

Music Hubs Investment Programme Midlands Group

January 2023

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Note on transcription:

Between Monday 9 January – Tuesday 17 January 2023, Arts Council England conducted six focus groups with 140 participants from throughout the music, education, youth, creative and cultural communities as part of their consultation on the Music Hub Investment Programme. We recorded these focus groups in order to create and publish anonymised transcriptions so everyone can access the conversations.

Focus group participants were made aware of the plan to record before they confirmed their place at the focus group, and were reminded at the beginning of their session.

The audio recordings of the focus groups were independently transcribed by an external contractor. The transcription contractor has sometimes lightly edited the transcripts for clarity, and has noted where audio is not clear enough to transcribe. The contractor has not transcribed periods where focus group participants were doing individual tasks, or long periods of silence. This has been noted in the transcripts.

Arts Council England has subsequently anonymised these transcripts by removing the names of participants and their organisations, as well as all other identifying details, such as the location of their organisation.

The list below outlines the type of organisation each ‘Voice’ represents, as self-identified through our focus group expression of interest form:

How would you best describe the organisation you work for?

- Voice 1: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation
- Voice 2: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation
- Voice 3: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 4: I work for a school, multi-academy trust or other education provider
- Voice 5: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 6: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 7: I work for a Local Authority
- Voice 8: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 9: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation
- Voice 10: Other
- Voice 11: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation
- Voice 12: I work for a Local Authority
- Voice 13: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 14: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 15: N/A
- Voice 16: N/A

The focus groups were facilitated by Melissa Wong and Douglas Lonie, assisted by Arts Council England employees. Hannah Fouracre (Director, Music Education at Arts Council England) attended every focus group. This focus group was observed by representatives from the Department for Education, who have been anonymised in this transcript in line with Department for Education policy. Arts Council England employees have not been anonymised for clarity.

Beginning of transcription:

Hannah Fouracre: I've just bumped into Darren in the building, so he wanted to come and say hello.

Darren: Hello, I'm Darren, chief exec of the Arts Council. I just wanted to say hello and thank you very much for giving up your time today. I really, really appreciate it. It's really important to us, and it's important that we hear everything you have to say. So, through Hannah, we'll pick everything up, but just thank you again for being here. obviously, you've got lots of wallcharts and sticky post-it notes, and we will read all of them and digest them, but thank you very much, and have a great day. I'm going to go now. Cheers. We're next door but see you soon.

Hannah Fouracre: I think we're in a weird position of it being boiling in the room, but quite cold when the wind blows on you from the window, so see how you get on. It's 10:01, so shall we get started? Thank you all so much for coming in today. My name's Hannah Fouracre. I'm the director for music education at Arts Council England. I really want to thank you first for putting yourselves forward to be part of our focus groups. It's really appreciated, and I think it's - well, particularly post-COVID - so nice to just be in a room face-to-face with people talking about things like this. So we're going to be having lots of interesting conversations. A little bit of housekeeping. Hopefully, you've all found the little kitchen by now, just to the left of the room. At any point go and help yourself to water, tea, coffee, hot chocolates, cappuccinos, whatever else the machine does. The toilets, women's are just on the right, you go a little bit further round to find the men's.

I've just checked, and we did have a planned fire alarm today, but it's been cancelled, because they couldn't bear the thought of all these people having to try and get out of the building, so they're doing it tomorrow instead. So, there shouldn't be a fire alarm. If there is, follow the signs to get out of the building and the staff that will appear to help us. You might have noted the little table in the centre with a black machine on it. We are recording today's session. That is so that we can create anonymised transcripts of the conversations that we'll have today. That will help our researchers to analyse all the feedback, and we're planning to publish an anonymised transcript of the session, so everybody that's not been able to come today will be able to read what we've talked about, but that will be anonymised. You won't be named in that. Because of that, I have a really weird request, and it never becomes natural. So, every time you speak today, could you please say your name, so that we can attribute your comments to your reference? You won't remember every time, and neither will we, but we'll try and remind you to say your name after you've finished speaking if you haven't done it already.

So, the outline of the agenda is here. I'm going to start by just providing a little bit of scene-setting context. Some of you will have read some of this, or you will have heard me say some of this, but I want to make sure that we're all on the same page today as we go in to do the exercises that we're going to be doing on the methodologies that we'd like to talk to you about today. Everything that we're talking about today is really important. It's important to the Department for Education, it's important to the Arts Council, it's important to you and your colleagues, and it's really important to children and young people. We want you to be able to speak freely today, to think innovatively, to think about what could be. We'll be exploring lots of different ideas, and I'm sure that we'll have lots of different

views and opinions, and we really welcome those, but I do ask that you share those respectfully of each other, please. I'd like to introduce Melissa, our external facilitator for today's session. Would you like to say hello?

Melissa Wong: Hello everyone. My name is Melissa Wong. I'm an independent researcher, evaluator and consultant working across the arts and cultural sector, and mainly focusing on children and young people, learning and participation and social impact of the arts.

Hanna Fouracre: Melissa was supposed to be joined by Dougie Lonie today, but, unfortunately, he has had a personal circumstance that's meant he's not been able to join us today. Because of that, Becky, from the Arts Council, is going to be helping just with a little bit of post-It note action and note-taking to support Melissa. So, if we can just start by going around the room and introducing ourselves and the organisation that we represent, if you do represent one? Becky, do you want to say a proper hello?

Becky Sliwa Webb: Yes. Hi everyone. So, I'm Becky Sliwa Webb, and I'm the senior officer for training and advice at Arts Council England.

Voice 9: My name is [redacted]. I work in the community setting with [redacted]. I have 30 years of experience in music education. I also work with [redacted] as a hub lead, and I also work for [redacted]. So I'm very interested in sharing what I believe I have as experience, as well as sharing some views that will, hopefully, enlighten diversity into the subject as well.

Voice 8: Hi. My name is [redacted]. I am the founder of [redacted] which is a private [unclear words 0:19:36.6] instrument service based in [redacted].

Voice 4: Hi. I'm [redacted]. I'm a curriculum improvement leader at a special school in [redacted].

Voice 13: I'm [redacted] chief executive [redacted] so lead partner of [redacted]. I grew up in Birmingham. I started my career in Staffordshire. I'm Midlands through and through.

Voice 5: I'm [redacted] from [redacted].

Voice 11: I'm [redacted]. I'm chief executive of [redacted], which is part of the [redacted].

Hugh James: Hugh James. I'm the senior relationship manager in the Arts Council Midlands team, and part of my remit is having the overview of music education in the Midlands.

Voice 16: I'm [redacted]. I'm from the Department for Education music policy team, so it's really lovely to come and hear things direct. I'm also from Birmingham, so this is a nice trip home for me.

Voice 15: I'm [redacted]. I'm also from the DfE, working on music, and I'm based in Leicestershire.

Voice 3: I'm [redacted] from [redacted]. We're in [redacted]. We have the music service in [redacted], and we lead the music partnership, which is the hub for [redacted].

Voice 12: I'm [redacted]. I'm head of service for [redacted] and partner in the music partnership that [redacted] 's just mentioned.

Voice 7: I'm [redacted]. We're not related, by the way. I'm running [redacted], which is the Lead Organisation for [redacted].

Voice 14: Hi, I'm [redacted], and I lead [redacted], which is the Lead Organisation of [redacted].

Voice 1: I'm [redacted]. I'm from [redacted]. I run [redacted], which is a cultural organisation specialising in music. We're the Lead Organisation currently for the [redacted] Hub, and I'm proud to be from East Anglia originally, dare I say it?

Voice 6: Hi. I'm [redacted]. I'm head of [redacted], which is currently the Lead Organisation for [redacted].

Voice 10: Hi. I'm [redacted] I grew up in Birmingham and played in the youth orchestra with [redacted]. I'm currently working for [redacted] who are passionate about the inclusion of children with physical disabilities.

Voice 2. I'm [redacted]. My experience, I've had 40 years of working in education, further and higher education. I was also a member of [redacted] as a member for 15 years. I'm actually here to represent [redacted], which is a network of promoters across the Midlands.

Hannah Fouracre: Welcome. Thank you. I'm a Yorkshire girl. So, first, I'm going to start with an introduction to the Arts Council, which will be brief. We are the national development agency for creativity and culture in England. We're a non-departmental body that's sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. We invest public money from the government and from the National Lottery to support the sector and to deliver our vision that's set out in our tenure strategy, Let's Create. Since 2012 we worked really closely with the Department for Education, to support the delivery of the government's National Plan for Music Education. That's included our role as fundholder for Music Education Hubs on behalf of the Department for Education, as well as co-investing with

them in a network of national youth ensembles and a programme called In Harmony.

The Department for Education provides the funding for Music Education Hubs, and as a development agency and funder we also support Music Education Hubs through investing in many hub partners, like music organisations, venues and festivals, and we also enable hubs to apply for funding through National Lottery project grants, or for music educators through programmes like Developing Your Creative Practice. We've also got relationships with every local authority and many place-based partnerships. Our investment in youth music of around just under £10 million a year also supports many Hub Lead Organisations and hub partners. So following the publication of the refreshed National Plan for Music Education in June last year, we were delighted that the Department confirmed that the Arts Council will continue as fund-holder for Music Hubs, and they've asked us to run an investment process for hubs, which is launching this year. We're really excited about continuing as a fund-holder, and to work with everybody that's contributing to a fantastic and accessible music education for all children and young people in England.

The new National Plan builds on the vision that was outlined in the 2011 version of the plan, but it responds to the many changes that have been advocated since then by the education, music education, and music sectors, as well as by children and young people themselves. The plan sets out the government's priorities for music education until 2030, including plans to strengthen the success of music education hubs. The plan contains a refreshed vision for music education, which is that all children and young people should be enabled to learn to sing, play an instrument, create music together, and that they should be

able to progress their musical interests and talent into a professional, creative career. It also highlights the importance of Music Hubs with meaningful engagement and collective action by a broad range of partners that are relevant to the musical lives of children and young people. That's based on an understanding that by working together we can best support young people to develop as musicians, providing real variety and reach and opportunity.

Because of their key role, the National Plan outlines a refreshed strategy for Music Hubs. So let's talk about that briefly. First of all, Music Hubs are groups of organisations that work together to create joined-up music education provision for children and young people under the leadership of a Hub Lead Organisation. The range of partners within a Music Hub will continue to be determined at a local level, and each member of the partnership is expected to play a key role in supporting hub activity, and the operating and governance models for Music Hubs will be determined locally as well, based on what is relevant and useful to that place. The National Plan replaces the existing core and extension roles for Music Education Hubs with a refreshed strategy for Music Hubs that is expressed by a vision, three aims, and five strategic functions. The vision is the same as the vision for the National Plan as a whole, and its three aims are outlined here.

The first is to support schools and other education settings to deliver high-quality music education. The second is to support all children and young people to engage with a range of musical opportunities in and out of school. The third is to support young people to develop their musical interests and talent, including into employment. Underpinning and driving and facilitating the work of the

Music Hub will be the responsibility of the Music Hub Lead Organisation. So, thinking about their role specifically, that Lead Organisation will be responsible for the coordination and facilitation of the hub partnership, and subsequently for the strategic development and oversight of a local plan for music education. They'll be responsible for the overall effective use of the Department for Education's funding, and for the development of a high-quality music education in their hub area, that will be delivered by the partnership and expressed through that local plan for music education, and they're going to achieve that through five strategic functions, which are on the screen, but you also have it in front of you to help with the exercises we're doing later.

In summary, they are to facilitate the operations of an effective and sustainable partnership, to connect with and respond to the needs of schools, to implement a strategy to ensure that music education is inclusive for all children and young people, to implement a strategy which will support equitable progression for all children and young people, and to ensure the strategic, financial, and operational sustainability of the hub. As part of the plan, the Department for Education also confirmed continued investment of £79 million a year into the Music Hub programme, including a grant of over £76 million per year directly into hubs. As I said, the plan announced that the Arts Council will run an investment process for Music Hubs and will be inviting organisations to apply for the role of the Lead Organisation, which I've just described. Those organisations will be the ones that receive the government grant to coordinate the Music Hub partnerships from September 2024.

So, some key dates. In the spring we will be sharing the guidance for applicants. Our online portal, Grantium, will open for applications against the criteria that will be in that

guidance later in the summer. After we've carefully considered every application against the criteria, we'll be letting applicants know whether or not they've been invited to become a Lead Organisation in early 2024, ready for starting in the September that year. The National Plan also set out the DfE's intention to fund fewer, more strategic hubs, through the investment programme, and that will be achieved by prescribed geographic areas. We've published the rationale for that on our website, and part of it is on the slide here, but I wanted to just share a few headlines. The DfE believes that hubs covering larger geographies will offer more strategic leadership and governance, increase the profile of Music Hub work across the area, improve provision, so by providing greater access to children and young people, and to schools, and supporting more consistency there will be greater access to resources and ideas, capacity and capability. It will better support the workforce, particularly around progression, and encourage stronger and more sustainable partnerships, including with schools and multi-academy trusts.

