Music Hubs Investment Programme North Group

January 2023

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 caommunities 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:

Organisation type:

- Voice 1: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation

- Voice 2: Arts organisation/ Charity Foundation supporting mental health through arts in over 250 schools and communities.
- Voice 3: I work for a Combined Authority
- Voice 4: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation
- Voice 5: I work for a Local Authority
- Voice 6: I work for a Local Authority
- Voice 7: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 8: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 9: I work for a further education setting or higher education institution
- Voice 10: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation
- Voice 11: I work for a school, multi-academy trust or other education provider
- Voice 12: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 13: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 14: I work for a Local Authority
- Voice 15: I work for a creative, arts and culture or heritage organisation
- Voice 16: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 17: I work for a music education organisation
- Voice 18: I work for a Local Authority
- Voice 19: N/A
- Voice 20: N/A

The focus groups were facilitated by Melissa Wong, 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.

Hannah Fouracre: I walked in about five minutes ago, and I thought, there's a lot of people in the foyer. How many chairs are in this room? We were ten chairs short. We're very cosy and comfortable in here now, aren't we. My name's Hannah Fouracre, I'm the Director for Music Education at Arts Council England, and I'd like to start by thanking you for coming today and putting yourselves forward to be part of our focus group today. This is the fifth of five. You are the last, we've saved the best till last. We've come to the North for our final one. I have to say, being in rooms with people face-to-face, and being able to talk about these really tricky things that we're trying to sort out, with people, has been really wonderful. I'm really looking forward to us having the conversations that we'll be having today. We have got a couple of people that are stuck in road traffic because of an accident. When they arrive, we'll make sure that they're able to introduce themselves.

I just want to start with some housekeeping. We are having some refreshments brought into the table, I believe, at some point, so please help yourselves whenever you'd like to. If you need the loo, it's just outside of this door, and you'll see it straight ahead of you. I don't believe we've got a planned fire alarm today, so if it goes off, we'll follow the ways out and some staff will come and help us get out if we need to. We have got a little black box down here at the front, recording today's session. That's so that we can create an anonymised transcript of the conversations that we'll be having today. That will help both our researchers analyse all of the feedback from the sessions, and we're also planning to publish an anonymised transcript, so that everybody that's not been able to fit in this little room today will be able to see what we've talked about.

I do have a request because we're recording it, of something that is not natural, and will not, still not, feel

natural by the end of the session. Every time you speak, can you try and say your name first? That's so that the transcribers can attach your comments to you as an individual, although when we publish, it will be anonymised. Outline agenda for the day, we've got quite a lot to get through, and I have to say, we have finished five to ten minutes late in three of the four sessions so far. We'll do our best to try and keep to time because it is a long one. We will be working you hard. It is quite a tiring session. What we're talking about today is really important. It means a lot to the Arts Council, it means a lot to the Department for Education. It means a lot to you and the people that you work with. It really means a lot to the children and young people that we're all working to serve.

The session will be really interactive and I really encourage you to speak freely, to think innovatively, but of course, to share your differing, what I know will be differing views and opinions respectfully of each other please. I'd like to start by introducing our external facilitator, Melissa. Would you like to say hello?

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

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you. Dougie Lonie was supposed to be joining us today, and working with Melissa, but unfortunately, due to personal circumstances, hasn't been able to come, which means that my colleague, Dav, from the Arts Council, over here, is just going to be helping with a little bit of facilitation in terms of flipcharts and Post-it notes and things. To start with, I'd like us just to go round the room and introduce ourselves and the organisation that

we represent if we represent an organisation. [redacted], would you like to start?

Voice 19: Yes, hi, I'm [redacted], I work for the Department for Education. I'm the [redacted] on the policy for Music Hubs for the investment process and delivery.

[?Voice 20 0:05:59.2]: Hi, I'm [redacted]. I'm also at the Department for Education, working on music policy. I'm based in [redacted], so it's been a short hop for me today.

Jane Beardsworth: Hi, I'm Jane Beardsworth, and I work at the Arts Council, based in the North, and I'm the lead for our music education working.

Voice 11: Hi, I'm [redacted] and I work as a Director of Music for a multi-academy trust [redacted].

Voice 13: Hi, [redacted], I lead the music service in [redacted] is my main job. I'm also the regional rep for [redacted], a trustee [unclear words 0:06:36.4]. I feel I represent a few people. Also, a Bridge Organisation for [unclear word 0:06:40.8] and also [redacted].

[Unknown 0:06:44.9]: Is that it, [redacted]?

Voice 13: No, I just thought, I'm not just a hub lead if you…

[Unknown 0:06:50.4]: Yes, I know, I'm joking.

Voice 7: I'm just a hub lead. My name's [redacted], I'm [redacted], and we're the lead delivery partner for my hub, which is the hub in [redacted].

Voice 8: Hi, I'm [redacted], I'm the [redacted], who's a [redacted].

Voice 18: Hi, I'm [redacted], I'm [redacted] for [redacted], and the lead for [redacted].

Voice 16: Hi, I'm [redacted], I work at the [redacted]. I'm Director of Performance and Deputy Principal, and I also sit on the [redacted] Music Hub board.

Voice 10: I'm [redacted], Projects Director for [redacted]. We are an independent arts charity that specialises in working in criminal justice settings.

Voice 1: Hi, I'm [redacted], I'm an Education Manager at [redacted], and I also sit on the charity board of [redacted] Music Hub.

Voice 15: Hi, I'm [redacted], I'm Education Director at [redacted].

Dav Williams: Hi everyone, I'm Dav Williams, Senior Officer for Music Education at Arts Council England.

Voice 6: [redacted], I'm [redacted], which is the lead organisation in [redacted].

Voice 5: [redacted], I'm [redacted] of [redacted], and we are the [redacted].

Voice 3: Good morning, I'm [redacted], I'm the [redacted] of the [redacted], which is [redacted] across [redacted]. My day job, I'm part of [redacted] as well.

Voice 14: Hi, I'm [redacted]. I'm an Officer at [redacted], Chair of the [redacted], and a governor at a special needs school.

Voice 9: Hi, I'm [redacted]. I'm a Lecturer in Music at [redacted]. I also sit on the board for, well, a committee for music HE,

which is a subject association for music departments and a concern of ours and so on in the HE sector.

Voice 12: Hello, I'm [redacted]. I'm Manager of the [redacted]. It's a relatively new music charity, working in the North East and Yorkshire. Mostly in primary schools. Working closely with our colleagues in the hubs in that region.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you. Welcome everybody. You'll see from the agenda that I'm planning to start with a bit of scene setting. I just want to share some context, to make sure that we're all on the same page for going into the exercises that we're going to be doing today. Some of you may have heard me say some of this, may have read some of this, but I think it's important we've all got the same information in our minds as we go into the exercises that we've got. First of all, a very brief introduction to who the Arts Council is, in case anybody isn't that familiar with us. We are the national development agency for creativity and culture in England. We're a non-departmental body, that is sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. We invest public money from both government and the National Lottery.

