons in January 2021 as fees were reintroduced, a second billing period ran from April and this charge can also be seen in the data. This tells us that cost was a significant factor for some families.

Date	August – December	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
% of total number of pupils who stopped lessons	0%	6%	43%	3%	3%	24%	16%	4%

3.3.5 Most children who dropped out were in the final years of primary schools. This has been a consistent pattern over many years. Some children, having had an opportunity to learn an instrument at primary school decide to cease instruction before heading to secondary school.

Year Group	% of total number of pupils who stopped lessons
P3	4%
P4	7%
P5	14%
P6	18%
P7	17%
S1	8%
S2	8%
S3	8%
S4	4%
S5	6%
S6	6%

3.4 CHANGE TO NATIONAL POLICY

3.4.1 In June 2021 Ministers and COSLA Leaders agreed a new policy of free music instruction. COSLA Leaders agreed to an initial one-year removal of fees for Music Instruction which will be supported by funding from the Scottish Government to allow existing levels of provision to be maintained in academic year 2021-22 as longer term plans are developed. Aberdeen City Council has received an initial grant of £168 000 to enable the implementation of free music lessons from August 2021.

3.4.2 This policy change was communicated to families at the start of this academic session. The removal of fees is likely to see demand for the service increase and 3000 children are currently on the waiting list.

3.5 MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUGUST 2021

3.5.1 Analysis of data around uptake raised a number of concerns regarding the equity of offer in place across the city. Local evidence would suggest that children are most likely to express a desire to learn an instrument if they see Music Instructors routinely in school and hear from peers engaging with the service. The table below shows the allocation in FTE as of August 2020.

ASG	FTE allocated to ASG August 2020	Number of pupils	% of total Music Service pupil numbers	School roll as % of city roll	% of ASG roll receiving tuition
Grammar	5.4FTE	136	25%	12%	4%
Harlaw	4.0FTE	63	11%	10%	3%
Lochside	2.0FTE	17	3%	12%	1%
Cults	5.1FTE	151	28%	9%	7%
Dyce	0.4FTE	4	1%	4%	0%
Bucksburn	1.8FTE	34	6%	8%	2%
Bridge of Don	1.2FTE	24	4%	4%	2%
Oldmachar	1.8FTE	40	7%	8%	2%
Northfield	1.6FTE	7	1%	10%	0%
St Machar	2.0FTE	13	2%	13%	0%
Hazlehead	4.0FTE	60	11%	9%	2%

3.5.2 As of June 2021, 10 schools had no offer of music instruction.

3.5.3 Given the change in national policy and need to make the service accessible to all, allocations have been reviewed for session 2021/22 to ensure that children from all schools are able to access the service.

3.5.4 Given anticipated increased demand, it is important that we offer an efficient service which maximises the benefits of Music Instruction for as many children and young people as possible. The service has reviewed the number of students each instructor supports locally and looked at available averages in other urban Local Authorities.

3.5.5 Average numbers of pupils per instructor in Aberdeen over session 2020/2021 are currently low at 17 (range of 2 – 32). Uptake and therefore offer is significantly lower in some parts of the city as shown in the table above.

3.5.6 Further analysis of the workload of each Instructor highlighted that a number of music instructors were allocated to Associated School Groups at opposite ends of the city resulting in the need for travelling time and reduction in teaching time available. This approach limited opportunities for Instructors to work and learn together. It is thought important to address this in order to reduce travelling time and creating the ability for teams across disciplines to work collegiately on bands and ensembles and share expertise with each other.

3.6 ARRANGEMENTS FOR SESSION 2021/22

3.6.1 For session 2021/22 each Associated School Group has been allocated a minimum amount of instructor time to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to access the service. The full range of instruments will be offered across each Secondary School allowing more pupils to learn their instrument of choice. This provides greater choice for young people keen to consider certification and therefore has the potential to increase levels of pupil engagement and achievement. The timing of changes has been carefully

considered to minimise the impact on SQA students who rely on building positive relationships with Instructors from the start of the school year.

3.6.2 Changes were communicated at the end of the academic session 2020/2021 to ensure that SQA students would have certainty around their instructor. This very limited timescale resulted in the service having to move at pace to ensure that arrangements were communicated and in place for the beginning of the new academic session.

3.6.3 The changes have received a mixed response with extremely positive comments from those who will be able to access the service for what they perceive to be the first time but some anxiety from parents and carers who have been advised of staffing changes. All families have been assured that if they currently receive a service this will continue to be available.

3.6.4 The music service consists of 32 instructors in total offering lessons across all disciplines. This represents a total workforce of 29 FTE.

Discipline	Number of instructors
Brass	5
Guitar	4
Piano	3
Strings	6
Woodwind	5
Singing	3
Piping	1
Percussion	5

3.6.5 The service has undertaken some benchmarking to better understand the optimal capacity of the service and has looked at pre-pandemic data.