The DfE has also given a rationale for the use of prescribing the geographies, and they believe that will best support a fair and open process for bidders of all types, including those organisations which might be leading a hub at the moment, but also from new entrants to the programme. The DfE has outlined some guiding principles, that we've got here, and we need to keep these in mind today as we're going through the conversations that we're having. So, the guiding principles are that new hubs will cover multiple local authority areas, and be more consistent in terms of size, coverage and quality of provision. Geographic areas should be prescribed prior to the application process, and that means that prospective lead organisations will submit an application for a specific area. The prescribed geographic areas will not be

determined by current arrangements but be informed by open and objective consultation and evaluation. This one's really important: it's not intended that fewer Lead Organisations means that children and young people will be able to access less provision or have to travel further. There shouldn't be fewer organisations that are designing and delivering provision and support in the hub areas, but the Hub Lead Organisations will be more strategic, overseeing and working with and funding the partners to do that work on the ground.

So, we want to make sure that we're drawing on the experience and the knowledge of everybody from music, education, youth, creative and cultural communities, to help shape the Music Hub Investment Programme. So, in the autumn last year we launched the sector conversation and consultation phase of the programme, and to date that's included a range of sector communications activity, stakeholder management and market engagement. To support the development of the programme, we're also testing the options for prescribing the geographies, and to make sure that we can understand as far as we can the implications of transitioning and mobilising those new arrangements. That means we'll be able to present to the Department recommendations which are appropriate to the needs of the programme, to the organisations that might apply, and to children and young people themselves.

So, running these focus groups is part of how we're going to be able to do that, and there's also an open survey which mirrors the content of these sessions, and that's because we won't be able to talk to everybody via the focus groups, so the survey is going to make sure that we can allow everybody the opportunity to contribute. We're planning to use the outcomes of this activity and the analysis offered by Melissa and Dougie to make some final

recommendations to the Department about prescribed geographies. So, that's the context. We're going to head into the exercises with Melissa in a moment, but I wanted to pause to give you the opportunity to make sure that you're ready to go into the conversation. So, are there any questions on anything I've covered or any reflections that you want to share? If you could say your name before you speak, as well, please? No?

Voice 13: There are so many questions I don't think anyone knows where to start. Can I ask a question of [redacted]? You said there the DfE believe that larger hubs will improve the quality. Why do you believe that?

Voice 15: Well, I think we've published the rationale. So, is there a specific question about the rationale that you...?

Voice 13: Yes, well, I don't think the rationale answers that question. I've read the rationale, I've read it very, very closely. It doesn't tell us why the DfE believed that larger hubs will necessarily lead to better outcomes for children and young people. If I go a little bit further, it's in contrast to the statements in the National Plan about hubs providing local solutions.

Voice 15: I don't think it's in contrast. As I was saying, a hub currently, they're not - the idea that there's only 117 or 118 organisations in the hub network is clearly - we all know that's not right. It's hundreds. I don't know that anyone has quantified the number, but it would be, I don't know, 1000 organisations are currently actively engaged in the hub network. So, by that time, you could say, 'Well, should there be 1000?' I don't think that's - so I think what the rationale, I understand, is trying to make clear, is that there's a distinction between Hub Lead Organisations and the hubs, and therefore, my expectation, and our expectation I think, would be that this will create the opportunity for more organisations to get involved, not fewer.

Currently, from the call for evidence that we conducted in 2020, there was some evidence to suggest that some organisations felt they currently didn't have the opportunity to engage with the programme. That, for whatever reason, they weren't currently able to take part, and they felt that there were challenges there.

So, one of the hopes is, as a result of doing this, it will create the context in which more organisations feel they can get involved, because I think a lot of organisations - if I speak frankly, but others may disagree - there's a sense that there's this money, this £78 million plus all the money that the hubs generate through their own activities, and somehow they don't feel connected to that. They're not sure how to access it. They're not sure how do we get involved in that. That's certainly what the call for evidence suggested, but [unclear words 0:36:12.3] to use. So, I think that one of the hopes is that, as a result of this work, by there being fewer larger hubs, it will create the opportunity for organisations who currently work on a cross-LA basis, but also ones that work on a local basis, to get involved and to take part. So, my hope would be that, at the end of this process, it's not fewer organisations, it's more. It's more organisations, because those Hub Lead Organisations taking on a more strategic role have to work in partnership.

They cannot deliver - it wouldn't be possible or desirable for an organisation to be delivering everything on the ground, so they're going to have to look for those local solutions, and that's going to involve working with organisations that currently have a focus within the geographic area, but also organisations that don't. I mean, there's loads we could say, and we can spend all day talking about it, but that's one hope, and one expectation, that more organisations will feel that they have a seat at the table when it comes to the activity of Music Hubs.

Hannah Fouracre: I think we all know how important leadership is in making sure that we're delivering things

that are of high quality, and I think by moving towards having fewer strategic Lead Organisations, we're looking at really having excellent leadership, being able to draw in really excellent governance arrangements. People on our governing bodies of those larger hubs, you will appeal to people that want to work across larger geographies. You'll be able to engage into the other place-based partnerships that are working across larger geographies and be able to identify where there is really excellent provision that's really high quality that you can then scale up more quickly and easily across larger geographies, as well. So, I think, really thinking about that leadership and governance and accountability over those larger areas, will drive quality and improve the outcomes for children and young people.

Voice 15: One of the things that the call for evidence told us, and our other engagement that we've conducted through the National Plan and various other avenues, is that some organisations, and indeed some MATs and schools and others, at times feel that the geographic restrictions have made engagement more challenging. That, perhaps, there are these boundaries that they don't recognise, but that at times make it quite difficult for the hub network as a whole to provide a coherent response. So, say, for example, just take a MAT or perhaps a music organisation, once they get involved, but the Hub Lead Organisation they're engaged with says, 'Well, this is our boundary. We can't really go outside of that, and we don't really have a partner relationship with our neighbouring Hub Lead Organisations, such that we can reach a consistent agreement, because we just have a different way of working.' Then, obviously, there's the rationale, but we can give 1000 reasons as to why we hope it's going to be helpful.

It would be that those artificial constructs would be removed, so an organisation like a MAT or like a music organisation, a charity, or similar specialist provider, would be able to reach an

agreement that works for them, that's logical and reasonable, and aren't those geographic boundaries where you say, 'Well, you can do it up to this line in the map, but unfortunately, after that it's them, and we don't really talk to them, or we don't really know what they're doing, or they have a totally different way of working.' The call for evidence suggests that in some of our feedback we've received, that, at times, makes it quite challenging. Through not necessarily a fault of anyone, but just the nature of having 118 lines on a map. You could say, 'Why isn't it 155?' You could say, 'Why is it not any number?' At the moment, the feedback suggests that there are challenges, but again, colleagues around this table might say, 'Well, that's not an issue for me. We've never found that', but some people have indicated that currently it's a barrier to the effective partnership working that people would like to see.

Voice 6: I think that's right, [redacted]. I think that's absolutely true. There are real issues to do with this and the different geographical boundaries of things. I'm just not convinced that, given the way that academy chains spread far and wide, that it actually necessarily makes that much a difference by going to larger areas, because it's still going to cross those things. I think as soon as you have academy chains working in one way, and other things working in other ways, that's not going to happen. I think it might be better, but I don't think it solves it.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you, [redacted]. [redacted], and then [redacted].

Voice 8: What you described is exactly my experience. That feeling of being unable to engage with my Music Hub is my experience over the last six years, trying desperately to be recognised by the [redacted], but not having emails responded to, and that's because the lead of the [redacted] is my competition. So why would they promote my music service that's providing something a little bit different, actually? It's

growing, it's doing really well, providing a good service, providing an alternative in a county where [redacted] have had this monopoly. I feel quite unfairly treated, and I'm hoping that spreading it out, it will have that - my services I'd like to be promoted much more.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you, [redacted]. [redacted]?

Voice 14: Yes, I just wanted to ask a question, because I know we're going to be looking at the methodologies, aren't we, the three, and I just want to understand before I get into that. So we're looking at larger geographies, multi-hubs, but we're also talking about consistency of size and so on. So within the Midlands, which is a huge area, we've got really large, rural set-ups to start off with, and actually, I know we can't talk about our own services, but, for example, [redacted], we were the size of Northern Ireland to start off with. If we make ourselves even bigger - it's not so we don't work in partnership currently, because we do - I just want to understand how set are the pre-requisites that have been set around everybody must be a multi-hub, must be larger geography. I want to understand that before we get into - because if that's set, and that's a done deal, but I know with the teaching hubs, for example, there was the tiered funding allocation, where, if it was a large geographical size, actually, there were exceptions to the rule. So, I just wanted to understand that. I don't know if the pre-requisites are set.

Hannah Fouracre: So, we've been asked to consult on the basis of the guiding principles, which are that there would be multiple local authorities, and they would be prescribed, but it is a consultation. So, your feedback today, and in the survey, if you're also planning to complete that, will be considered and fed back to the Department for Education. The issue that you're facing in terms of consistency of size, I think is a really important thing to feedback as we talk

today, because I think something really interesting for us to think about is what do we mean by consistency of size. Are we talking about the number of pupils? Are we talking about the size of the area? That is what we want you to start sharing as we talk about the methodologies today. Those methodologies are example methodologies that are to get us talking. They're not the three options. So, I think we're heading into starting to think about the things that we want to draw out from you today. Does anybody have a final question before we then go on to the exercise?

Voice 7: Yes, the one thing with the prescribed levelling things up, obviously, there is one already massive hub in the [redacted], of eight, nine, ten local authority areas. Obviously, if the idea is, potentially, to make everything mirror up, and there's also other multi-area hubs, etc., is the idea that they would stay as multi-area hubs, regardless of what happens moving forward, or is every part of the map up for debate about whether that changes the prescribed geographies as well? Because, obviously, it doesn't affect me - I'm currently working in a single-area hub - but it does change a lot of things. If you don't want to break things up, but there's already one that's a size of [redacted], does that set a precedent of that's the size that we need, or is that still part of the consultation?

Hannah Fouracre: So, one of our other guiding principles is that we are not creating geographies based on current arrangements. So, we will be trying to work out a methodology that will work across England, not based on what this is already. [redacted]?

Voice 3: So, I know today the question in the focus groups is, essentially, about the size of [redacted], so just to be clear, are you saying there'll be further consultation to look at things like where you say, 'We don't want to look at what's gone before', but there is a decade of good practice there in place. There will

be elements of things that aren't working so well, as well, of course. But I think that's a big concern for me and the colleagues I've spoken to, that where there are partnerships, that have maybe even been emerging through that time about further developments - we're a three-partnership at the moment - we've had conversations about what that could look like, even before the plan arrived. Will there be a further opportunity to be able to comment on that?

Hannah Fouracre: So, at the moment, we've been asked to do this consultation and to feedback to the Department for Education. Our plan at the moment is that we're hoping to quite quickly come to an agreement on geographies, so I don't, at this stage, know what will be next and what time there will be for further consultation. I think we are very keen to try and protect particular parts of the investment programme, to make sure that what needs to be delivered can be delivered. So, for example, we want to make sure that, once the hub geographies have been announced, that the sector has enough time to go and have the really important conversations that it needs to have with potential partners before they can submit an application, and we want to make sure that at the end of the process there is time, once the announcements have been made, to make sure that the mobilisation can happen to make sure that things can start from the beginning of September 2024. So the consultation feels really pressured in terms of time, but that's because we're trying to protect time further down the line, but the feedback from all of the sessions and the survey will be given to the Department, and we will consider with them what we might need to do, if anything, after this.

Voice 6: Interesting about what's just come up. Has any research been done into what the geographic clusters of academy chains actually are? Given the point you made, which

I think is a really valid one, is there any evidence about what clusters they do cluster in and around the country? Because that would be worth considering as a model.

Voice 15: Well, there is research, but that isn't what's driving this. I used MATs as an example of one type of organisation. A hub is a partnership of all sorts of organisations. Schools, and schools that are set up within trusts, or schools that are set up within LAs are just one aspect of that. It's not the driving principle; it's just the recognition and the fact that the music education landscape in 2023 is somewhat different from the music education landscape of 2011, and therefore making sure that Music Hubs reflect the education landscape, and indeed the cultural landscape that exists, is obviously desirable, but that's not the driving principle. As you said, MATs are all shapes and sizes. There's lots of small MATs, one-school MATs, and larger MATs. As Hannah says, just as we're not using the existing hub geographical splits as the driving factor, neither are we using any other, because it has to be fair and transparent, and it has to be seen to be fair and transparent. Therefore, we wouldn't be seeking to align with any particular model of any working, because that wouldn't necessarily be fair and transparent to everybody.