Since 2012, we've worked really closely with the Department for Education to support the delivery of the government's National Plan for Music Education. That's includes our role as fund holder for the Music Education Hub programme, on behalf of the DfE, as well as co-investing with the department in a network of national youth ensembles, and a programme called In Harmony. The Department provides the funding for Music Education Hubs, but in our role as a development agency, we also provide support for hubs more broadly. For example, we fund many hub partners, including music and music education organisations and festivals and venues. We also

support hubs to apply for our funding, like National Lottery project grants, or for music educators to apply for programmes like Developing your Creative Practice. We've got relationships with every local authority and lots of place-based partnerships, and our investment of £9.6 million a year into Youth Music funds many Hub Lead Organisations and hub partners.

Following the refresh of the 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 Education Hubs, and has asked us to run an investment process for hubs, which is launching this year. We are really excited about continuing our journey with everybody that contributes to a fantastic and accessible music education for all children and young people across the country. The National Plan for Music Education builds on the vision that was outlined in the 2011 plan. It responds to the many, many changes that the music education, music sectors, music education and young people themselves have navigated in the 11 years since it was published. The plan sets out the government's priorities until 2030 for music education, and children and young people, and it plans to build on the success of Music Hubs to date.

The plan includes a refreshed vision that is all children and young people should be enabled to learn to sing, to play an instrument, and create music together. That they should have the opportunity to progress their musical interests and talent, including 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, and provide real variety and reach and opportunity. Because of Music Hubs' key role, the National Plan outlines a refreshed strategy for them. Let's talk about that.

Music Hubs are groups of organisations that work together to create a 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. Every member of the partnership is expected to play a key role in supporting hub activity. The operating and governance models for Music Hubs will also 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 with a new vision, three aims, and five strategic functions. The vision is the same as the vision for the whole National Plan as a whole, and the three aims are outlined on this slide here. To support schools and other education settings to deliver high-quality music education. To support all children and young people to engage with a range of musical opportunities, in and out of school. To support young people to develop their musical interests and talent further, including into employment. Underpinning and driving and facilitating - welcome!

Voice 4: Apologies for being late, sorry.

Hannah Fouracre: No, it's fine. Please do take a seat. Before I go on to strategic functions, would you like to say hello, who you are and where you're from?

Voice 4: Yes, good morning everyone. My name's [redacted]. I'm a freelance worker for [redacted], an arts community interest organisation.

Hannah Fouracre: Welcome. We're just doing a little bit of scene-setting, so you haven't missed much yet. Driving the work of the music hub will be the responsibility of the lead organisation. Thinking specifically about that role of lead organisation, they're responsible for the coordination and the facilitation of the hub partnership, and subsequently for the strategic development and oversight of a local plan for music education. They'll be accountable for the use of the Department for Education's funding, and for the development of high-quality music education in their hub area that will be delivered by the partnership, and expressed in that local plan for music education. They're going to achieve that through five strategic functions that are on the slide here. You've also got them printed out in front of you, so you can refer later in the exercise that we'll be doing.

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. To ensure the strategic, financial, and operational sustainability of the hub. As part of the plan when it was published last year, the Department for Education also confirmed - welcome.

Voice 17: Sorry I'm late.

Hannah Fouracre: It's fine. People are very conveniently arriving at the beginning of slides. Please do take a seat.

Voice 17: Thank you.

Hannah Fouracre: I'll let you settle in before I ask you to introduce yourself. As part of the plan, the Department confirmed £79 million of investment per year into the Music Hub programme, including a grant of just over £76 million per year directly to hubs. As I said, the plan announced that the Arts Council will run an investment process for Music Hubs. We'll be inviting organisations to apply for that role of Music Hub Lead Organisation that I've just outlined. They're the organisations that will receive the funding to coordinate the Music Hub partnerships from September 2024. Some key dates. In the spring, we'll be sharing the guidance for applicants. Our online portal, called Grantium, will open for applications against the criteria in the guidance for applicants in the summer. We'll be letting applicants know whether or not they've been invited to become a lead organisation in early 2024, before they start delivering in the September. Would you like to say hello and introduce yourself?

Voice 17: Yes, hello, hi everyone. I'm [redacted], I'm from [redacted], and the traffic's been awful this morning.

Hannah Fouracre: Okay, so a reminder that the National Plan set out the Department's intention to fund fewer, more strategic hubs through the Investment Programme. Also, that that will be achieved by prescribed geographic areas. We've published their rationale for that on our website, but part of that rationale is on the slide here. I wanted to just share a few of the headlines. The Department for Education believes that hubs covering larger geographies will offer more strategic leadership and governance. Increase the profile of Music Hub work across that geography. Improve provision, providing a greater access to children and young people, and to schools, and support more consistency. That there will be greater access to resources, ideas, capacity, and capability. Better support the

workforce, particularly in terms of workforce progression. Encourage stronger and more sustainable partnerships, including with schools and multi-academy trusts.

The Department has also given a rationale for the use of prescribing the geographies and they believe that that will provide, support a fair and open process for bidders of all types, including those organisations which might be already leading a hub, but also, from new entrants to the programme. The Department's outlined some guiding principles from hub geographies and they're outlined here. We need to keep these in mind today as we have the conversations that we're going to. They are that new hubs will be more consistent in terms of size, coverage, and good-quality provision. Geographic areas should be agreed or prescribed prior to the application process. That means that prospective Hub Lead Organisations will submit an application to lead a Music Hub in a prescribed geographic area. We anticipate that an applicant would be able to apply for more than one prescribed area, should they wish to. Prescribed geographic areas will not be predetermined by current arrangements, but be informed by open and objective consultation and evaluation.

This one's really important - it's not intended that fewer Hub Lead Organisations means that children and young people will be able to access less provision or have to travel further. We are not anticipating that there should be fewer organisations that are actually designing, developing, and delivering the provision in local areas. It's the Hub Lead Organisations that will be becoming more strategic, overseeing and working with and funding their delivery partners to do that work locally with children and young people and communities. The other question that we've been asked a few times this week, which I think is worth outlining here, is that we're also not anticipating that

we would split up top-tier local authorities. When we come on to the methodology, some of our examples did do that, but we're not anticipating that we would be splitting up any top-tier local authority areas. We want to make sure that we are drawing on the experience and the knowledge of everybody from music education, youth, creativity, and cultural communities, to help shape the Music Hub Investment Programme.

In the autumn, the Arts Council launched the sector Conversation and Consultation Phase of the programme, and to date, that's included a range of stakeholder communications activity, stakeholder management, and market engagement. We're also testing options for prescribing geographies, to make sure that we can understand, as far as we can, what the potential implications might be in terms of transition and mobilisation. That means that we'll be able to provide the DfE with recommendations, which we think are appropriate to the needs of the programme, to the organisations that might apply, and to children and young people themselves. To get to that point, we're running these focus groups. We've also got an open-access survey that's running along at the same time, that mirrors the content of the focus groups. That's because we can't talk to everybody in this format. The survey will make sure that we've had the chance to listen to everybody that wants to contribute.