Local authority	Average pupil numbers in 2018-19 per instructor (<i>pre-Covid19</i>)
Aberdeen City	72
Glasgow	103
Dundee	175
Renfrewshire	157
North Lanarkshire	122
East Renfrewshire	119
Edinburgh	92
Inverclyde	93
Aberdeenshire	79

3.6.6 Aberdeen City Music Service had the lowest number of pupils per instructor of all urban Local Authorities and it will be important to address this given anticipated increased demand. A maximum of 100 pupils per instructor is thought reasonable having taken account of instructor timetables, previous numbers supported by the service and the level pupils are studying at. This is in line with Glasgow City Council who averaged 103 pupils per instructor in 2018/2019. This will be kept under review.

- 3.6.7 Given that each tutor currently supports (on average) 17 pupils, this provides a great deal of capacity to help meet increased demand.
- 3.6.8 As a result, officers believe that the potential capacity of the service is 3000 and instructors have been set a target of 2490 for session 21/22 and 3000 for session 22/23. It is proposed that digital resources support this increase in order to provide pupils with access to additional practice materials.

3.7 CORE AND FLEXIBLE ALLOCATIONS FOR AUGUST 2021

- 3.7.1 In order to ensure that the Service is well placed to deliver national and local policy, a core allocation of Instructors has been awarded to all Associated Schools groups. Allocations have been developed by ensuring that all secondary schools receive the full range of instruments offered and each primary school receives a minimum allocation. Each instructor's timetable will allow enough time to make a visit viable (i.e. minimum of one morning/afternoon per school visit).
- 3.7.2 Flexible/agile allocations have been made based upon the need of pupils currently learning a musical instrument to ensure that they continue to be able to access Instruction in their chosen instrument. These flexible allocations will be kept under continual review and will help take account of current ensemble arrangements.

ASG	Core FTE allocation August 2021	Flex/agile allocation August 2021
Grammar	1.7FTE	1.3FTE
Harlaw	1.8FTE	0.8FTE
Lochside	2.2FTE	0.1FTE
Cults	1.5FTE	1.1FE
Dyce	1FTE	0.1FTE
Bucksburn	1.7FTE	0.4FTE
Bridge of Don	1.2FTE	0.3FTE
Oldmachar	1.9FTE	0.4FTE
Northfield	2.7FTE	0.1FTE
St Machar	2.2FTE	0.1FTE
Hazlehead	2.7FTE	0.8FTE

- 3.7.3 There is some FTE not included on the table above as this is used for Youth Music Initiative (YMI) projects which move between schools throughout the year. Each school receives an equal amount of YMI time under this scheme. The scheme is funded by Creative Scotland.
- 3.7.4 This approach to allocation will be kept under review as the scale of demand for free music instruction is as yet unknown. The YMI offers a good opportunity to advertise the service and share details of the offer with our children and young people.

3.8 COLLABORATION WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 3.8.1 The Chief Officer, as instructed, engaged in discussions with Highland Council in order to consider the development of a partnership model for expanding digital delivery. It was thought that a digital service could be developed and offered within Aberdeen City and Highland but also offered outwith to help off-set costs.
- 3.8.2 Highland Council and Aberdeen City Council remain keen to collaborate in order to widen access to learning, celebrate our culture and support economic recovery for the future. Both education services have made highly effective use of G Suite tools to support the delivery of the curriculum and are well placed to collaborate.
- 3.8.3 The announcement of free music tuition for all and the publication of the OECD report in June has led to uncertainty. There is anecdotal evidence that many Local Authorities are developing digital solutions and Education Scotland are currently working to bring all parties together to ensure that offers are not duplicated. There are also indications of an expectation that all digital offers will be free to access.
- 3.8.4 As a result of the uncertainty, and the need to prioritise preparations for the new term, work in this area has paused until we gain further clarity. Officers would hope to have a clearer national picture in the coming months.

3.9 PROPOSALS FOR THE SERVICE IN THE LONGER TERM

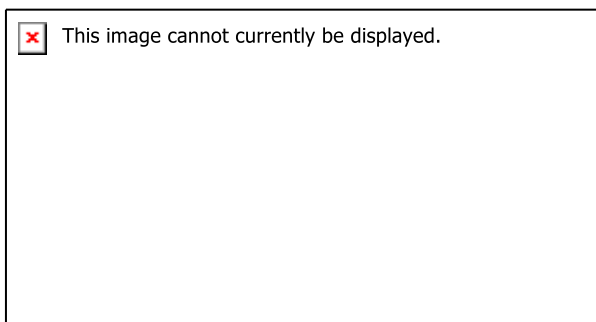
- 3.9.1 The service has identified that it has a potential capacity of 3000. 1431 young people are already registered for the service. The announcement of free music tuition is likely to lead to a significant rise in demand for the service. 3000 children are currently sitting on the waiting list for Music Tuition and this is likely to rise. The service will develop tracking and monitoring arrangements to ensure that it is well placed to identify patterns in demand so that the service can adapt appropriately.
- 3.9.2 A universal offer of Instruction will be available to all schools remotely. This will include the Big Noise offer, some of the singing resources already available on the service Google Site and some percussion workshops. This offer will be available to all schools and can be supported by class teachers and will not require children to be registered with the Music Service. It is hoped this approach will see increased numbers of children develop an interest in Music Instruction where opportunities have been limited previously.
- 3.9.3 It is proposed that the Google Site be further developed in collaboration with children and young people to ensure that practice lessons are available to all children and young people which can be accessed at any time. Some children leave the service as they don't like missing time with their peers in class and this digital anytime offer will allow children and young people to access instruction from either school or home. This resource would help children progress through the early stages of the grading system by incrementally learning and practicing skills. This offer would be available to all children registered with the Music Service and could be accessed either at school or at

home. This would help provide a more structured skills practice for all and could help children progress more quickly.