Voice 6: Okay, except that I do think that half the problem that we have at the minute is so many different things going on, and the government having, basically, dismantled education based in local authorities and replaced it with something else. This is not in my probably personal interests, but I can see there is a logic in trying to actually make those things match up again, rather than actually pulling across each other all the time.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you, [redacted]. We're going to take one last question, and then we're going to move on to the exercises. [redacted]?

Voice 2: You've put up the indicative budgets within. Is that more or less than what's currently invested in Music Hubs?

Hannah Fouracre: It's the same.

Voice 2: So you're expecting more for the same?

Hannah Fouracre: Well... I'm just trying to think how to answer this. We're not expecting more...

Voice 2: I don't mind you saying yes.

Hannah Fouracre: No, because I don't think the answer is yes. What we're looking at is not that the provision for children and young people will be drastically different; it's how. How hubs are going to be working is changing, not the what. So, we're not anticipating that it should cost more. Now, that doesn't mean that there haven't been significant challenges with increases in prices in inflation in the last few years, but, broadly, it's how, not what, that's changing.

Voice 2: I'm there as an external provider wanting to get Jazz on the agenda. You can't do it unless you invest in it, and if your existing investment is taken up with schools education, and you can't do more, can you?

Hannah Fouracre: I think what would be really interesting, as we go through the conversation, is about whether we think any of the models might make leveraging of the funding against the hub grants more successful or harder, because currently there's a lot of leveraged income, and we're looking to see how we can continue that and increase it. So, it might aid or hinder that, so keep that in mind as we go through the conversation. What we found in the other three focus groups that we've had this week is

that questions and reflections will come up throughout conversation today. So, at any point you can ask something, or pop it on a post-It note and put it on general reflections, and we'll capture those. So, this isn't the end of your opportunity to be able to ask questions, but I think it's a good time to move on to starting the exercises.

Melissa Wong: Thanks, Hannah. So, let's just go onto the first slide. So you'll notice it says, 'Our role' here. That's because I was meant to be joined by my colleague, Dougie Lonie. Dougie is co-director and co-founder of there is an alternative, a consulting agency developing creative approaches to capturing evidence of social impact. He's very familiar with the music education sector, as well, having spent a lot of time working in this area, and I know he wishes he could have been with us today, but he was very much involved in designing the way that this focus group is going to run. He's also going to be very much involved in reviewing all the evidence, all the input that we gather today, and helping analyse and feed it back to Arts Council and DfE. Just to tell you a bit about our role, so we've been commissioned by Arts Council to facilitate these focus groups to ensure they run smoothly, and importantly, to make sure that we're hearing from a real range of voices with different types of relationships, different ways of working with music hubs currently.

We have no directive responsibility in terms of the final decisions on prescribed geographies, but our role is just to provide summaries of what's been heard today, and to ensure that your views are represented fairly to Arts Council and the DfE. When we're reporting back about what's been said today, this will be presented at an area level and at a national level. So what that means is, yes, we do have a recorder in the middle of the room, and yes, we are asking you to state your name every time you speak,

but when the transcripts are published your names will be stripped away from those transcripts, and any identifying details. So if you say the name of your organisation, that will be stripped away as well. In the report that Dougie and I give back to Arts Council and the DfE will just be reporting back at a high level the overall feel and sentiment of the room, on an area and a national level, rather than identifying you individually. So, I hope that provides some assurance as we go into our conversations today.

Let's go onto the next slide. So, we are carrying out this national consultation with everyone who's involved in the musical lives of children and young people across the country. So, this includes five stakeholder focus groups, one of each of the five Arts Council areas; one digital stakeholder focus group. So across all of these focus groups I believe we're talking to around 175 people over the span of two weeks, which is incredible to be able to have conversations with so many people, but, of course, there are still people who won't be able to take part, just because of capacity, so we are also running this open survey as well, which is for everyone who works across the sector to respond to. As Hannah said, the focus groups and the survey cover the same content. There are some slight tweaks, just to reflect the different formats. So what that means for you in practical terms, is that if you've said what you feel like you needed to say in this focus group today, you don't then have to go back and do a survey as well.

On the flip side, if you come away from this focus group and you think to yourself, ooh, I really wish I'd said that, or we didn't have quite enough time to say as much as I wanted in this area, or, oh, I just thought of this extra thing, please do go and fill out the survey, and make sure anything else you didn't get the chance to say today is

captured as well. So, let's talk a little bit about the aims of what we're doing today. We have three aims for today's focus group. We're going to, firstly, work together to interrogate different methodologies. You've been sent in advance of today three different approaches to prescribing geographies. We're calling them the regional, the subregional and the locally nuanced. We're also going to try to draw out and understand the implications of these three scenarios, and when we talk about that we're thinking about it, essentially, in short-, medium-, and long-term. What does it mean in terms of the immediate transition? What does it mean in terms of mobilisation? Importantly, what does it mean in terms of the ongoing impact for children and young people under this scenario?

Finally, we're going to explore the guiding principles that DfE has given us for these new Music Hub geographies. The things that we're not going to do is we're not going to agree an overall preferred geographic option. I absolutely want to hear from each of you individually about the preferences of your own organisation, but we're not going to come to a consensus; we're not going to make a decision in this room today. The other thing that we're not going to do is we're not going to debate the use of prescribed geographies within the Investment Programme. That's a decision that's already been made. The purpose of the conversation today is to think about what those prescribed geographies should look like. So, let's talk a little bit about the structure of the conversation we'll have today. As I said, we've borrowed three example scenarios for prescribed geographies. These are all drawn from real-world scenarios, real-world subdivisions of England, for service delivery across education-related sectors.

You'll probably have lots of reflections about how they might apply to the music education world. They're not

intended to be a perfect fit for music education. We're very much aware of that. What they are intended to do is just to give you something concrete to look at, and to help stimulate feedback about the implications of the three different approaches on a regional, subregional or a locally-nuanced level. It's really important to say, as well, that the three scenarios you've been presented with don't necessarily reflect the views or the preferences of either Arts Council or the DfE. I know very much from having worked with Arts Council to prepare for today's focus group that they very much need to hear your feedback. They haven't already got an exact number or an exact approach in mind. That's why they want to hear from you, and they want to take everything today into account in feeding back to the DfE to make that decision.

So going onto the next slide, I said we'll talk about the implications of these three geographic scenarios, and the way we're going to do that is we're going to think about it in terms of, if this were the scenario that was taken to prescribing geographies for Music Hubs, what would that mean for a Music Hub Lead Organisation in terms of delivering the five strategic functions of HLOs? So those are partnerships, schools, musical progression and development, inclusion and sustainability. Each of you should have a printout in front of you with those five strategic functions, and the full definitions, so you can reference them as you're thinking and as we're having our conversation. In terms of the three scenarios, you've probably taken a look at the links on the websites that you were sent. You've probably looked at what that might mean for your particular area. You don't need to know the exact details of them. You don't need to understand what their work or focus is; you don't need to understand what's the organisation that's leading them, or even the specific location that they use. It's just to give you a sense of the

flavour of what that might feel like if that was the general approach that was taken.

In terms of the final decision about prescribed geographies for Music Hubs, the number and the exact structure of these scenarios is not likely to be borrowed and taken wholesale. It will very much be taking into consideration the factors that affect music education specifically. So the purpose of looking at these scenarios is to test a rough number and a rough approach to creating an equivalent Music Hub cohort. Finally, it's just worth saying that the final structure and the final number will ensure that a national coverage is sustained, and that organisations of all kinds are able to contribute as active partners within a Music Hub. So, let's go onto the next slide. We'll talk about the three different scenarios. Within each scenario, what we'll do first, is I'll present the scenario to you, and there will be an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions to help you understand the scenario fully, and then we'll have some time for individual reflection.

So there are sticky notes scattered throughout the room. You'll notice that they're in three different colours. What we're asking you to do is to log your thoughts, your ideas, or your questions about this scenario on three different colours: green for opportunities, yellow for neutral or not sure what this might mean, and pink for risks. Once you've written up your individual sticky notes, so one thought per sticky note, you can go around the room and put them up on the relevant flip chart. So we've got one flip chart for each of the five strategic functions, and then we've also got a general reflections flip chart. So, this is if 'ou have a thought about the scenario that doesn't fall neatly under the five strategic functions. You can use the gen'ral reflections to capture that. Once we've all had a chance to think individually about the scenario, we'll come and sit

back down at the table, and we'll have a group discussion. So, we'll take a look at some of the things that people are saying, and get a sense of what the overall things that are jumping out at us are, what the overall feelings in the room are.

Finally, for each scenario I'm going to ask you to give it an overall rating on a scale of one to five. So, in the far corner there, on one of the grey boards, we have a matrix, where each scenario is presented one, two, three, and you'll rate them on a scale of one to five. One meaning not at all effective, and five meaning extremely effective. I never try to tell people to fit themselves in a box, but for the purposes of rating these scenarios, I am going to ask you to, please, put your dots under one of the numbers rather than on a line, and the reason for that is just because this is for parity with the online survey, where we're asking people to pick a number on a scale of one to five, and they won't get the chance to do half these. So just a few quick ground rules for how we're going to work together today. We have a lot of different people in the room. People have come from a lot of different experiences and organisations. We have current Music Hub Leads, community music organisations, schools, etc. I just want to say that what we're looking for is we're not expecting everyone to be an expert on every strategic function of music hubs. Speak from your own experiences and your perspectives, and what your preferences would be for your organisation in terms of the scenario that would work best for you and the way that you would work with music hubs going forwards.

Secondly, because there are a lot of people in the room, and because we want to try to capture a clear recording. Let's all just speak one at a time, so to do that, please just raise your hand and wait to be invited to speak. When someone is speaking, please let them get their thoughts

out and don't interrupt them. Everyone's been doing a great job of saying their name before they speak, so please do continue to do that. Finally, we're asking everyone to observe the Chatham House Rule. So, what this means is just to respect the confidentiality of the conversation that we're having today. If you come out of this focus and you go back to your office and you're telling your colleagues about this conversation afterwards, feel free to tell them about the overall things that came out of this conversation as a whole, but please don't identify any specific individual who was here or any specific thing that could be attributed to that person.

One more thing that's not on this slide, but it would be very helpful if you could please use your best penmanship, because if I can't read your notes then it makes it very difficult for me to report back. Is that all clear? Does anyone have any questions about what we're doing?

Voice 6: I think you should have warned us about the colour scheme before [redacted] and I scribbled all over these things.

Melissa Wong: We do have lots of extra, so if at any point you need more sticky notes, just let us know and we'll get them to you.

Voice 14: I've just got a quick question. Just so I can really do this in the right way possible, because I want it to be really productive, so if we're, potentially, rating models from one to five - I know you said the methodologies don't assume the geographies will be identical, but for that exercise - because if you don't know who you're partnered with, it's really difficult to rate - shall we assume the geography would be likely to be similar to a Maths Hub and a Teaching Hub, in order to make that decision? Because, otherwise, it's really difficult to rate

when you don't know who the potential partners are going to be that you're going to be working with.

Melissa Wong: That's a really good question. I'm going to challenge you to really try to think about the scenarios in terms of the number of Hub Lead Organisations overall, and the overall size of geographies that they would be working in, rather than the specific boundaries that you see in the examples that you've been given. So, when you're thinking about giving your rating to them, think about it in terms of the number and the size, rather than what does it look like for Maths Hubs, or what does it look like for Teaching School Hubs.

Voice 14: Yes, it's just that partnership which is so important for effective delivery. If we're here to underpin, drive, facilitate, that's a really big deal. I get it.

Melissa Wong: I get that it will be difficult to assign a rating in the absence of that specific detail, but that's just not quite the level of conversation that we're able to get to, because the Arts Council and the DfE do still need to make this decision first about the overall size of the geographies. So just keep in mind that this is the stage of the conversation that we're at, and there will be a later stage when that further decision will be made.

Voice 13: Can I ask a further question? Are we to assume that all prescribed geographies will be geographically contiguous, or is it possible that some prescribed geographies will be demographically similar with places that are not next to each other?

Melissa Wong: What does contiguous mean?

Voice 13: Next to each other.

Melissa Wong: Ah, thank you. So, could you repeat the question?

Voice 13: So should we assume that a geographical area will be a clump of people that's in the same place, or could it, for instance, be a collection of inner city areas that have the same demographic that are working together?

Melissa Wong: I'm going to refer that question to Arts Council England.

Hannah Fouracre: So the samples we've shared are all neighbouring, but I would welcome thoughts on whether you think there is a different approach that we should be thinking about, which you might want to share in general reflections.

Melissa Wong: Does that answer your question?

Voice 13: Yes. Well, so we assume geographically close, but make comments.

Melissa Wong: Perfect. Any other questions before we get started? Let's jump into Scenario 1, then. So, Scenario 1, you've probably heard of or interacted with in some way already. This is drawing from Bridge organisations. So we've given a bit of information about what Bridge organisations are on the slide, but the main thing that you need to know is that, within this scenario, we're talking about a network of ten organisations that are structured on a regional level. The official government regions of the country, there are nine of them. In this particular example there are ten, but I think in both cases we're talking about for the purposes of the Midlands is West Midlands Hub, and East Midlands Hub. Are there any clarifying questions about Scenario 1?