We're going to be using the outcomes of this activity to, and the analysis that will be offered by our external facilitators, to make some final recommendations to the DfE about prescribed geographies. That is the context in which we're operating and that we need to keep in our minds today as we go through the exercises that we'll be going through. I would like to just pause, to take any reflections on anything I've said or any questions that you

have about that, or anything that will help you move on to the next phase of our session today. Yes.

Voice 4: Can I just ask, on the question around local authorities and Music Hubs and catchments, is it based on population numbers or geographical areas? There would be a difference in ethos and approach around music and arts from different local authorities. If you've got two-tiers and unitaries [sic], it's going to be different. If a hub is going to be set up, does it need sign-up from those local authorities to be part of that?

Hannah Fouracre: Good question. You both missed me at the start to say that we're recording the session, and asking you to say your name when you speak. Would you mind, for the purposes of the tape…?

Voice 4: Okay, it's [redacted].

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you! Good question. There's a couple of things in there, I think. One of the things that I've shared this morning is that the rationale for the work that we're doing on hub geographies is looking to try and get more consistency in terms of size. I think what you've raised there is a really good question in terms of what does that mean? Does it mean population or does it perhaps mean size of the geography? I think that's something that we'd really like to try and draw out today as we go through the methodologies. In relation to local authorities or the local governance arrangements in terms of local authorities, they are a really key partner in Music Education Hubs. What we would be looking for is any lead applicant to be telling us what their relationship would be with key stakeholders in that area. That would include local government, and some of them might be the ones that are making the applications.

What I'd really encourage, we're going to work through three different options today, and what we'd really like to try and draw out from you is what you think the implications might be politically, or in terms of the children and young people, the communities that different places serve, in your feedback on those options today. Thank you. Any other questions? What we'll find is as we start working through, lots of questions will come up. There is space throughout the session to ask questions as we go, and to share thoughts and reflections as we go, both verbally and on the sticky notes as well. I'm sure there will be lots of questions as we go through. Welcome.

Voice 2: Hi, I'm so sorry.

Hannah Fouracre: You are very welcome.

Voice 2: The traffic was a nightmare.

Hannah Fouracre: Would you like to say a quick hello to everybody?

Voice 2: Hi everybody, I'm [redacted], I'm from [redacted]. I run an arts organisation trust called [redacted]. Nice to meet you all.

Hannah Fouracre: We're recording the session, so that we can make an anonymised transcript, and our facilitator, Melissa, will be able to listen back to gather the feedback. Each time you speak today, if you could try and say your name because we're recording it over there. It feels a bit like a police interrogation. Thank you. [Aside comments regarding refreshments and facilities] Right, okey-dokey, well, in that case, I'll hand over to Melissa, who's going to help set us up for the conversations that we're going to have.

Melissa Wong: Thank you. Hello again, still Melissa. Just want to start by talking a little bit about my role in this consultation. Actually, it says our role on the slide because as Hannah mentioned, I was meant to be joined by Dougie Lonie. Dougie is co-founder and co-director of an agency developing creative approaches to capturing social impact. He unfortunately couldn't be with us today, due to personal circumstances, but he was very much involved in designing the structure of this focus group, and he'll also be very much involved in analysing and reporting back to Arts Council and the DfE. Just to tell you a little bit about our role in the consultation, we've been commissioned by the Arts Council to lead this series of focus groups, to ensure they run smoothly, and most importantly, to ensure that we're hearing from a range of voices, from across the sector, everyone who's involved in the musical lives of children and young people.

It's important to be clear that we have no direct responsibility in the final decision on prescribed geographies. What our role is, is to provide summaries of the conversations that we have today, to ensure that your views are accurately represented, and to ensure that Arts Council and DfE are able to take that into account in the decision-making. As Hannah mentioned, we are recording today's session, and she's also said that the transcript will be published. When the transcript is published, it will be fully anonymised. What that means is we'll be stripping away your names, any identifying details, so that that won't be in the public record. Also, just to assure you, you won't be identified in the report either. What we're looking to do is to present a summary of the views at a regional level, and at a national level, rather than to say this is what this person said. I hope that provides some assurance as we have our conversations today. Next slide please.

Great, so we are carrying out a national consultation, to help shape the new Music Hub geographies. This has a few different components. The first component is, obviously, these in-person focus groups. You are five out of five that we have run this week. It has been a whirlwind tour of the country. Next week we'll also be running a digital stakeholder focus group. Across the five focus groups we've done this week, and the one we're doing next week as well, we'll be speaking to approximately 175 people involved in the musical lives of children and young people, which is rather amazing. As many people as that is, that's still not going to capture everyone. We're also running this open survey as well, which we encourage everyone to respond to if they aren't able to attend one of the focus groups. The focus groups and the survey do cover the same content. There are slight tweaks, just to reflect the differences in the format.

What that means for you in practical terms is if you've come to this focus group today, you've said what you wanted to say, and you don't have anything more to add to that, you don't need to then go back to your office and fill out a survey, so you can tick that off your list. On the flipside, if you come out of the focus group today and you think, gosh, I wish there had been more time to talk about this thing, or I've just thought of this thing that I really wish I could have said, do then go to the survey and add that additional comment or reflection because that is, that opportunity is still available to you. Let's talk a little bit about the purpose of the session and what we're going to try to achieve together today. We have three aims for today's session. The first thing we'll do is we'll interrogate three different methodologies for prescribing geographic areas. We'll also try to draw out and understand the implications of these three different approaches. I'm thinking of that in short, medium, and long-term, so

transition, mobilisation, as well as the ongoing long-term impact for children and young people.

Finally, Hannah's presented DfE's guiding principles around the new Music Hub geographies. We'll explore and understand the implications of those as well. What we're not going to do together today is we're not going to agree a preferred geographic option. I am absolutely interested in your preferences and rationales for those, but we're not going to come to a consensus today. We're not going to make a decision here together today. The other thing we're not going to do is we're not going to debate the use of prescribed geographies within the Investment Programme. We're working on the basis that that's going to happen. The question is what is the best shape and size of those prescribed geographies?

A little bit more about the session structure. You will have been sent, in preparation for this focus group, three example scenarios for prescribed geographies. All of these examples are drawn from real-world scenarios, sub-divisions of England, for service delivery in education-related sectors. These examples aren't an exact fit for the music education sector, and they're not intended to be. They're just something concrete, to help ground our conversation in something that has worked in other sectors. They're intended to stimulate feedback about what the implications might be if an approach to dividing up the country like that were applied to the music education sector. What we're thinking with these three scenarios, we're calling them the regional, the sub-regional, and the locally-nuanced options. That's how I'll encourage you to think about these three scenarios throughout our conversation.

It's worth emphasising that these three scenarios aren't intended to reflect the views or the preferences of anyone at Arts Council or the DfE. I know very much from having worked with Arts Council in preparation for today's focus group, they don't already have an exact number or an exact structure for Music Hubs in mind. That's why we're doing these consultations, they really want to hear from you, so please do make your views heard. Right, a little bit more - we're getting closer to giving you guys a chance to talk.