- 3.9.4 In order to future proof the delivery of music instruction it is important that we develop models of delivery to include delivery of live lessons through video link in order to increase opportunities for learners to work collaboratively and maximise instructor time. This would not remove 'in person' learning, rather look to a blended approach where tutors are present for some lessons and others are delivered digitally. This would also allow Instructors to engage with children from different schools at the same time. This model is used in a number of other Local Authorities and many others are beginning to adopt this approach. This work will be subject to on-going evaluation over the coming year to ensure that we find the optimum balance.
- 3.9.5 Working with groups has always been part of the service offer however it can present challenges for instructors who are used to working with individuals. In order to expand the service and meet demand it is essential that group delivery becomes the norm across the Broad General Education. Music Instructors will be guided to develop approaches to group delivery over the coming session.
- 3.9.6 In order to continue to showcase the work of young people and share successes with their communities, there is a need to increase opportunities for bands and ensembles in localities where this has not been previously available. Children and young people value the opportunity to come together to play. Children who attend group lessons and those who benefit from the digital anytime offer, would therefore be afforded opportunities to play together with a wider group of learners.
- 3.9.7 The research around learning a musical instrument shows a direct link to raising attainment and engagement for some young people. The service will develop approaches and systems to allow School Leadership Teams to access targeted tuition as part of wider initiative to raise attainment and support engagement in learning for our most vulnerable learners. This is a new approach but one with the potential to support a further closing of the gap for some children.
- 3.9.8 Monitoring data and performance will be of critical importance over the coming year. It is important that the service adapt to changing demand based on local data. A tracking system to measure % of uptake by school, % of pupils with protected characteristics receiving lessons, pupil progress and impact of tuition on learner engagement will be established and monitored.
- 3.9.9 It is proposed that an evaluation of the service be presented to Committee within one calendar year to determine next steps.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In keeping with most other Councils, a charge was previously made for Music Instruction. The national policy of free Music Instruction will be implemented and £168,000 has been awarded to Aberdeen City Council to offset any loss.
- 4.2 The table below outlines the costs of the service, staff costs including the coordinator and all administration associated with the service. During the pandemic the service experienced a significant reduction in fees due to the reasons explained above. The award from Scottish Government will be used to offset the cost of loss of fees.



- 4.3 The Scottish Government have indicated that Local Authorities who previously charged for music lessons (of which Aberdeen City Council was one) will be able to access “top up” funding to cover shortfalls in income. However figures have yet to be confirmed along with any longer-term funding strategy.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:
- The Education(Scotland) Act 1980
 - The Education(Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004
 - The Equality Act 2010
 - The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- 5.2 The approach being taken to offer music instruction outlined in this Report will assist the Council, as Education Authority, to fulfil these duties more effectively, and secure necessary and appropriate music instruction for pupils across the city.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Risk that an equitable offer will not be made available to all communities across the city	L	Implementation of the staffing allocation as outlined in this report

Compliance	Failure to offer free access to free Instrumental Instruction as per national policy		<p>Implementing tracking arrangements as outlined in this report.</p> <p>Increasing access to digital resources and group lessons to help manage demand.</p>
Operational	Failure to meet demand for a service	M	<p>Implementing tracking arrangements as outlined in this report.</p> <p>Increasing access to digital resources and group lessons to help manage demand.</p>
Financial	Scottish Government funding may not cover the budgeted income and continued staffing costs resulting in financial pressure	M	Continue to work with COSLA and the Scottish Government as they have committed to work with Local Authorities to develop a model for a longer term sustainable instrumental music tuition service which includes sustainable funding.
Reputational	Failure to meet demand for a service	L	Monitoring uptake and promoting agility in the service.
Environment / Climate	None identified		

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Policy Statement 7 – Commit to closing the attainment gap in education. The paper asks the committee to note the establishment of a universal offer available to all children and young people and the general move to group lessons for learners in the Broad General Education.

Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcome	The proposals within this report support the stretch outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of nearly all Children and Young people stretch outcomes in the LOIP. The paper seeks to inform how the service will provide an equitable offer of music instruction across the city. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2026. • 90% of Children and young people will report that their experiences of mental health and wellbeing have been listened to by 2026. • As corporate parents we will ensure 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, health and emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026. • 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026. • Child friendly city where all decisions which impact on children and young people are informed by them by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	N/A

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Following an assessment no DPIA required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

None.

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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