Voice 5: You probably can't answer it. I'm just thinking about the politics of both the West and East Midlands, and thinking how are local authorities going to be consulted, because some of them really don't like each other, and some of them want to have their own identity, and if you are turning them into - I mean, I suppose in the West Midlands we have more of an understanding of that working because of the combined authority stuff that's been happening the last few years, but do you run the risk of imposing something where there are going to be certain councils or certain local authorities and go, 'No, actually, we do not want to be part of that', and how will that be dealt with?

Melissa Wong: That is a great question, and I think that's something to capture under potential challenges for this scenario. So if you could write that on a sticky note, that would be great.

Voice 5: Three or four sticky notes, maybe.

Hannah Fouracre: I think it would be really interesting to think about that particular point in each of the three examples, and whether it changes in each of the examples, the political impact.

Melissa Wong: Any other clarifying questions?

Voice 8: Please excuse my ignorance - I have never been part of a hub - so when we talk about the West Midlands and the East Midlands, does that mean [redacted], or [redacted] where it continues to exist, but under a larger umbrella of [redacted] or does [redacted] no longer exist and we have one person organising?

Melissa Wong: That's a great question. So, what we're talking about is a scenario in which the current structure

no longer exists, and instead there are nine or ten regional-level Music Hubs across the country. So in the Midlands, one East Midlands Music Hub, one West Midlands Music Hub, and it's up to each of those two hubs to decide what the relationships will be with all of the different organisations that might feed into the work that they deliver.

Voice 8: Will it be up to organisations like mine to approach the West Midlands Hub to be a part of that, to be recognised as a partner?

Melissa Wong: Or, potentially, for them to approach you.

Voice 8: Is there a limit on the number of organisations that can be...?

Hannah Fouracre: No. What we'll be expecting in the applications is for the Lead Organisation applicants to talk to us about who their partners are, how they're going to reach out to those partners, what the partnership agreements might look like, how would you make sure quality is good across those partnerships. So we're not intending to say what the model means to be within each of the different examples. They will be up to the applicants to tell us who their partners are and how they're going to work with the partners.

Melissa Wong: Any other clarifying questions?

Voice 5: Can I just ask, Bridge organisations, I've got in the back of my mind something's happened with funding for Bridge organisations. Are they winding down now? Am I correct? Yes.

Hannah Fouracre: Yes.

Voice 5: It might be useful to know the reasoning behind that as to whether - because if you're looking at a model for how Music Hubs might work, and you're applying a model that's been wound down to it, are there areas where - is it being wound down, I guess I'm asking, because there aren't enough of them, or...? Do you see what I mean? So that we could feed that into the discussion.

Hannah Fouracre: So the Bridges were set up to help deliver Great Art For Everyone, our previous ten-year strategy. We've now got Let's Create, and we're approaching how we deliver arts, [redacted], very differently to how we have done previously. So, a lot of the work that they were doing, the strategy they were delivering against, has changed. So, some of them have made successful applications for funding through our national portfolio as part of the process and will be contributing to Let's Create. So, it's more about just a change of strategy, rather than a reflection on the work that they've been doing in this geographic model.

Voice 14: I'm not sure whether we're going to come onto this, so I apologise. Just tell me to stop, if so. I just want to understand, if it was an East Midlands and we work together anyway, Music Education Hubs East Midlands, I'm wondering would it be one local authority to step forward, or would it be a new governance model, because if track record is required as part of the application process for that, that makes a big difference in terms of risk and the legal work that would need to be done to bring those organisations together. You may not know yet, but I'm just thinking if track record is allowed, you'd need one local authority to step forward to take the risk. I know that's the [redacted] model anyway, but that's major for a big region such as ours, and West, actually, it would be similar.

Hannah Fouracre: I think it will be possible for new organisations to make an application. As you say, we do look at track record, but there are other ways that we can look at that in terms of the people that will be working on it, and their track record, and the things that they put in place, and there might be additional requirements to make sure that they're okay.

Voice 14: Yes, but that collaboration could be possible to form something.

Hannah Fouracre: Yes. It will be up to the people within that area to decide what was going to work best for them.

Melissa Wong: Really great questions. Let's just take a few minutes now for individual reflection on the sticky notes.

[Respondents complete task 1:13:41.0 to 1:24:15.3]

Melissa Wong: Can I draw your attention to this side of the room? Thank you, everyone. Grab a seat. thank you everyone so much. I see a tonne of sticky notes up on the wall; this is fabulous! Just a few quick overall observations. I'm noticing people had a lot to say about partnerships in particular, so that's just something to log. I'm also noticing a lot of pink so I'm getting a sense that there are a lot of concerns about the risks and challenges. It is nice to see there's a good spread of green at the top here, so let's start with some positives. I'm not going to have a chance to read through everyone's sticky notes, but we will do that as part of the analysis and reporting process. Just for the purposes of trying to get through as much as possible as a group, what I'll do is I'll just pick out a sample of a few sticky notes to give you a flavour of what's happening in the room. If there's anything that I've

missed that you think is really important, please do put your hand up and say.

So, starting with the green - and thank you everyone for your lovely penmanship! - we've got would keep existing strong partnerships in place, but give extra support to develop across the wider region. Ability to design activity with other partners - oh, that's nice! - e.g. one orchestra delivering in one part of the area, another in another place. Informal partnerships already in place e.g. West Midlands Music. Opportunity to form a partnership with a local organisation to provide equal opportunity across the region. Some very nice positives there. Some of the challenges, we've got risk of partnership funding being swallowed by bigger, high-profile organisations, with smaller organisations missing out. Vast, too many organisations.

Some areas could be disadvantaged geographically. Size, too many partners to make key decisions and have the biggest impact. That's quite interesting. Not enough exposure on how to become a partner with the Hub Lead. Require the building of a bureaucracy using resources. Have I read that correctly? Hopefully I have. So, let's just take a moment to reflect on what's been read out loud. What are the key things that are jumping out at you? Yes?

Voice 7: [redacted] for the tape. I'm just reflecting on - I've forgotten your name, sorry. Is it [redacted]?

Voice 8: [redacted].

Voice 7: [redacted] was saying about struggling to involve with her local music education hub in a small organisation. Imagine if that was 14 times the size, because [redacted] is one-fourteenth of the West Midlands; how difficult it would be for a

small organisation. I was thinking back to what [redacted] said actually at the start about more organisations being involved and stuff. Actually, the research piece probably needs to be commissioned about how many partners current Music Hubs have and how many they actually actively delivery currently. I know in my area I've got 20 odd partners; pulling together a full Hub Partners meeting is a bit of a nightmare. But out of that there's a load of really exciting work going on and it hits a lot of different boxes because if we want to do something with kids that are excluded from school, we go to one partner to do that. If you're SEND, you can work with a SEND specialist. It becomes a lot more difficult to do that without - at a much higher level.

So, imagine we're in the West Midlands and, say, Birmingham. No one from Birmingham here - well, yes, there is someone from Birmingham here! I was trying to use an example of where no one is, but say someone in Birmingham and then they're trying to look at, say, Shropshire or Telford and go, 'Oh, we really need to just pin down. There's a little challenging area of cold spot there.' That becomes so much more difficult. I think that's the main fear I find with such massive geographical areas, would be: how do you actually have the time... Does it actually just look like a blob on the map when there's no delivery happening without that local organisation that can go, 'Actually that is an area we can work with local partners to make something really exciting happen', rather than going, 'Oh yes, that's that part of our data. We'll look at that in the next 12 months.'

Melissa Wong: Thank you. Well observed. Yes?

Voice 14: Just following on [redacted] from what was just said, though, but on the flipside to that, given the example that you gave earlier: with a larger regional it actually would make it slightly easier, in my opinion, for small organisations because

there'd be one go-to rather than having to work with multiple Hubs across a region. So, you can see actually the flipside of that as well for knowing where to go to, because at the moment that is part of the problem. It's so vast, there are so many people, everybody is operating in different ways. So, I can see a flipside to that where there's a local plan for how you're going to work with that organisation that could make it easier for trying to streamline - sorry to...

Voice 7: No, no.

Voice 14: But that's what today's about, isn't it?

Voice 7: Yes.

Melissa Wong: Absolutely! [redacted]?

Voice 9: This gentleman was...

Melissa Wong: Oh sorry, yes.

Voice 6: Thank you. [redacted] in [redacted]. Yes, I think that's a really interesting one, but I think what I'd draw out of that is that if you had things this size then it would not really be possible for all of the strategic thinking to be done by just the lead organisation, that some of the implications and the strategic things are done all by the Lead and then there are local things. A lot of that strategic stuff is going to still need to be done locally; otherwise, it's going to miss out on the local thing. So, I think that would require more than one layer of strategic thinking.

Melissa Wong: Really interesting, thank you for that. Yes?

Voice 9: [redacted]. I believe that there needs to be a bit more scope for giving opportunities to LGBT groups, diverse groups.

There needs to be an opportunity for these community groups that are sitting in the community, have very little exposure from [?knowing 1:30:32.2] that the work they're carrying out... It needs sometimes - I think they're in the dark and I believe that if we can open partnerships more broadly, because at the moment where I am in [redacted], we seem to be partnering with the big flagships. I feel we need to go to grass-roots level, but if that can happen then you're spreading the word in the text, equality.

Melissa Wong: Yes, really interesting point about what equality might look like for partnerships within this scenario. Yes?

Voice 11: [redacted] I was just observing that at the moment, if you want... We have quite a large geographical remit as an orchestra, but we tend to end up mostly working with [redacted] directly at the moment because [redacted] is the Hub Lead in that area. We have to be associated with this, [redacted]. So, my observation is that there would be more opportunities to work more flexibly across a larger geographical area, potentially understanding what other partners are already delivering. If, for example, there is more than one orchestra in the area then we can work out what one orchestra is doing well that we can do and where we can work well with them. I think that having a smaller, more local focus would still be needed, though. I think that point you make is: who would I talk to if that person has to cover an area that's something like got the population of Scotland in it or something?

They're going to be quite busy and there'll be quite a lot of email traffic with them whereas... Yes, so I think that actually understanding what the difference is going to be between a Lead Organisation and perhaps another music educational-focussed delivery partner that someone - something like an

orchestra would be able to work with within that structure would be interesting.

Melissa Wong: Yes, that's a really interesting point. [redacted]?

Voice 8: Yes, [redacted]. What you both said basically reflected on my pink and green slip. So, on one hand, you are opening the door. At the moment there are I think four organisations in the [redacted] preschools [inaudible 1:32:53.8] the [redacted] in competition. So, to open the door to have a large organisation and all these other potential partners, is potentially a really exciting thing. Also as a business looking to expand into other counties, that potentially could be very helpful. On the other hand, how do I know I'm going to be recognised as a partner in something so big? What's the criteria? Who decides?

Melissa Wong: So, there's a lot of potential, but also a lot of practical challenges to be navigated?

Voice 8: Yes.

Melissa Wong: Thank you.

Voice 1: Yes, thank you. [redacted]. Listening to what you were saying, and some others around the room, I think there is a danger in this model of, in order to cover the localism part of it and what is going on locally, we end up just creating another tier above it without actually much strategic direction because it's all stored at local level. Although I'm 50-50 myself in the model, so I admit, but it's interesting that there are two, that there is just that... There is more opportunity, I think, and I would actually say for smaller groups to get involved. I think there is. Breaking the boundaries, I think is one of the strategies, but whether the price of that is having an extra tier in the system is something just to consider.

Melissa Wong: Yes, so it feels like there's a lot of opportunity, potentially, especially for smaller organisations or for alignment and understanding what other organisations are already doing, but then how do you ensure that that isn't ridden down by bureaucracy and administration? How do you ensure that those Lead Organisations have the time and capacity to communicate with all these partners? Brilliant conversation. I'm going to move us on to schools now. Schools are of course a partner within Music Hubs, but because there is this strategic function specifically around how Hub Leads will interact with schools, that has been drawn out here. Worth noting there's a lot of pink down here, so we'll have a look at what that says. I'm just going to read out all the greens because I really like to hear what's positive.

So, number 1 priority: maximises links across multi-academy trusts. Local knowledge of area and schools within it. Those are some of the positives that people have picked out. Some of the challenges are a loss of localism, too large for meaningful relations with schools. Schools in a smaller local authority area could feel lost in a large partnership. Finance is an issue with schools. Hard to focus on local relationships with schools and families and local needs. So, a real theme there around how those local relationships will be maintained. Yes?