In terms of the three example geographies, what we're going to do is we're going to examine each example in terms of the five strategic functions of Music Hub Lead Organisations. Those are partnership, managing, ensuring that all schools are - sorry - partnerships, ensuring that all state-funded schools have an ongoing relationship with them, to deliver high-quality music education. Supporting all children and young people to progress and develop musically. Ensuring an inclusive approach to music education. Ensuring the overall strategic, financial, and operational sustainability of the hub. Those are the five strategic functions, and that's the lens through which I want you to be thinking about these three scenarios. On the opposite wall from me, we have five flipcharts, one for each of the five strategic functions, and one for general thoughts about each scenario. I'll tell you a little bit more about how to put stickies [sic] on that flipchart in a moment.

In terms of analysing and thinking through the scenarios, you don't need to understand the full details of each scenario. You don't need to know exactly what music, what Bridge Organisations do, and what Maths Hubs do and what Teaching School Hubs do. The purpose of the scenarios is to give you a general understanding of what that approach might look like. The exact number and

structure, geographic structure of the hubs in these three scenarios aren't likely to be exactly replicated for Music Hubs. The purpose of giving you these scenarios is just to test a rough number and a rough geographic approach to creating subdivisions of the country. The final structure and the final number of Music Hubs will ensure that there is a national coverage, and that organisations of all types are able to contribute as active partners within the hub.

Okay, getting down into your tasks for each scenario now. What I'll do is I'll introduce each scenario, one at a time, and tell you a little bit what that scenario looks like. Then I'll give you an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions about the scenario, to make sure you understand it fully before you start reflecting on it. I'll give you some time and space for individual reflections. You should see there are Sharpies and sticky notes in front of you. We're asking you to log your individual thoughts, ideas, and reflections for each scenario using a colour-coding system. It's essentially a rag rating. Green for opportunities, yellow for neutral/not sure, and pink for risks. I think we did run out of yellow at some point, so this is what yellow looks like now. If you do run out of Post-it notes at any point, just raise your hand and Hannah, Dav or I will run some more over to you.

Once you've had a chance to do some individual reflection using the sticky notes, we'll put them all up on the boards, against the strategic functions and the general thoughts flipcharts, and then we'll have a group discussion and work through each one, trying to draw out what are the overall themes that we're seeing from across the room. Finally, the last thing I'll ask you to do for each scenario, is I'm going to ask you to rate that scenario on a scale of one to five. We have a matrix here and some sticky dots underneath. Just take a sticky dot and put it to indicate whether you

would rate it one, not at all effective, or five, extremely effective, or somewhere in between. Normally, I don't tell people to put themselves in boxes because you shouldn't try to put yourself in a box, but because we are doing this exercise for comparability with what people are saying in the survey, and they're only allowed to pick whole numbers, I'm going to ask you to please not put your dot on a line, but to keep your dot in a box.

Right, so those are our tasks for each scenario. Do you have any questions about what we're doing?

Voice 9: I've got more of a comment than a question - sorry to be that person. Thank you, that was super-clear. There was one thing you said, and I totally understand why, you said something like it's not important to know how each of these examples operates in terms of disciplinary background and what they do. I was looking through each of them. I thought it was quite interesting actually that a maths organisation focusing on CPD and leadership is rooted in a school system. That probably does relate to how many there are and where they're spread. I think that might just be something worth bearing in mind as we go through, thinking what's appropriate for a music education setting.

Melissa Wong: Absolutely, yes, we can definitely talk about that when we get to that scenario. Your name, just for the recording.

Voice 9: Sorry, I'm [redacted].

Melissa Wong: Perfect, thank you. Great, so just one more slide about how we're going to work together today. I'm really cognisant there are a lot of people in the room, who come from different backgrounds and different types of organisations. Some work in Hub Lead Organisations,

some in community music organisations. I think there was a conservatoire as well, there's freelancers. We're cognisant that not everyone is going to be an expert in everything that a Music Hub Lead Organisation might do. When you're thinking through the three different scenarios, think about it from your own perspective and your own experience. What would be the implications of this scenario for the way that your organisation would work with Music Hubs, or your individual practice if you work as a freelancer? I hope that's a helpful framing.

Other ground rules, very basic things, just raise your hand and wait to be called upon because there are a lot of people in this room, I do want to ensure that we have a spread of people who are able to speak. When someone is speaking, please just don't interrupt them because everyone should be entitled to say what they want to say without interruption. We've already talked about stating your name before you speak each time, and those will be anonymised. Finally, I'm just going to ask everyone to observe the Chatham House rule, so that's really just about respecting the confidentiality of the conversation that we're having today. If you go away after this focus group, and you're telling your colleagues about the discussion that we had today, it's absolutely fine to talk about it in high-level terms, and this is the general tone and this is the general thing that came out of it, but please don't identify any specific individuals or what that individual said. All right? Great, yes, a question.

Voice 16: Just a very general question, going back to the start again in terms of the outcomes of this consultation. Is the idea with the prescribed geographic areas that when the criteria for applications come, that the Arts Council will prescribe those areas, or is it to inform the applications that leads will put in about what those areas might look like?

Hannah Fouracre: At the moment, we're anticipating, we've been asked to consult on the basis that the areas will be prescribed in advance of organisations making their applications. They will be told, these are the areas, and you make an application for those areas.

Melissa Wong: Great, thank you. Any other questions before we get started? All right, let's jump into scenario one then. Scenario one is drawn from the Arts Council's Bridge Organisations. Some of you in the room may already be familiar with Bridge Organisations. They're an England-wide regional network of ten organisations, and they work on a regional level. Thinking about what that means for the North, the regions that they work in are the North West and the North East. There's a little bit more about Bridge Organisations on the slide if that's helpful. The main thing that you need to understand for the purpose of this scenario is that we're talking about reducing the number of Hub Lead Organisations from 118 currently to about 9 or 10. Nine is the number of official government regions. They would be working across much larger areas, so the entire region of the North West and the North East.

Are there any clarifying questions about this scenario? All right. If there aren't any questions then, let's just take a few moments to think through the implications of this scenario, using the sticky notes and the colour-coding system. Again, the question is if this were the new structure for Music Hub Lead Organisations, in terms of how many leads there are and the geographic areas that they cover, how effective would Music Hubs then be in delivering against the five strategic functions? Take your time now to write your thoughts on the stickies.

[Respondents complete task 0:41:01.0 - 0:52:35.0]

Melissa Wong: Can I draw your attention to this side of the room please? Thanks everyone. Let's have a bit of a group discussion about scenario one. The way I'll do this is I'll just work through the five strategic functions, one at a time. Then we'll do a mop-up at the end of general thoughts. Quick reflection just before we start digging into the content is there's just a lot up on the boards, which is fantastic. It's really good to see you guys are thinking critically about this and that you've got a lot to say. I'm also noticing quite a good spread of colours. A lot of opportunities, especially under partnership, progression, and musical development. Although schools seems like there are more challenges or risks in this scenario. Let's dig into them. What I'm going to do is I'll read out a sample of what the sticky note said, so you can get a flavour of what your colleagues are saying. I won't have the chance to read out every single one, but we will read through every comment in the reporting and analysis. Everything will be taken into account.

