

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Ariannu Addysg Cerddoriaeth a Munediad ati / Funding for and Access to Music Education
CWLC(5) FAME21

Ymateb gan Heather Powell, Rheolwr Gyfarwyddwr, Cerdd Cydweithredol Sir Ddinbych Grŵp Cynghori Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol / Evidence from Heather Powell, Managing Director, Denbighshire Music Cooperative Advisory Group Additional Information

For me the set up of our cooperative, Denbighshire Music Cooperative (DMC) was out of necessity, not choice. We had a full cut, went through redundancy and decided to continue.

Almost three years on we have a vastly successful cooperative that has again been nominated for National awards and have expanded our original team of 22 tutors to a team of almost 60.

We had no support whatsoever – this business started in my lounge! The Wales coop centre at the time had lost funding and, as such couldn't help us although they have since been fantastic.

Our LA gave us some transition monies, but not a lot – 30k.

Practical matters that would have really helped us that other authorities moving to our model should consider would be –

- Help with office space – not difficult for any LA to give a coop a small office at no cost to run from – this should be suggested (we have had to rent our own at a cost of £10k a year)
- Help with translation costs – minimal to any LA but difficult for a coop to find this money (we spent £7000 on this last year alone). The MU 'Altogether Now' guides great but, not in Welsh language, nor were any of their policies – I've now done all of this and we have them all in both languages.
- Help with loan of any council instruments – Our LA have, in fairness been fantastic with this(although we have to meet maintenance and insurance costs – £4500 last year)
- Help with a concert venue once a year for each co-op to put a concert on at no cost – last week for example it cost me £3600 to hire a venue to put a concert on involving almost 600 pupils – the council owns the building!

- A central steer to all schools from each LA that the co-op is the recommended model – otherwise you end up having individuals and others competing and it will fail ultimately...
- Support with safeguarding and child protection – Vastly important and not always there for us.
- Support with TUPE – This was a minefield!
- HMRC VAT issues – we've just had HMRC inspectors in and dealt with this head on – we also asked them to look at self-employed v employed model and have a written directive on this now to safeguard us against any future issues. Happy to share more info on this as needed.

Financial matters to aid co-operative set up's

- Our LA gave a one off transition fee – and that's it. Due to this, we cannot afford to lower our hourly rate to schools – currently £35.00(cheapest in North Wales by far). Several of our schools have indicated for September 2017 they will no longer be in a position to subsidise lessons and, as such will pass full cost to parents – this works out at £8.75 for a 15 minute primary lesson/£11.67 for 20 minutes secondary price – therefore we lose pupils as not many can afford this as schools charge termly in advance. It is virtually impossible to engage any FSM pupils or SEN/LAC pupils – Often PDG was being used to fund music but this has now gone to pay for classroom assistants so that's gone also – its dire. Co-ops need core funding each year from their LA to work long term. Yes, so far we are doing well but only due to sheer hard work and determination – it's a daily battle to keep schools on board.

With a central pot to each LA ring fenced for the music service we would be able to bring price down for schools and therefore engage more pupils – unless this happens even coops long term will be unviable. We have been fortunate to run our ensembles on grants but – if more coops are established there will be fierce competition for these grants – many, once you've got them will not allow you to reapply for three or even 5 years!

I would suggest core funding of £100k that each LA must give to the music service model of choice – if this isn't worded carefully believe me, music services won't see it!

Here in Denbighshire, a core funded amount of £100k a year would allow us to significantly reduce costs to schools and therefore we would reach far more pupils particular in deprived areas. This would also run our 9 weekly ensembles.

I read comments re co-ops not being 'strategic' and disagree totally – if anything, all of my tutors have had to step up, think on their feet and be far more willing to take any work on offer – for this reason, we've expanded provision in smaller, rural schools vastly – once a tutor is in there for one pupil, many more hear and see the lesson and want to get involved! Many tutors were hiding behind employment and 'coasting' along – in this model everyone has to consider standards and work harder as they're self-employed! There is a much better team approach, people who had worked for years in same schools but never spoken are now all in a team – we have social events, CPD days and a friendly office that offers full daily support. The tutors tell me they've never been happier – over summer we all run a huge summer school – tutors have to engage 10 pupils to attend then they have a week's work(which substitutes their lost employed Holiday Pay). The tutors are empowered and listened to – the schools tell me it is a far better service and for schools it is cheaper than previous service considerably.

Personally, having been an employed 'peri' for 12 years – this is best thing that could happen here – and I say that having lost my pension in the cut.

Other counties seem to be frightened of this model – it is really very simple and in my view, with core funding works fantastically well and is viable. The unstable picture across the country would settle with a direct decision from WAG – if every county operated a cooperative model I think services would greatly strengthen and connect with one another – but it will not work, long term with no 'core' funding.