Voice 5: [redacted]. So, as some of you may know, back in September I ran an event about the National Plan. The majority of people who came to that were actually school-based staff - which really surprised me because I thought it would be the Hub people and people who wanted to get involved. It was the majority schoolteachers. We had a lot of discussion about the place of schools in the Plan and about how they worked with Music Hubs. The overall feeling was often that either the Hub didn't - it was a one-size-fits-all thing, and it was, 'We know

what you need so this is what we're giving you', which you can see in a structure like this when there's only ten Hubs, that's going to be even potentially worse if that's not the right... I'm not disagreeing with that approach because you've got to pick something to give them, but it's going to be even more remote if you're just in ten areas.

Also, they were talking about the idea of lead schools, and how lead schools would be chosen. There was a really strong feeling that often when they asked for support, they are told, 'Oh, this school is great, go and see this school.' But that school has a music specialist and their school doesn't, or that school has a totally different demographic from what their school is. So, there was a really strong feeling in that particular room that, whatever happens moving forward, there has to be a real partnership between Hubs and schools. It has to be detailed and bespoke. They also actually talked about geographical boundaries and said, 'We are the only school in our particular area that is like this. So, it would be more helpful for us to go to the next local authority and talk to another school with the same challenges than it would be to be directed to a lead school in our local area, who are amazing because they're amazing.'

One lady actually said that she'd been sent to be given some mentoring in the school and she'd actually come out in tears because she'd just been told, 'Find more money, get better at what you do and basically just do better.' So, I think that's what we need to avoid, and I think in this structure you run the risk that, because there are so many schools, you're going to end up with this generic one-size-fits-all thing and some schools are going to get lost in there.

Melissa Wong: Yes, thank you for that. I think - yes?

Voice 9: Yes, one [unclear word 1:37:56.8] in schools is engagement with some schools with the Hub Lead is very poor,

but some of the schools are still not exposed in building the support they can get from above. Secondly, also more so we've noticed since September: schools are struggling; they're struggling now with finances - and the governing bodies are making decisions as we talk now. They're talking January/February they'll be [unclear word 1:38:27.4] with our budgets. There is a problem with schools - which we all knew was going to happen. Most of them engage and I always find it still frightening that schools, still - some of them - aren't aware of how they could utilise the Hub.

Melissa Wong: Yes, really useful reminder of the context of what it looks like from the school side. Yes?

Voice 6: [redacted]. Just thinking what you're saying, [redacted], and I think I would actually make the opposite point; that by having those wider areas you're likely to have expertise across a whole range of things from rural to inner city to things. Actually, you've got more opportunity to put people in touch with people, because I think you're absolutely right. There's this...

Voice 5: Yes, it's finding the mechanism to do that, isn't it?

Voice 6: Yes.

Voice 5: Again, I totally agree that you could see it in that way, that it would have to be really carefully managed to ensure that that worked, yes.

Melissa Wong: Again, it sounds like so much opportunity and potential to learn and exchange, but again how will that work in practice when there are so many relationships to manage? Yes?

Voice 3: [redacted]. I think it's true the opportunity undoubtedly increases when you increase the size of the partnership. My

concern is that the level of bureaucracy always increases because you always... You can't take away from that local management, so you end up with layers of structures. It means the level of agility that you have to be able to respond to that local [unclear phrase 1:39:50.3], well, actually you might need to negotiate that with 13 other partners or way, way more people than that. We've not talked about quality, and that being able to ensure quality in schools. That is much harder, I feel, if you're dealing with a wider range of partners. Then you have to get that shared view of what quality is, so there is a risk there for me as well around school provision.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. I wonder if we'll get into some of these comments about the bureaucracy when we move on to sustainability. First let's take a look at progression. A little bit more mixed, this one. Let's see what people have said. To open more opportunity and diversity and SEND. Informal partnerships already in place. A decent-sized area for improved regional progression routes. A layer above current areas. On the yellows we have: regional impact on young people?! How will making the collaboration formal make deeper impact? Then some of the challenges people have picked out: too many stakeholders to be effective - thinking back to partnerships there. Progression needs to be organised over a geographically smaller area to ensure effective coverage. Having more rural settings access activities. Temptation to organise only in large centres? Really interesting observations. What is jumping out at you from what's on the board? Yes?

Voice 7: [redacted] I think the temptation to go to clusters would - drive people to city centres for things - would be the big issue with that sort of bridge-style model, because we've not done anything big since pre-pandemic. The day of the schools closing we were supposed to have a Big Sing in the West

Midlands at [redacted]. The biggest difficulty of that was negotiating people coming all the way from Herefordshire and the top of Staffordshire down to Birmingham, and actually fundraising for coaches to move people that distance. But you feel like as a big Hub - and I know it's a strategic element - but you'd want to celebrate things together as well. I think sometimes the geographies can cause a bit of an issue, especially when people have to do a rural coach ride in three or four hours and...

Voice 5: And the cost of that.

Voice 7: And the cost of all that, and the big organisations that you'd think, oh, the benefit of wider regions, [redacted] becomes a player in the West Midlands for everyone. Everyone can work in partnership with them but actually they're based primarily here. Then there are just things that sound really exciting that actually with the sort of practicalities on the ground head you can go, 'But we've still got to get young people to things. They need to see and feel and be appreciated.' Yes, it is that sketchy coverage that you feel would be an issue.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. Yes?

Voice 5: [redacted] again. Thinking about progression in terms of qualifications and further and higher education, I can see how this model might be helpful to promote that, because the bigger area you've got, the more likelihood you have got a conservatoire or a contemporary pop college or a university that does music. Perhaps young people and their families don't know those things exist, and by being part of an organisation that embraces those, that might be - I can see how that might be helpful. Obviously, we're going to come on to the smaller model but then the argument is, are you going to end up with some areas that don't have any provision for further and higher education? Is that something that needs factoring in? In your

application you must make sure that within all the geographical regions that you prescribe, you must make sure that all of those opportunities that arise are available within that one Hub area.

Melissa Wong: Yes, a really good question. Anything else on progression and musical development? Let's move on to inclusion, so a few greens, a lot of pinks; not much in the middle. A quick scan of the greens: would build on existing substantial work on inclusion based on trust built up over many years. Each Hub to be allocated a school to work on their behalf. Not sure what this one means - and it would be great if somebody could clarify - SEND needs to be more of a focus. Under the pinks we have larger Hubs will mitigate against inclusion. Pupils will be missed. Pupils most likely to be missed. Larger Hubs. Did that sound familiar to anyone? We'll try to interpret that later. Inclusion strategies can be agreed upon across a wide area, but implementation needs to be local. Risks to ensure inclusivity. Another comment here about transport and public transportation for people in less advantaged areas. Music providers may not - something around SEND... Ah, music providers may not have full SEND/inclusion.

So, it sounds like there are some concerns around how children and young people with access issues would be reached and how well they'd be provided for. Yes?

Voice 14: [redacted] It's interesting from a strategic point of view, though, how we'll be held to account by being a larger geographical Hub. Inclusion, EDI; so important and actually by working in a larger geographical area there's that challenge that we all need to ensure that we're doing exactly what we need to do. So, I can see, yes, you need your local plan - of course you would - but actually that larger strategic approach I think could potentially - that peer-to-peer model, isn't it? I think it could be a positive thing.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. Yes?

Voice 1: Thank you. [redacted]. The big thing for me, being in a rural county with five special schools, all of which have got quite different categories of young people in terms of their special educational needs, it's providing the support that we would do for other schools. We go into other schools and provide support in curriculum development in primary and secondary. You can't do that in the special schools because there is such a wide range of young people's abilities and disabilities in those groups. So, I see the idea of having more Hubs working together giving the opportunity to actually have a specialist and an SEND, whether it be on the medium scale or on a larger scale. So, somebody that can be a specialist in a PRU for a - you couldn't have one in a small Hub, but you could have one in a Hub of about ten.

Melissa Wong: So, being able to draw a wider range of specialist skills that you...

Voice 1: Yes, I didn't put it on a post-it but actually it's a...

Melissa Wong: Could you write that on a post-it and put it up?

Voice 1: Yes, that's a key one for me for supporting, for schools particularly.

Melissa Wong: Yes, brilliant, thank you. Yes, on this side?

Voice 4: [redacted] I work in an SEN school and we create our own partnerships with people because in our Hub at the moment - like you said - there isn't a specialist person that can come in and deliver any music or any workshops or anything like that. So, it would be nice if Hubs... I put the one that you questioned a little bit.

Melissa Wong: Oh, this one?

Voice 4: Yes. If they knew their partners really well, that they knew which ones would be ideal to go into SEN schools and deliver what they needed. So, it comes back to what you said: having SEN specialists working within them rather than just watering down what opportunities are available.

Melissa Wong: That makes a lot of sense. Thanks for clarifying that. Who was first?

Voice 10: [redacted] was first.

Voice 6: No, go on, after you.

Voice 10: [redacted]. I think our passion is to support those pupils in mainstream schools with additional needs that may be completely hidden. We've got fantastic work going on with a range of partners around the table at the moment. Our worry would be that if it was in the context of a small number of larger organisations, there would be a greater risk of these pupils being missed, continuing to be hidden.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for sharing that. [redacted]?

Voice 6: Bouncing off an earlier point - sorry, [redacted] - I think actually the wider thing does mean that all of the areas are going to have a real mix of demographics in there. Therefore, you're going to have the expertise that's coming in from all sorts of different musicians in the area. Also, you're going to have people who are experienced and expert at working and drawing in people from disadvantaged backgrounds, different ethnicities. I think that's something that you might not get in the smaller regions.

Melissa Wong: Yes, thank you, so it sounds like one of the real upsides for inclusion is just the specialist skills that you would be able to draw on in different areas. But then there's the practical question of: how do you ensure that children and young people with different access needs are able to be reached. Yes?

Voice 3: It's [redacted]. I just think we shouldn't make the assumption that just because you become large, and you solve problems around the specialisms. You actually might just find you have two problems from the specialism. You join with someone, and you suddenly have four or five problems with the same specialism. So, it's just too easy to draw that conclusion that automatically you gain expertise. You may not; it depends on what the category is that you partner with.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for challenging that assumption. Shall we move on to sustainability, then? Quite a mixed picture under sustainability. Let's pick out a few of what people have said. Leverage a national partner; that's quite interesting. Easier to attract investment - but with a question mark. Regional; this model is already in progress, [redacted]. Could result in the local plans needed. Trust already there. Reduction in cost and time as many partners won't be Lead Organisations, etc. Yellow: a larger Hub may withstand market forces and local pressure better. Some of the challenges people have picked up: money to put into an executive leadership team, not frontline. Not without better funding, have I read that correctly? Larger structures and bureaucracy needed. Higher top-slice. Supporting a dynamic workforce. Needs to be managed within a smaller geographic area.

Additional posts and structure needed; could be costly. So, picking up on a few things that have already been said around bureaucracy and administration. Also, some

opportunities - especially in terms of connecting on a national level. Anything else that jumps out? Yes?

Voice 11: I think...

Melissa Wong: Your name?

Voice 11: [redacted] I think that there's quite a lot of good that could be done in terms of actually data collection and reporting in terms of doing that at a higher level. I can see quite a lot of strain within the existing structure around ensuring that data collection is done well. If that is done on a higher level, one would hope that those people closer to the action will be able to do more of the action than necessarily have to do the level of continuous - very valuable, but somewhat onerous and repetitive - things that you can imagine are being duplicated in quite a lot of ways, whereas if [unclear words 1:51:58.8] just, say, ten you would hope that those ten organisations bear the brunt of that, which therefore might have the pay-off piece; top-slice salaries.

Melissa Wong: So, de-duplication and giving more space for people at the frontline to do what they do best?

Voice 11: Yes, because it would all be integrated into one system, you'd hope that the things that are being learned from that - say, simple data collection around, say, demographics from schools - you might be able to find a really efficient way of doing that. I don't know or systematise that in a way that is perhaps not done at the moment. I can imagine in school for example, if you work with more than one partner they might have completely different ways of wanting information out of you because they're all accessing funding from different pots. So, if effectively that's all being funded through one organisation then they could have a simpler structure.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. Any other reflections on sustainability?

Voice 7: Yes. [redacted] I suppose there are two parts to what I'm thinking; I'm just going to ramble a little bit. So, we're getting a bit - I think there's a bit of confusion between a Hub Lead Organisation and a music service. Obviously, a lot of the financial bit that is brought in to the Hub is actually through the music service element of it and the trading model with schools. So, actually if that is not part of the Hub Lead Organisation and they're commissioned, that money goes out of the Hub Lead Organisation system anyway because if you commissioned me whatever percentage of the grant to deliver the bit that I deliver in the city I work in, and then the trade income of that becomes out of that organisation system. That is then sat in the music service that's been commissioned to deliver that part, or what other organisations are commissioned to do stuff.