Right, so just for the purposes of seeing what people have said, let's pick out a few. Under the greens, so opportunities, people have said aligning with Bridge Organisations could have benefits. More partnerships, wider variety of options for young people. Able to access larger and non-arts funding and partners at scale, and a single voice for music education across the region. Organisations working across large areas can develop strong relationships, less people. Cross-pollination across the region, interesting new partnerships, opportunities for CPD.

Some of the opportunities that people have picked out. A few neutrals or not sure what the implications might be of this scenario. People have said, larger partnership groups, opportunity potential, but also potential to be

unmanageable. This one reads could be good for forging partnerships with larger organisations and partners, but poor for local-need partners. The implications might be different depending on what type of organisation you are. Finally, picking out some of the challenges or risks. Smaller organisations will be less likely to develop successful partnerships i.e. community music groups. Accountability of partner organisations, too big to manage. Greater number doesn't equal better. Hard to respond to local need - local is emphasised. Then one more here, too big to understand local demands and diversity. Just a flavour of what's been said under partnerships. What's jumping out at you?

Voice 8: The management of those partnerships would be a challenge - sorry, [redacted].

Melissa Wong: The management of the partnerships. Can you expand on that a little?

Voice 8: Well, I think just the more partners that you have in that group, to actually respond to the individual need of the young person becomes harder, you get further and further removed from that. I think that seems to be the flavour of what people are…

Melissa Wong: The distance that they would have.

Voice 8: …the distance. I think it could be a good thing because there's a breadth of experience, but actually managing that could be more a challenge, and therefore taking, because it takes more time, takes more funding actually away from the actual frontline delivery.

Melissa Wong: Yes, and I think there was a comment here as well, asking where will the youth voice be heard? That reflects what you're saying.

Voice 4: It's the concern around the partnership will be, will we have sufficient capacity to deal with all the different interests that's likely to emerge?

Melissa Wong: So because there are so many more partnerships, it's a lot more relationships to manage.

Voice 18: The thing there, from another angle, is that local element would be captured by that lead. You would have that lead, but local partnerships would capture that. Their voice to that lead would enable - a positive spin on it is that local need would be captured by that lead organisation. It takes account, so in those localities, they're actually being managed there, it's just feeding up into the lead. That's probably what a lot do anyway in the local, but again, you've got all those positives of sharing CPD opportunities, all sorts of those. Some real positives in that model.

Melissa Wong: Yes, a nice counterbalance.

[?Voice 10/Voice 2 0:57:46.0]: In that scenario, is there a risk of it just becoming another layer of bureaucracy? If that's the case, what is it that that lead organisation is adding in terms of that…? I'm just playing devil's advocate, I'm sorry. I think with the really big, broad-brushstroke organisation as a lead, it becomes just another layer of bureaucracy. Actually, all of the other stuff that happens locally happens anyway because it has to, and because the small organisations that run the risk of getting lost within those big ones make stuff happen locally anyway, so it just becomes very disjointed.

Melissa Wong: Useful to have that devil's advocate.

Voice 1: Yes, so I think it has the potential, I think there's a balance of more opportunities come with more people, but then does that mean that that can be done equitably and a balance across the region as well? There could be potential that, for example, an urban area, with lots of different organisations there, actually end up getting the bulk of that support across the region, and rural areas are left. I definitely agree with what you said there, I think the idea of this surely is that there's a strategic level and then delivery underneath. If we're adding in another layer of the local areas are going to be working with the potential in that area, that just becomes another layer of hubs, which we're moving away from.

Melissa Wong: Yes, really great point.

Voice 5: What's coming out to me from those comments is that there is a risk if there's a very large, if it's a very large area, and there's a very large number of delivery partners, the hub lead could feasibly have a relationship with all those delivery partners, but that extra role of bringing those delivery partners together in terms of collaboration between them, to raise the bar across the whole area, might not be possible if it's too large.

Melissa Wong: It's something about not just how delivery partners communicate with the lead, but how they would communicate with each other if there are so many. I see your hand, I think you were first though, so I'm just going to…

Voice 16: Yes, it seems that the same thing can be perceived as both a positive and negative, obviously, the way you look at it. The two things that stood out for me, one was the nuance of local need, that that could get lost quite easily. The flipside of that, the thing that did stand out for me as well is the voice for music education, and to have a much stronger, unified, strategic voice, which clearly is needed in the coming years.

Melissa Wong: Yes, really great point.

Voice 15: It's a question actually in thinking about Bridge Organisations, has there been done an assessment about what the strengths and weaknesses of Bridges were, and what the positives and negatives, and is that feeding in?

Melissa Wong: That's a good question. Hannah, I'm not sure if you have anything to say on that.

Hannah Fouracre: Well, they were doing a very different type of role, very specific delivery, particularly in terms of Artsmark and Arts Award. I don't think it was the fact that they were working regionally that has made the changes that we're moving forwards with with that programme. I'm not sure we do have a full assessment of that model in place, but it's a good question.

[Unknown 1:01:07.7]: It's just whether there's any learning that you could identify that would actually cut straight across and help.

Melissa Wong: Maybe something to look into then. One more from here, and then I'll move us on to schools.

Voice 13: It says in the partnership thing, capture the offer in a local plan for music education. It's got to be local. Going on from what [redacted] had said, there's still going to have to be a lot of high-level, strategic working in localities if it's going to be successful and not lost. It's that whole thing about how big is that? For me, it's the other unanswered questions, if there is something large like that, how much money is going to support that strategic…? Is it duplication? Is it money that's been taken from young people and delivery at the [unclear word 1:01:53.1]?

Melissa Wong: Yes, thank you for that. I'm hearing a lot of concerns about the challenges of ensuring that there's that local understanding if the lead organisation is working at a regional level. Also, some opportunities. It's been really great to hear a spread of views from across the room, and I really encourage people to keep playing devil's advocate because I feel like we're having a great debate and being really respectful of the range of views in the room. Let's keep moving on and see what people have said about schools. Seeing a lot of pinks. Always start with the positives. On the greens, we have joint CPD/networks for schools. That sounds interesting. This one says opportunity to raise the bar in terms of support for all schools in the region, but would rely on very strong, local leadership, in addition to the higher-level hub strategy. Really interesting.

Just to pick out a few of the pinks, we have lack of knowledge of local infrastructure, echoing some of the things that have already been said. Support of all schools, mismatch of function and scale. Too large area to identify needs of individual children. Data from Bridges show far lower engagement than hubs with schools. Interesting. May not have locally-nuanced knowledge of all areas captured, as there will be large discrepancies between what areas need. Echoing a lot of the things that have been said under partnerships because, of course, schools are a specific type of partner within Music Hubs. Also, this thing about the support that can be given to schools with a larger geographic area. Anything else that's jumping out at you from schools?