It's that bit that I think needs potentially unpicking because there are a lot of partnership agreements we've got in place with loads of people. I know we've got six Hub partners at the minute that have Youth Music funding, but we are one of the people that wrote a letter of support and put some money in to commission them to do stuff. There's a lot of that sort of stuff that might lose traction, so sustainability of the Hub Lead Organisation and the music service element is one thing, but actually it's the whole music ecosystem that is that one grant, and how much it leverages across the whole thing. I think that is potentially another piece of research that needs to be done on the current infrastructure, regardless of what size these go to, on actually how much money is brought through that one grant going to the one organisation. How much are they leveraging - not just from what they leverage themselves - but actually when they commission out to another organisation and what they leverage on the back of being able to run this programme, which then runs that programme.

So, one of our youth providers, they have a programme called [redacted] that's [redacted]. Funded, but on the back of that they have a drama programme and an art programme and a theatre programme that all bounce off the fact that they've got the kids in through this other thing. So, there is a bit more to it than just we've leveraged a bit... The sustainability of the music bit doesn't always do that. I think that's the bit that needs to be drilled down on, and whether money just going into one big organisation and commissioned out loses some of that traction to be able to do that work.

Melissa Wong: That's a really interesting observation. Is there any way you can capture that in one post-it note?!

Becky Sliwa Webb: I will try to!

[1:55:24.7] Unknown: I'll put something together. I'll create a...

Melissa Wong: That would be great.

[1:55:30.4] Unknown: Pad of A4 paper!

Melissa Wong: So, we've had a really brilliant discussion about each of the five strategic functions in Scenario 1. Becky, I just want to check: is there anything else from general reflections that we haven't already talked about, or have we covered it?

Becky Sliwa Webb: I think we've covered it. There's a lot in the risk section, which is again just about overall feeling of size and that perhaps this [reduction 1:55:59.4] is just slightly too large.

Melissa Wong: Brilliant, thank you. With that said, having had this discussion I'm going to ask you now to take a sticky dot and tell us how you would rate Scenario 1 on a

scale of one to five. The sticky dots are on here, so you can find some way to navigate here and put up your dot. That would be fabulous.

[Respondents perform task from 1:56:28.5 to 2:03:43.5]

Melissa Wong: Just a couple more people we're waiting on, and then we'll start back up. Everyone, can I bring your attention back to the front of the room? Can I bring your attention to the front again? So, we're going to start talking about Scenario 2. Just a quick introduction to Scenario 2, so we've taken this scenario around Maths Hubs - but you don't need to know the specifics of what Maths Hubs are about. The thing you do need to know is that this is a sub-regional approach to creating a division across the country. So, Maths Hubs are an England-wide network of 40 Hubs. Just by way of comparison: there are currently 118 Music Hubs so this would be scaling down to approximately a third of the number that we have now. The size of the geography, rather than on a regional level, would be on a sub-regional level. So, thinking about dividing up the Midlands into slightly smaller patches, but not quite just the local area. Are there any clarifying questions that we have about this scenario? Yes, from the back?

Voice 3: It's [redacted]. It's a lot easier to think about regional because we know: one West Midlands, one East Midlands, perhaps. Because there are so many hubs in London, which kind of affect that split, approximately how many would you think the region, just to focus their mind on that... We're looking at two/three in the West, two/three in the East?

Melissa Wong: I don't think we're making any assumptions about that at this moment. For comparison: there are currently 19 Hubs across the Midlands. So, if we were to

scale that down to approximately a third of the number that we have now, it would be around six or seven. Is that helpful?

Voice 3: Perfect, thank you.

Melissa Wong: [redacted]?

Voice 8: [redacted]. Will the Hub Lead be a school - definitely a school - or could it be...

Melissa Wong: We're not making any assumptions about who the Hub Lead Organisation might be. I think we've probably provided a bit too much information about the scenarios, so you can ignore the fact that Maths Hubs are led by schools. Within Music Hubs we're not making any assumptions who that Lead might be, and it will be decided through an open application process led by Arts Council. Yes?

Voice 1: Can I just ask? In smaller sub-regional, is it possible - or are you considering - whether they would still be within the Arts Council regions? We're on a border of two Arts Council regions. We have working relationships with both the West Midlands and with one Hub in the South West. So, it would be interesting to know whether that's part of it as well. Does that make a difference in our opinion to this answer?

Melissa Wong: Hannah?

Hannah Fouracre: I don't think we would want the government regions and the Arts Council's areas to dictate necessarily what the geographies were. At the moment, the government regions is a very well-understood geography. So, I think it would be something for you to feed back in general reflections, I think, about whether you think that we

should be looking across government regions to help with partnerships - and why you think about it.

Voice 1: Thanks, okay.

Melissa Wong: Perfect. Yes?

Voice 14: Just a clarifying question. [redacted]. When you look at Maths Hubs or English Hubs, anything like that, I'm just wondering if the intention is to keep current Hubs whole. With Maths and English Hubs they were carved, so authorities were carved up and that is quite important in terms of how we approach this as a potential model. So, will Hubs be kept whole, or is there potential to carve Hubs into smaller Hubs?

Melissa Wong: Hannah?

Hannah Fouracre: We're not looking to go smaller than upper-tier local authorities.

Voice 14: Right, okay.

Hannah Fouracre: So, we wouldn't be going smaller than that - I mean, we wouldn't be changing those geographies.

Voice 14: Yes, because I know with the DfE English Hubs, for example, it went down to district level, so that is really useful.

Hannah Fouracre: Yes, that question came up yesterday.

Voice 14: Oh, did it?

Hannah Fouracre: The DfE colleague yesterday answered that in that way, so that should be...

Voice 13: Hello, this is [redacted]. Hannah, so there is no intention to split something up? I know [redacted] were very concerned they've got three teaching hubs in their area, so they can be split into three. But some of the boundaries splits give effectively a one-and-a-half of our current Music Hubs. So, I think [redacted] point is: would anybody be considered to, 'Oh, we don't need that Hub anymore. We'll have half of that over there and half of that over here'? Is that sort of thing likely to happen?

Hannah Fouracre: I'm not sure I understand.

Voice 13: Imagine three existing Hubs as they are at the moment based on historic boundaries. Actually, the Maths Hub has two areas for those two so one-and-a-half in one Hub, one-and-a half in another. Is that a scenario that you're considering?

Hannah Fouracre: Hannah. Maths Hubs are an example. We're looking at top-tier local authorities that are could be grouped together in a sub-regional way.

Voice 13: Right, thank you.

Voice 5: Sorry, you may've already answered this earlier on and I've just forgotten, but: is it based on number of authorities or is it based on number of children? So, for example you might have a Hub that was a similar size because it had got X number of children that had three or four authorities, and then another one that was smaller or larger because there were fewer children.

Hannah Fouracre: Hannah. That's what we'd like you to think about. It might be that you think that geography is so big because of the size of the place, or that's got a lot of children in it, and what are the implications of those two models that we need to be aware of? [redacted]?

Voice 8: [redacted], yes. Can you define a top-tier local authority?

Hannah Fouracre: Yes, apologies, oh, this is a test, isn't it? Have I got the description the right way round? So, you have smaller district authorities and then - such as... [redacted]?

Voice 3: So, East Staffordshire, South Staffordshire, Burton; they're all the top-tier local authority of Staffordshire. It's [redacted], if you're not...

Voice 5: That's helpful, so it's difficult for me to understand.

Voice 1: So, [redacted] is a top-tier local authority, yes.

Voice 5: Okay.

Hannah Fouracre: The big counties are all top tier.

Voice 5: Okay.

Voice 1: I can't do that for you because I can't remember what they are!

Voice 5: All right.

Voice 6: So, [redacted]: that is different to the Maths Hubs, aren't they, because they definitely do split the top tier?

Hannah Fouracre: Yes.

Voice 6: Okay, sure.

Hannah Fouracre: Yes, we won't be splitting top-tier local authorities.

Voice 6: Sorry, okay, fine, thank you.

Voice 3: Thank you.

Hannah Fouracre: That's fine.

Melissa Wong: Perfect, so again the question here is: if the Arts Council and DfE were to take a sub-regional approach like with Maths Hubs, how effective would Music Hub Lead Organisations be in coordinating the Hub to work against these five strategic functions? I'll just give you a few moments again for an individual reflection on the sticky notes.

[Individual task from 2:12:22.9 to 2:17:22.4]

Melissa Wong: Two more minutes of writing your stickies and to get them up on to the board.

[Individual task continues from 2:17:28.2 to 2:18:37.8]

Melissa Wong: Can we put up all our stickies on the board and then we'll take a look at them together as a group? We're getting more efficient at this! Can I have your attention to this side of the room, please? Thank you. So, again let's work through each of the five strategic functions and take a look at what people are saying. The first thing I notice, just doing a quick scan around the room is, there's a lot more green for this one than there was for Scenario 1. That's just an interesting reflection. Also just noticing a lot of stickies, so I can see that you've got lots of thoughts and really energetic responses to this, so let's take a look at what people are saying. To start with some of the greens on partnerships, we've got: ability to group demographic areas e.g., urban hub or rural...

Voice 1: Shire.

Melissa Wong: Shire hub, thank you.

Voice 6: Sorry for the writing.

Melissa Wong: Helps to an extent with multi-academy trusts partnerships, although they will still spill beyond likely boundaries. Easier to make connections. Balance between strategy and local. Workable size, biggest impact. [Unclear words 2:20:44.8] strength of partners as long as they are the right partners to add the most impact. On the yellows and the pinks, we have difficult for small partners to get involved. Partnership would happen naturally because multi-local authority area would not have an identity. If activity crosses borders, how to coordinate delivery? Not an existing structure, no track record, no existing partnerships in place of this size. Splits up and fragments the really powerful regional partnerships already developed e.g. [redacted]. Harder to share practice. So, just a flavour of what's been said.

I'm going to call on people just to get your responses to this, but just want to say before I do that that we are running a bit behind, so I won't get a chance to call on everybody. I do want to make sure we end on time to let you get on with your days. If I don't get to call on you and there's something we haven't had the chance to talk about, could you please just write it on a sticky note and put it up on the board as well - just so we can ensure that's captured for our reporting? All right, so what are your responses to the partnerships? What are the things that are jumping out at you? Yes?

Voice 12: I'll go. [redacted] We already work as a part of a multi-area hub. I think for me, the key thing would be: who would be

the right partners to add value to what we have already? So, how could we create additional opportunities for the children we work with? Obviously at the moment, the other authorities that we work with and the other partners that we work with mean that the children in my area have more opportunities. I think the concern for me is: if the geographies were prescribed, would they be the right people to add value for my children [redacted]?

Melissa Wong: Really interesting question, thank you. Any other reflections on things that are jumping out? Yes, [redacted]?

Voice 11: So, I think that the comment about this being perhaps the middle way, in that it might be the best way of delivering excellent governance and high-level strategic coordination whilst also giving local partners the more logical and easy connection to their actual area. You could also see that the actual partners within the structure, they're probably delivering across the area already. Therefore, it might not be so much of a stretch to perhaps encourage them to move into another local authority area, like one extra area, whereas if you're going for the really big one, it might seem a bit overwhelming as to how you might engage with it. So, this might be a good halfway house to have that level of ambition within the partnerships.

Melissa Wong: All right, brilliant, interesting! One more, so I'm going to call on... [redacted]?

Voice 7: Yes, [redacted]

Melissa Wong: [redacted] this time.

Voice 7: Hello! [redacted]. I was actually thinking because this relates to any of the things. When we're talking about partners it could be any sort of size of organisation. So, some partners might be three people and actually regardless of how big we

make the geography, we've got to remember they're individual people. You might say, 'Oh, we're in this massive West Midlands area' but they might go, 'Well, actually I don't want to commute more than 20 minutes to go to somewhere. So, I'm not going to go and do that work over in that part of - anyway.' That's the issue with partnership working is we can have the most perfect person that can deliver the most amazing project, but they know that they're doing an amazing job. They've got a remit of people that want to work with them in their locality and they might not go. So, I think we've also got to remember that we're working with individuals who might not want to travel or might not want to go places.

There are also the practicalities of: people like to work where they work. A lot of people who set up independent businesses, set them up so that they can choose where they go, not just because they're in a partnership that says, 'Actually we could really do with you going to Herefordshire for a three-hour commute each way to do a one-hour workshop.' I think we need to remember there are people involved in all this.

Melissa Wong: Yes, absolutely.

Voice 5: I think possibly the word partnerships is so - a partnership can be anything, can't it? We're a partner in some Hubs where we do lots of work with them. We're partners in other Hubs where they just ask us for a letter every year, sent to you guys, to say that we're a partner. We're not a financial partner in any Hub yet - and there are different layers. Depending on the model you choose, it could be more advantageous. I can see this working on a financial level quite well, but perhaps not in terms of the local input and smaller companies and individuals getting involved.

Melissa Wong: Thank you. Your name for the recording?

Voice 5: Oh sorry, [redacted].