Voice 17: I think, for me, with schools and partnerships there's a theme so far of quality and quantity. We have that larger quantity of schools, larger quantity of partnerships, but then how do we manage the quality of that and make sure that

things aren't watered down? That, of course, the young people, who are involved in that area, are heard? There was youth voice as well mentioned before and that's important for schools as well. Yes, it's just that quality/quantity balance really, and making sure that the key priorities don't get lost.

Melissa Wong: Would others agree with that? I see both your hands, just want to check, haven't heard from the back yet if there's anyone who wants to jump in.

Voice 9: What's jumping out for me so far is a lack of clarity about what a Music Education Hub or what a hub is going to be for actually, which is quite a fundamental issue, I would say. I'll just leave it there.

Melissa Wong: I was going to ask you to elaborate on that, but you did…

Voice 9: Well, do we want it to be an advocacy group for music education, to give it visibility, as [redacted] was saying, which is going to be very crucial in the forthcoming years, and advocating for the role and importance of music education? That could be done perhaps more effectively at a regional level, like the North West. Or is it there to really join up and provide excellent quality music education at a local level? Do those two things, are they both to be run by the same organisation? Not sure.

Melissa Wong: Yes, great question. I think for the purposes of the exercise we're doing today, we're focusing on Music Hub Lead Organisations as strategic organisations, that underpin, drive and coordinate the work that they do to ensure high-quality music education on a local level for children and young people. We're thinking about it in terms of these five strategic functions. There is, obviously, this advocacy side of things as well, which we haven't talked

about. Maybe that's something you also want to be reflecting on in terms of how these different sizes of prescribed geographies would impact on their ability to perform that function. We will have some time to capture any other considerations at the end. I think that would be a good place to park those thoughts. Thank you for that. I'll come back to the ones who raised their hands earlier. Yes.

Voice 1: Yes, I think it, having an area of that size, I think the reality is there's not going to be personal, individual relationships with teachers, which I think is really important, which is possible at the local level now. Actually understanding their individual needs, the school situation they're in, what support they have, to understand their CPD needs, will actually get lost.

[?Dav 1:07:08.5] Do you mind just stating you name, for the purposes of the recording?

Voice 1: Yes, [redacted], [redacted].

Melissa Wong: There was one over here, yes.

Voice 8: I think it's linked on to [redacted]'s point really, I think it's that point you raised earlier about the consistency in terms of the size of the hubs, what we mean by that. Now, obviously, we're talking about consistency in terms of number of schools. For a rural area, that's far more challenging. Actually just the cost it costs my staff in the [redacted] to drive round is far more expensive than is, so if you, whereas if you're going for a city centre, it's to the consistency even with that. I think we really need to understand what we mean by consistent size to really answer that question appropriately. If you've got schools that are in one city, that might be achievable, but for us, that's a real challenge.

Melissa Wong: I think maybe that's something else to add in a sticky, is if we're thinking about consistency in terms of size, we could think about it in terms of numbers of children and young people, in terms of the size of geographic area, or in terms of the number of schools, which might be slightly different from either of those things. Maybe it's something to add on to a sticky, to put on the board.

Voice 8: I will do.

Melissa Wong: Thank you! Yes.

Voice 6: Just coming on to that point, we are geographically the biggest [redacted]. The issues we have by becoming a larger, perhaps, hub would just be compounded by some of these options. Having said that, I think there are things to be learnt from perhaps what goes on with inner city schools that could be taken over to rural schools. There is that cross-pollination there of ideas that could circulate. I have to stress that it is the size, the geography, and the cost of delivery that I'm really concerned about when it comes to what I think would be quite a considerable amount of top-slicing of that fund.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. I think the comment about size there's a lot of up there, but I like the bit you said about cross-pollination and I'd love to put that up on the board as well. If you could capture that in a sticky, we'll get that on the schools chart. I see your hands. I'm just aware that there are a few more strategic functions to move through! I'll make sure to call on you if I see your hands for these three. Just moving on to progression and musical development, this one's quite mixed, quite a mixed picture. Let's see what people have said. This one says musical development depending on strengths of lead. Opportunities for consistency across whole region.

Planning progression can be more strategic. That's interesting. Potential for wider breadth of opportunities across a larger region. Would allow the creation of better signposting and progression routes to HE and cultural organisations. A lot of really nice opportunities around signposting and opportunities that would be opened up for children and young people.

Under the yellows we have is it feasible for breadth of opportunities to be delivered in an equitable manner across the region? Able to provide progression routes across a region in a joined-up or strategic approach. Under the pinks, concerns around children and young people from very rural areas able to access high-quality ensembles. Progression for young people beyond the local area may rely on young people travelling long distance, and therefore not inclusive. Important to have sign-up and representation of local authorities if the hub is working across different stretches, areas - areas maybe. Right. What's jumping out at you, what are the themes you're picking up on? Yes, [redacted].

Voice 17: When you're talking about higher education and cultural venues, I think a larger area would automatically capture more of those. You would think that the partnership could be built then between young people and those venues, who might not travel to those venues ordinarily. However, there is, obviously, the con that's been brought up there of the financial implications of that for some young people from more rural areas, for example, having further to travel. If the hub were leading on that and were working with schools in those areas, perhaps things could be funded in that way, so there's less onus on the families of the individual young person to travel to those venues and to take part in the opportunities that are there.

Melissa Wong: Thank you, so a lot of opportunities, but then how would they be handled practically?

[?Voice 20/Voice 15 1:12:13.4]: It's just to point out that, actually, the issue of travel exists in cities already, in the current structure. I think that's a challenge to be met and solutions to be found, rather than - it's there anyway.

Melissa Wong: Okay, brilliant point. I see your hand, I just want to check if there's anyone in the back who wants to chip in. All right, okay, let's come to you then.

Voice 1: I think a general point, that's pertinent for all of them, particularly for this one, more opportunities doesn't mean that there's going to be more opportunities to access. I think it's spreading locally, yes, there can be more breadth, but that doesn't mean that more individuals within the region are going to actually be able to access more. I think that is a nuance that at this larger level, is difficult to get to.

Melissa Wong: That's a really interesting nuance to pick up on, and I think will lead us quite well into inclusion. I'll just pick up on one last comment first.

Voice 10: I think there's a risk of everything being centralised into one place. Areas like Bolton or you don't even have to go particularly rural if you're thinking about Greater Manchester, you could get people from Stockport going, 'Well, we won't invest in Stockport because, well, Manchester is only 20 minutes away.' You lose those very local connections and people are expected to travel. Even though it's not particularly a long journey, it is really a massive barrier. I've worked with young people in Stockport who've never been into Manchester city centre.