Melissa Wong: Thanks [redacted], and just a reminder: if you could put up your hand so I can call on people to try to ensure we're getting a good spread, that would be fabulous. Let's just take a look at schools. Again quite a few greens here; let's take a look at a few of them. Joint initiatives, more opportunities - although perhaps balance that against some of the comments that we had from [redacted]. Plugging gaps in provision is easier. Balanced approach, room for local but also wider partnerships. On the yellows: risk that relationships with schools will not be personalised and meaningful. Confusion on who to go to; local or [?HLL 2:26:21.8]. Interesting! Still huge geography for schools; what are the benefits for young people? That's really important, keeping that at the centre of our thinking about these scenarios. Still too large for meaningful interaction with individual schools. So, what's jumping out at you from this board? Yes, [redacted]?

Voice 6: I think just coming to me, with discussing it: in some ways this looks like a nice middle ground; the porridge is the right temperature. I just wonder whether actually it sits in a really uncomfortable place that doesn't actually fit with anything that's existing already. Whereas if you have very localised stuff you've got the local thing already, if you have the one we looked at earlier then you have an overall strategic per region - but you're going to have to look at the local stuff. Here that sort of merges together and doesn't quite work. Sorry, [redacted], by the way!

Melissa Wong: Thanks [redacted], so the middle ground is the best of both worlds but is it also the worst of both worlds?

Voice 6: Yes.

Voice 1: Yes, totally.

Melissa Wong: [redacted]?

Voice 14: Can I follow on from what you just said? [redacted]. I think to get political support for this model could be very difficult - in response to what [redacted] was just saying. It is neither strategic nor it's local and it's going to... Yes, I think it could be very messy and then thinking about what we were saying before about music services generating lot of income, carrying a lot of the risk: I think that could be a risk that might be a step too far.

Melissa Wong: Yes, let's see if we pick up on that when we talk about sustainability and the implications on fundraising. One more?

Voice 13: [redacted]. You may not want me to say this now, but I feel I want to echo that this is neither fish nor fowl and it falls between the two. The most important thing is, every single Hub area would be a new area and that will take a long time to bed in, and it doesn't build in any way on the legacy of the last ten years. I know things are going to change - but does everything have to change?

Voice 1: Yes.

Melissa Wong: So, it sounds like there are some concerns here about what this scenario might mean in terms of the transition period and the mobilisation. Let's move on to progression. Lots of greens here - which is nice to see. A few of them, let's see better able to provide local progression routes, schools ensembles, conservatoires/HE professional. Less likely to be organised in the urban centres. Interesting. Reasonable size for progression routes and developed across a wider area than current.

Yellows: may not have FE, HE and industry partners. Progression still needs to be planned and implemented on a local basis, some alternative options. Finally, just one pink which says: quality assurance of providers, so you have some questions around how that would be ensured. What's jumping out at you from this board? Yes?

Voice 13: [redacted]. What's jumping out to me is, there are fewer reds than there were on the regional, but in fact actually all of the issues that we raise around potential problems for progression on the regional area apply to the sub-regional as well.

Voice 6: Yes, they do.

Voice 1: Yes.

Melissa Wong: So, would you write that on a sticky note? That feels important to capture. Would others agree?

Voice 1: Yes.

Voice 6: Yes.

Melissa Wong: Some nods around the room. Anything else to add to that? It feels like there's a bit of consensus on progression, so let's move on to talking about inclusion. Let's see what the stickies say. More opportunities to create networks of PRUs/special schools. More local offer and Hub more able to understand local needs than regional Hubs. So, better understanding because it's a smaller area. Maybe more SEND specialists. Joint approach to cold spots without going too large. Then on the yellows: providers may not tackle SEND/inclusion. Is large-scale structure actually the opposite of true inclusion? Good question! Lots of regional expertise available in larger

model, and inclusion strategies can be agreed, but implementation needs to be local. What are your thoughts? Yes?

Voice 7: [redacted] So, I put that providers may not tackle SEND/inclusion - and I put that as red last time I put it as amber this time because I think it's not as big a risk because I think the smaller organisation overseeing the whole thing may have the ability to maybe check that people are actually trying to deliver stuff. I think the more funding goes and it gets commissioned out in a model, the easier it is for people not to tackle the hard-to-reach young people. It's really easy for a commissioned partner to go and work with X, Y and Z. But actually commissioning people to work with the most challenging people is the most rewarding, but also it's the most difficult thing for people to do. It's quite easy for people to skate around the edges of that if they're not the organisation potentially being held to account. I know music services and Hubs are linked very closely in the current model and - rightly or wrongly - that's how it's worked.

At least with them being a Lead Organisation they have to justify why they're putting money into these things and why their delivery figures are related to that. Actually we do get a broad reach - in some areas. I'm guessing it's not the same everywhere - which is why there's this consultation happening - but I think that's the one risk to me is that: how do we really make this for all children and young people? How do we make sure that there are no gaps because we've gone too big or too small, or however that's done?

Melissa Wong: Yes, absolutely. I think accountability was a key word I picked up on from you, and that's something that came out last time as well when we were talking about inclusion.

Voice 7: That's true.

Melissa Wong: So, great to have that. If you would want to elaborate on that in another Post-it note, that would be brilliant. Any other reflections on inclusion? Yes?

Voice 5: [redacted] again, sorry [laughs]! So, I'm just coming off the back actually of a big research project with the [redacted] into inclusive practice in music. Obviously, it's a very different environment: they've only got 36 schools, it's all sewn up by the music service there so it's not a Hub structure, as it were. Some of the things that we found from consulting with the special schools there and from talking to the teaching workforce and the other organisations involved was, basically we felt that thinking of inclusion as a separate thing is not helpful. In fact, rather than saying, 'I need a specialist to come in and do that, I need specialist provision', where the specialism needs to go is training everybody involved in the workforce to deal with absolutely anything so that then you have real equality, and you have real accessibility. So, all of the ensembles - whoever you are, wherever you come from, whatever kind of needs you've got - you can be in that ensemble, we will make that work for you.

It's very early stages yet, we haven't started the delivery of that, but that was kind of where that research took us and that's what worries me about the model we just looked at and this model. You could end up with these sweeping inclusion statements of, 'Oh, it's all lovely and we're going to turn our logo rainbow colours' and all that kind of thing, and it not actually filter down into being every child is given absolutely every opportunity they need.

Melissa Wong: Yes, thank you for that. [redacted], I do see your hand. I apologise. We are going to have to move on.

Voice 6: Okay, that's fine.

Melissa Wong: I know you're doing a really good job of continuing to add sticky notes! I would just encourage you to...

Voice 6: I'm not going to add any more now [in jest]!

Melissa Wong: Last one on sustainability, so a flavour of what's been said; greater knowledge and leverage of funding. Strategic yet local. Easier to leverage funding. Shared costs e.g. CPD and fundraising. Purchasing power but not so far removed from local priorities. On the yellows: some added bureaucracy, levels of management. Would the geographical area makes sense in terms of spread of expertise and opportunities i.e. what do you gain from this? Oh, this is one out of two. Two out of two says: geography to replace what you might lose by splitting wider region. Have I read that correctly?

Voice 6: Probably, yes.

Melissa Wong: Then on the pinks: more duplication of function. Huge hiatus for little benefit. Workforce needs to be employed and deployed on a more local basis. So, a real spread of comments here under sustainability. What are the key themes that you're picking out on? [redacted]?

Voice 11: [redacted] We all seem to think that there would be more opportunities to get money through this than perhaps contrasted to both the last one - where I think that we saw it as perhaps so big that it might be sucking up resources, and perhaps the local - the one which we'll come on to, I assume that that's in the back of our minds, that we know that it can be a challenge then when you're in more competition for the same pot.

Melissa Wong: Yes, thank you. [redacted]?

Voice 6: I don't think that's our experience across [redacted]. We've experienced that it's much easier to get access to funding when you've got a big weight of things going to really get seriously big things coming into your area.

Melissa Wong: Interesting to see that contrast. [redacted]?

Voice 3: This is the one for me that's most likely to balance collaboration without suddenly becoming bureaucratic. So, my view is slightly different to everyone where I feel [unclear words 2:36:37.4] at the moment. I feel I would've wanted us to become slightly larger to be able to unlock more capacity than we have currently, so maybe I'm a voice in a slightly different direction on that one.

Melissa Wong: It's good to see the spread of views across the room, thank you all for that. Becky, is there anything else from general reflections that we haven't already picked up on?

Becky Sliwa Webb: So, generally I think it expresses the very mixed views on the benefits and cons of this one. I just wanted to point out one comment that says: the idea of my LA remaining the Hub Lead is worrying. I don't think this would be different to the current arrangement which is happening. So, just a voice there to say that for some people, actually the current status quo isn't working for them and they're smaller, trying to engage with current Music Hubs. Would it be radical enough for those people trying to get more involved [inaudible 2:37:26.7]?

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. So, if there are any other reflections on Scenario 2, please just do jot them down quickly and put them up on the board. As you're doing that,

please also take a sticky dot and tell us: how would you rate Scenario 2 on a scale of one to five? Everyone, grab a seat. You can continue putting up your dots, but I am going to start introducing Scenario 3 now. Scenario 3 is what we're calling the locally nuanced option. This scenario is drawn from a spread network of teaching school hubs. Again, you don't need to know the specifics of what teaching school hubs are or what their specific geographic boundaries look like. The main thing to know is that this is a network of 87 hubs working across the country.

So, by way of comparison: we currently have 118; 87 will be going down to approximately three-quarters of the number of hubs that we have now. Remembering also the DfE's guiding principle for the hub structure going forward is that there will no longer be any single authority hub. So, I think we're imagining that there will be at least two in any of the locally nuanced options. The number might vary, but essentially, they will be smaller than the other two options that we've explored so far. I see there are questions already.

Voice 6: So, that number, that doesn't match up, does it? Those are the numbers... If you've got two in each one, the maximum it's going to be is about 60/70? Sixty?

[2:40:12.5] Unknown: No, how many local authority areas are there?

Voice 5: I worked it out as being three-ish per this one.

[2:40:18.5] Unknown: Yes, 150 something local authorities.

[2:40:22.2] Unknown: So he's right, it can't be more than 75.

[2:40:24.6] Unknown: Okay.

Melissa Wong: But this isn't a perfect example of it.

Voice 6: Yes, no, that's true.

Melissa Wong: It's just to give you a rough idea.

Voice 13: But as an indicative - sorry, [redacted] - as an indicative indication for our discussions, have you done the - got an indication for us of how many you think there would be in the East and West Midlands? So, it will be...

Hannah Fouracre: No, it will just be thinking - Hannah - broadly in terms of going down a quarter and then think about that regionally.

Voice 13: The reason I ask is because we have some very large shire counties in our area which are big geographical areas, which have their own problems and possibly not big populations. I suppose I looked at this as [code 2:41:05.1] for the metropolitan areas, particularly London where nobody thinks there are going to be 36 hubs in London out the other side of the process. I suppose have you got anything to say on that?

Hannah Fouracre: I would like you, [redacted] to write that on a post-it note!

Voice 13: Okay!

Melissa Wong: Any other questions or clarifications? Yes?

Voice 12: [redacted] Just wondering whether local authority areas would potentially be split.

Melissa Wong: I think that Hannah answered that question already around...

Voice 12: Is it the same again?

Hannah Fouracre: Sorry, I missed that.

Voice 12: Sorry, around local authority areas being split.

Hannah Fouracre: Not within the top-tier local authorities.

Voice 12: The same for this one?

Hannah Fouracre: Yes, exactly.

Melissa Wong: Let's just take a few moments again to jot down our individual thoughts on sticky notes, and if you are running low do give us a shout; we've got a few more packs.

[Respondents perform individual task from 2:42:08.9 to 2:46:55.2]

Melissa Wong: Just finish writing your stickies. Please finish writing your sticky notes and put them up on the board. Can I draw your attention to this side of the room again? So, again working through them one by one. Just a quick scan of the boards first; I'm noticing a lot of pink, so that will be interesting to dig into as we look around the boards. I'm getting a read that there are more challenges or risks associated with this scenario, but let's find out. So, let's see what people said under green: close link between hub and partners. Provide local partnership with ability to continue regional strategic work. Potential for some areas to maintain and develop existing partnerships further. Increasing number of partners; therefore, same advantages, options 1 and 2. Under yellows: enable some wider collaboration. Sounds like there are both positives and negatives associated with that, if that's yellow. Less

purchasing power means less attractive to larger national partners.

Then amongst the pinks: political confusion versus Arts/DfE agenda i.e. [redacted]. versus local partnership. No real gain for partnerships, arts organisations, MATs or others. Too small an area to see impact of joint partnership working. Could be not sufficiently different from current system e.g. partners equals same old, same old. Essentially just increasing the size of the hub; just by a smaller margin, so same disadvantages as numbers 1 and 2. So, what is jumping out at you from this board? I'm going to try to - it's just because we've heard a lot from some people in the room. So, I'm just trying to see if there is anyone who hasn't spoken up yet who wants to chip in. All right, well, let's hear from [redacted] then.