Melissa Wong: Absolutely, thank you for sharing that. I'm going to move us on to inclusion now. Again, a pretty good spread across the colours. Starting with the opportunities, inclusion may be better coordinated. Same opportunities from all communities in that region. Inclusion strategy could be more coherent, with less able to slip through the cracks. Under yellows we have shared EDI policy - interesting that it could be either a positive or a challenge. Does inclusion require a more individualised approach? Is it possible to do that with such a large lead and area? Interesting question. On the risks or challenges, we have too large to drill down and support more vulnerable young people. Can every child's needs be identified in this scenario? Local opportunities likely to be less compared to regional. Inclusion, impossible to respond effectively to local need/differences in demography. Right, really interesting spread of comments on that one. What's everyone picking up on under inclusion? Yes.

Voice 13: It maybe relates also into the schools point I was going to say. Ultimately, in the real world, a lot of this comes down to schools or people or services putting their hands in their pockets. Finance, yes. For me, it's is that going to be more successful if that's strategically delivered and promoted at a local level or at a regional level? I would suggest it's the latter - sorry, it's the former. I mean that it's the actual local, you're more likely, with the real, to real everyday things that are going on with the local partnerships and things, you're likely to get that school or that family or that service to actually support financially, to make these things happen.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. I think that's really useful to reflect on and I can see you're already starting to compare the three different scenarios, so we'll create more space to draw out preferences among the three.

Voice 13: I've not made my decision yet, but that's…

Melissa Wong: Yes, in the back.

Voice 11: I'm thinking in terms of socially-deprived areas we work a lot with, and if you are working within a huge region, would that region know to put that funding where it's really needed, for all kids to have that opportunity? I think, locally, you're going to know that, where we need more inclusion of music and where we need more… Are you going to have that knowledge in such a big area like the North West? Just thinking of the North West and areas of social deprivation that we have. Even [redacted], just where I'm from, working across our organisation, there are some schools that have nothing and there are other schools that are very affluent. In terms of inclusivity, how would that huge, regional organisation be able to do that?

Melissa Wong: Yes, it sounds like there's a real concern around geographic inclusion and capturing young people in cold spots. What about other types of inclusion? Yes.

Voice 4: The key thing that strikes out for me, inclusion around the demographic profile for wherever the hub is going to pick up. Then you may have different sections where the different community make-ups and the heritage that, and make-up, and then the interest is going to be different in terms of that skill base and the interest around that, so how that's going to be nurtured and supported around that. We see quite a lot as an organisation, we pick up and train young people a lot around South Asian arts and music, which is not provided in any other sector, mainstream sector. We have to do it as a voluntary organisation.

Melissa Wong: Yes, I think it's really important when we're thinking about inclusion, I'm hearing a lot of comments

about geography and that's absolutely important, I also want you to be thinking about other types of inclusion as well, so SEND, ethnic background, etc. Let's move on to the final one for this scenario, sustainability. Picking up on some of the comments, we have duplication in specialist areas easier to avoid. Interesting. Potential for reduction in overheads at top level. Under the yellows, will all hubs have same agreed expectations for staff? Skills, expertise. Can consistency of approach, does this mean better quality? Not really sure what that might mean. Under the pinks, top-slice funding would reduce capacity of every hub to deliver. Further removed funding from delivery. Agreement on lead divisions, buy-in from others. Risk of money and funds being diverted away from young people and strategic work at local, ground level. Seeing quite a few concerns around what this means in terms of the implications for delivery. Yes, in the back. Sorry, I guess the middle then.

Voice 12: I was just picturing if the lead organisations did become this large, you're taking potentially a workforce or a leadership team that's managed X-hundred-thousand pounds, to somebody responsible for perhaps lower figures of millions. Obviously, that comes with a responsibility. It's a great opportunity for some people in this room to potentially have that, have those bigger budgets to play with. Could you envisage, during this process, that those people would want to take that level of financial responsibility at similar salaries or expectations that they're currently on? Would that create what would need to be a level of quite high-risk, high-budget jobs in this area? In practical terms, you'd suddenly go from somebody managing X budget to huge, and although some people might see that as an amazing thing to do, it's not everybody's bag.

Melissa Wong: Yes, so what does that mean in terms of leadership, who will step up into those opportunities?

Voice 9: Also, just to add on to that, I think what you just said is the actual financial cost of funding a lead organisation on executive-level salaries.

Melissa Wong: Yes, I'm not sure who was first.

Voice 8: Picking up on that point about finance, a lot of hubs already have a millions-of-pounds budget. [redacted]. There are other risks, but I don't think that's necessarily a risk. The other side of that is of a £2.6 million turnover budget I have, about £2.3 million of that goes on to staff to respond to local needs within schools. It's very easy to say, 'Look at all the money they've got in music education.' We don't have slush funds around. I have £300,000 to play with, to do other work. The rest is actually frontline delivery. Just for Hannah's sake, that's not £300,000 of management, so don't panic. [Unclear words 1:21:43.0] but I could see her sums going through her head. I think there is the precedent there for managing those big budgets in terms of that in some hubs.

[Unknown 1:21:53.0] Nor is it all Arts Council money.

Voice 8: No, exactly. Totally, a lot of that - and that's another point actually, we haven't talked about sustainability - and I will put a Post-it note on - is that we, that's the Arts Council, the DfE funding is less than a third of our budget. The rest is money that's generated because we respond to local need, because I invest in the schools, because actually every single school - I have over 350 - has an area coordinator that goes in, speaks to those leads. Speaks to the heads of music on a regular basis, to make sure we're responding to the needs of the young people. The further that gets removed, if I have some budget cuts to make or the lead has budget cuts to make, it makes that challenging. Actually not only is it affecting the delivery, it's affecting the sustainability because I'm not actually generating as much income.

Melissa Wong: Yes, so there's a really interesting point there about how this model would affect your ability to leverage other funding.

Voice 8: Yes.

Melissa Wong: I don't recall seeing anything, so I feel like that needs to be captured in a Post-it note.

Voice 8: No, I'll write it down now. A moment of inspiration struck.

Melissa Wong: Perfect.

Voice 7: I was just about to make the same point about we need to consider the, what we currently do at a local level to leverage resource. There is a point of diminishing returns, isn't there, that if this becomes too big, we don't have the potential at the local level to keep that resource in the sector and what we might lose. Also, just from my own experience, where strategic function is distanced from delivery, even at a local level, that's already quite difficult. I know locally our biggest strength is our relationship with schools. The further we distance that strategic from delivery and from the youth voice, I think there's a point at which that, as I said, starts to have diminishing returns. I don't think it will work as well as it currently does.

Melissa Wong: Nicely said, thank you for that. Did I see a hand here?

Voice 14: Yes, just a question around local authority buy-in, in terms of will local authorities want to buy into that regional picture when something has been working really effectively on a grass-roots level in their areas? Therefore, will that financial commitment be less from those? Just a risk.

Melissa Wong: Yes, I think this goes back into this whole conversation around other funding, and especially the role of local authority funding. Really great points. That might even be a separate sticky note if you want to put that one up as well. Thank you. Brilliant conversation about scenario one. Again, each of the five strategic functions. Dav, just want to come to general thoughts. Is there anything else you've picked up on that we haven't already talked about?