Voice 7: I think what's coming out for me is that no one sees the difference between what we've got now and this model. So, it feels like, what is the point in doing - if you're going to do change it's going to cost a lot of money, it's going to be a lot more time and effort spent that could be money spent on young people. If you're going to do change you might as well do something that's meaningful, and this is just change for the sake of change.

[2:51:50.4] Unknown: Yes.

Voice 7: I think that's the vibe that's coming out, for me, in the room.

Melissa Wong: I'm seeing a lot of nods around the room.

Voice 13: [redacted]. Actually, I drew something slightly different from what you've said, which is: there are people on there who see this, 'Well, this is change but it's change to a

bigger thing', and some saying, 'This is essentially the same as it was before', because that won't be... If no local authority is going to be split, so nobody is going to see themselves downsized into this, but some people could see themselves upsized into it. Sorry, no authorities are going to be split, but some partnerships could be split.

Melissa Wong: That makes more sense, yes. Again, seeing a lot of nods around the room. [redacted]?

Voice 14: [redacted]. I think what we've got to remember, though, it doesn't stop all the brilliant partnership work that currently takes place; that can still continue. But to have that local knowledge of partnerships that have been established over a long time, it means your focus is on the young people. We can support those areas that need the support. I think for me, this provides the opportunity to really focus on the young people and less about the structures and the hierarchy and the governance, which is going to eat a lot of time.

Melissa Wong: So, your concern is about: if there is too much change, will that take away attention and focus from delivering for children and young people?

Voice 14: Yes - and funding.

Melissa Wong: Yes, great question. Let's move on to school and take a look at what people have said here. A lot of greens on this one, so we have: easier to manage. Meaningful relationships with schools, more locally focussed. Local offer easier to apply? Much more potential for meaningful personalised relationships with schools. Established relations with schools continue to develop. Lot of shared themes there. Under the yellows: may do the least to help with MAT working. Schools may feel nothing has changed and not engaged; that's interesting. Pinks:

branding is difficult. Separation of service/Hub partner, etc. Will children benefit from this model! What are your reflections on what's been said? [redacted]?

Voice 12: I think it comes down to local need again, doesn't it? It's that confusion that maybe the Maths Hub model, would there still be that element of local need? For us - and I can only speak from experience as a [redacted] - I still work really closely with the schools in [redacted]. That is still my job, and I am there as both their music service and their representation from the Music Hub. So, I speak to them about both elements, and we still retain that local knowledge. I think the worry for some may be with that larger model is, do we still retain that local need? That is really important.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. Any other reflections on what's been said? Do we agree with what's been picked out? Are there any dissenting views? Seems like there's a lot of agreement on how this would impact the way that Hubs work with schools. Let's move on to progression. So, under greens we have: [?groups/routes 2:55:39.6] can be established and some boundaries eliminated. Progression can be managed on a more local basis. Yellows: gap in progression routes at regional level? Under the pinks: might not have the HE/FE and conservatoire in region. Need to ensure progression into the profession. Payers of local authority areas will, in many cases, not form an easy geographic area for young people to travel to. Wider regional areas are better. Interesting.

Voice 6: Can I just expand on that?

Melissa Wong: Yes, absolutely.

Voice 6: I think if you look at just two - often if you look at two LAs together, they often spread out that way, whereas your regional thing, there is more of a central core to it, often.

Melissa Wong: I see, thank you.

Voice 6: Sorry, that was [redacted]

Melissa Wong: Thanks [redacted]! Any reactions to what's been said under progression? Let's keep moving on, then. If you do think of anything else, please write it on a sticky and add it to that board. Inclusion is also quite spread here. I'll pick out a few: good knowledge of challenges and approaches to develop community based. Potential to create real, bespoke, localised offer. Inclusion strategies can be implemented. Provide opportunities for specific groups of pupils across schools. We have one yellow, which reads: providers will not tackle SEND/inclusion unless directed. In the pinks: lose the benefits of wider expertise from other models, and not enough expertise where fewer partners are involved. So, echoing a few things that have already been said around partnerships and expertise to support inclusive practice. Anything else that's jumping out at you? Let's move on to the last one, then. I think that we're all getting a little bit tired so we'll just keep moving on [laughs]!

There is quite a clear steer from the room on sustainability. I do want to pick out the green and see what that person has said: a local workforce can be sustained to work in a defined geographic area. So, perhaps some benefits in terms of who is delivering the service. Amongst the pinks: less opportunities for joint working. Lacks the sustainability of other options. More difficult to work at scale. Significant duplication between hubs. Huge hiatus/distress for little benefit, so concerned about the

transition period. Smaller number equals smaller equivalent funding, equals more danger of organisations going under. Sounds like there are a lot of concerns about what this would mean for the sustainability of Hubs. Some nods around the room. Anything else that's jumping out at you?

Voice 6: Are you going on to the general ones in a minute?

Melissa Wong: We're going on to general, yes. Again, I'm seeing it feels like there's a pretty similar feeling that's being shared across the room. Let's just move on to general and see if there is anything else that hasn't already been picked up on.

Becky Sliwa Webb: Yes, I'd say that it's worth mentioning the positives but there've been a lot of the risks I think read out before. The overall reflection is that the benefits could be good local context, [inaudible - rustling sounds 2:59:58.1] be the most responsive and this would allow us to build on the experience of the last ten years. So, that's a stronger positive feel of it. Again capturing: is it enough of a change, or is it too much disruption for not enough gain? I don't know if there was this particular point... [redacted] did you want me to pick up your...

Voice 6: Yes. Again, just coming out of everything that's been talked about: I think whichever model you have with these, where there are fewer Hubs, I can see that there are real advantages in having that strategic overview and one organisation having that strategic overview for a region. But I am more and more convinced that whatever model you have, if you just say there is one organisation with strategic overview, everybody else is just delivering, then I think we're missing out on an awful lot of because I think a lot of organisations that deliver then don't deliver with real understanding of how those

strategic overviews should happen. So, I think you need to have - as well as that big thing, you need to have local representatives in the local regions who are not just delivering, but who are actually trying to drive and see how that strategy is being affected and how it's driving forward, and whether it's being effective in feeding back. I think that's absolutely essential.

I think if you don't do that then you will lose so much of what has been gained over the last few years. My own particular area it's very, very clear. What was happening before, there was somebody who was driving the local strategy forward. So, I think, yes, absolutely a bigger organisation that does things, I think that makes sense across a region but we've got to sustain that local. It can't just be [?delivered as 3:01:37.0] locally.

Melissa Wong: Thank you again. I think that's a really important, bigger, higher-level question to capture. It would be great if you could put that on if you remember anything else. One last comment from [redacted]?

Voice 12: Yes, [redacted]. Hannah, you mentioned that these geographies would not be determined by current arrangements, but I would have big concerns. Obviously if you split up the area that we've already created, partnership working does take a long time. We've created that partnership built on strengths. To split something up that we feel is working really well would be a real shame.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you. Can you pop that on a post-it, please?

Voice 12: Yes. I've already done that.

Melissa Wong: Thank you so much. It's been really interesting to talk through the three different scenarios

with all of you. It's been really interesting to see the number and quality of the reflections that you've had on each one. I just want to do one last thing and just final reflections. I'm just going to say now that we are going to go about ten minutes over. So, if anybody does need to leave, catch a train or to their next meeting, don't be shy; just head out as you need to, but hopefully it's okay for many of you to stay for a few extra minutes. Final reflections - and there is the dot that I need you to put up on Scenario 3 - but I'm going to get you to do that at the same time as final reflections just because it's a very small room. So, two questions we're going to ask you to reflect on. We've looked at three scenarios in detail: the regional, the sub-regional and the locally nuanced.

My question to you is: overall, in light of the conversation that we've had today, which is your most preferred scenario, and why? So, if you could write that on one sticky note with your most preferred scenario and why, and put that up under most preferred scenario. So, put it under the relevant one. Then the second final reflection question: is there anything else that DfE ought to take into consideration in making its final decisions about prescribed geographies for Music Hubs? So, anything general that we haven't already talked about today? Any other things that DfE should be looking at, evaluating, assessing? So, you can put that on the end under 'anything else'.

So, three things: put up your dot for Scenario 3 - and I notice that there is somebody who has been very naughty and put their dot up on the line for Scenario 2! So, if you could move that to one side of the line...

Voice 5: I'm going to own up to that. I'm sorry!

Melissa Wong: So, put up your dot for Scenario 3, write one post-it with your most preferred scenario, and any Post-its with anything else that the DfE ought to consider.

[Respondents perform individual task from 3:04:34.5 to 3:05:48.5]

Voice 14: Are you only allowed to go for one preferred?

Melissa Wong: One preference of scenario. If you're still torn, you can say, 'Two - but I would make these adjustments to it' or 'Three - but with these elements of something else.'

[Respondents complete task from 3:06:12.2 to 3:08:16.0]

Melissa Wong: Right, has everyone put up their dot for Scenario 3 and their most preferred scenario? So, let's take a look at what everyone's most preferred scenario was. I'm not going to have a chance to read through all of them. What I'm observing is, it's actually quite spread - which is interesting to me because from the conversation, I wasn't necessarily expecting that. So, there are a few who preferred the bridge organisation; the regional approach. Just to pick out a couple of them, this person said: continued partnerships, trust, still local plans in place but so much more to consider. This one said: overall Scenario 1, most likely to sustain and build on existing achievements e.g. re: EDI. This person had the two of two: but Scenario 2 also possible, but could depend on the national geographic split, thought through with...?

Voice 6: I think it basically says: make sure that you split it geographically so it's supportive to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds being able to access things.

Melissa Wong: Perfect, thank you.

Voice 6: But I appreciate you can't read my writing! Sorry again.

Melissa Wong: Thank you. Very helpful, [redacted]. So, just a flavour of this for Scenario 1. Scenario 2, the sub-regional option; what did people say? Most likely to bring real change without creating unwieldy monster structure [laughter]. Biggest impact: large-enough step change to make a difference. This one says: seems like the best option as gross capacity and still locally focussed. However, they still need to be suitable for stakeholders, CYPs, schools, etc. Finally, what people said about teaching school hubs, the locally nuanced option: big enough to deliver, small enough to care. That's a great tagline! Teaching hub model is an exception given for large rural hubs enabling regional strategic work. This one is quite interesting because it's long. I feel there should be room for movement between Hubs if one is offering more appropriate opportunities. My preference would be Scenario 3 and the money being spent on provision rather than big change.

A really interesting spread of preferences across the room. Thank you so much for sharing your reflections on that. Under anything else, the main thing I'm observing is there are a lot of other things that we haven't had the opportunity yet to talk about. Today's focus group was just about prescribed geographic areas and what approach would be the most suitable for Music Hubs. But there are so many other things for Arts Council and DfE to take into consideration. I'm not going to read them all, just because there are so many, but just to know that we will be playing this back and that each of these will be heard. So, with all of that said and done, let's just take a quick look at the next steps.

As we've mentioned, we're doing one focus group in each of the five Arts Council areas. We've done four already - including this one; there's one more to go this week. We are still doing the survey so if there is anything else you didn't get the chance to say today, please do write that in the survey and submit it before next Sunday the 15th. Please encourage other organisations as well to respond to the survey. We're also running a digital focus group on the 17th, so we'll be speaking with about 15 people in each Arts Council area then. So, speaking to more of your Midlands colleagues in that setting as well. Once all of this is done, Dougie and I will be collating, reviewing, and analysing the data and making sure that we're playing it back in a way that is true to what's been said, and that presents your views and perspectives clearly to Arts Council and DfE. From there, I'll hand over to Hannah.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you, so after the focus groups we are going to be publishing how many of each type of organisation has attended the focus groups, alongside the anonymised transcripts for each of the sessions so that everybody can read what we've talked about today. All of the ideas and the feedback that have been collated through the conversation and consultation base is going to be analysed by our independent facilitators. That research will assist the decision-making in terms of the geographies that are selected for Music Hubs moving forward. In the spring we're hoping to share those new geographies and how your feedback has helped shape those. In the spring we are planning to publish the Applicant Guidance ahead of the portal opening later in the summer.

Now, what we've been talking about today is very specific in terms of geographies. That guidance for applicants will translate the policies, the strategy that was set out in the National Plan and make it very clear what the expectations

will be around leadership and governance, accountability, quality, inclusion - and everything. So, that will be the key document to understand all the things that we are going to be looking for from the Hub Lead Organisation Partnership. Which leaves me just time to say: thank you very, very much. You have worked really hard today on barely any time off for any break, in what has been quite a hot room. So, thank you very much. You've contributed so positively, even with the challenge that you provided today. I really appreciate that. What we're talking about is really difficult and we're talking about a programme as well that has not had an investment process for ten years. That brings many challenges as well. It's also been very abstract, and you've risen to the challenge of talking about that in the abstract very well, so thank you very much. I hope you all have very safe journeys home and I really look forward to working with all of you moving forwards in the Music Programme, thank you.

[End of Transcript]

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