Dav Williams: A lot of what's been put on the general thoughts section mirrors a lot of the debate and conversation that we've had elsewhere. I think you can clearly see the separation between opportunities, risks, and neutral responses, aligning particularly with some of the comments that came out of the progression and musical development section, and the partnership section in particular. In terms of opportunities, there's some comments around the small number could be actually quite powerful, and could enable a more joined-up and strategic approach. There's something there, I think it was mentioned earlier, around higher education institutions and cultural venues, and the opportunities of connecting children and young people through that, through the larger picture. A lot of what's on here echoes that, the comments around the larger picture versus the local contextual knowledge.

A lot of the comments around the bottom are around does a one-size-fits-all approach, does that work? There's a lot around whether this is too large a structure to get that understanding of the local context. Then there's a couple of interesting, neutral observations on whether local deliverers, well, local deliverers would still be required, but not sure how they would benefit from this particular model. Then there's one around whether there's a need for Arts

Council and whether the model could report to the Department for Education directly, due to the size of it. A lot reflecting what's been discussed already. Yes, some interesting points on there as well.

Melissa Wong: Great, thank you so much for that round up. Brilliant conversation so far. I love how everybody has been chipping in. Everybody is speaking really productively and respectfully to each other. One last thing I'm going to ask you to do before I give you a five-minute break, is on the side over there, just behind Hannah, the top row says scenario one. Just take a sticky dot from below, and put a sticky dot to indicate how would you rate scenario one, on a scale of one to five. When you've done that, then you can take a five-minute break.

[Break 1:26:30 - 1:33:33]

Melissa Wong: We're just about to get started.

[Over speaking 1:33:41.7 - 1:34:10.0]

Melissa Wong: Thank you, everyone. Right. Thank you so much for coming back so quickly. I'm just going to start talking you through our next scenario that we'll work through together. Scenario two is based on the England-wide network of Maths Hubs, and I just heard from somebody who said, 'I don't like this scenario because it has the word maths in it,' but you don't need to know any maths to understand the scenario! The main thing you need to know is that what we're talking about is a network of approximately 40 Hubs across the country, which will be subdivided on a sub-regional level, so we're working into slightly smaller geographic areas now. Just for context, currently there are 118 Music Hubs, so we're talking about scaling down to about a third of the number that we have

now, and an approximately equivalent growth in the geographic area that they cover right now. Before we jump in to this scenario, do we have any clarifying questions? Yes.

Voice 9: I have one overall question. I'm finding it very hard, as I speak to people, to sort of envisage how these could work without some sort of steer about what the role of music services locally would be, and how that's envisioned in the future. Are they basically going to stay the same? If that's the case then it's easy to understand or better assess each of these, so just a little comment on that would be helpful.

Hannah Fouracre: Yes, Hannah. What we're expecting is, the lead applicant would tell us who their delivery partners are going to be in all of the different local authority areas that they would be managing. It would likely be that they would need do, be thinking about whether there's an existing music service there and how they might work with them, or what other delivery partners there might be in those areas that would be delivering the breadth of activity that we'd be expecting for children and young people in those circumstances. We're not saying explicitly what we expect to happen to every music service that exists, but the lead organisation needs to determine their delivery partners.

Voice 9: Thank you.

Voice 12: The lead organisation itself might be a coming together of some of those already. They could apply as a group.

Hannah Fouracre: Could be. What we're not doing is, within the numbers that we're exploring today, what we're unlikely to do is to say what the model should be in these places. We want the organisations and people in each place to

think about what's going to work best in this area, and they'd tell us what the model would be, and who the partners are.

Melissa Wong: Thank you. Just for the record, that question was from [redacted].

Voice 12: Sorry.

Melissa Wong: That's all right. Yes.

Voice 8: [redacted] from [redacted]. Just in terms of definition - I realise that we're not doing this exactly - it says it's coordinated by National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics. That was created fresh when the Maths Hubs were established. Are we suggesting with this model there will be a new centre for excellence for music education set up, or is the Arts Council fulfilling that role with the DfE currently?

Hannah Fouracre: Hannah. At the moment, we have been confirmed as the fund holder to continue in terms of the monitoring and development work for Music Education Hubs. Of course, the National Plan did confirm the creation of some centres of excellence for Music Hubs in four different areas, so they will be existing as well to support the network of Hubs. That's what we're working to at the moment.

Voice 8: Okay.

Melissa Wong: Perfect. Any other questions? [redacted]?

Voice 1: Yes, just a quick one to add on from that. Those centres for excellence, is that being determined through this process, or is that being determined separately?

Hannah Fouracre: Hannah. We're working with the Department at the moment on how we're going to establish the centres of excellence.

Melissa Wong: Right. Thank you for all those questions. Anything else? Yes.

Voice 18: Sorry, just one clarifying question, and you probably have said it and I apologise. [redacted] from [redacted]. The tender process would be put out in spring, and then it would be closed at the end of summer. Am I right in that?

Hannah Fouracre: At the moment we're working to publishing guidance in the spring, and opening the portal later in the summer.

Voice 18: Right, so it will open in the summer. When would that close?

Hannah Fouracre: We're still working that through. We always give several weeks for people to be able to submit something. I guess what's important for me to share is, we're really trying to protect certain key areas within the investment process where we think it's really important that applicants have got enough time, which is why our consultation phase feels quite squeezed. We're trying to make sure that applicants, once we've shared the geographies, that there's time for people to go and have the really important conversations that they need to about partnership development, and at the other end of the process that people have got enough time, once the announcements have been made, to be able to mobilise and be ready for delivery in September. They're the two really critical parts that we're trying to build enough time and space in for those activities to happen.

Melissa Wong: Great. Thanks, Hannah. Yes.

Voice 16: [redacted], from [redacted]. Just for clarity on this, did I understand that you're not specifying the structure? You don't mention lead organisation. Are you saying that the structure could be different, or is it a similar structure to what we just talked about, but just with more of.. I wasn't quite clear on that.

Hannah Fouracre: What we're talking about is, what would it look like if there were 40 lead organisations for Music Hubs in England, which is about a third of what we've got now. I think, for the purposes of this exercise, even though the country's very different, it's thinking about what might it look like if there were a third less in the north of England.

Voice 16: Yes, so still the model of a lead organisation, rather than a group of lead organisations, or there could be other models.

Hannah Fouracre: There would still be a lead organisation that we had the funded relationship with, but they would be leading the partnerships for those places.

Melissa Wong: Thanks, Hannah. Yes, one more in the back.

[Unknown 1:40:05.6]: Just quickly, Hannah, did you say for the north that's a third less lead organisations?

Melissa Wong: About. It's about two thirds less.

Hannah Fouracre: About two thirds less.

[Unknown 1:40:13.7]: Oh, two thirds less. Okay.

Hannah Fouracre: It would be a total of a third of what we've got now. Sorry.

Melissa Wong: Great. If there are no more clarifying questions, let's just take a few minutes now to capture our individual thoughts on sticky notes. I just want to say, you guys have had the best penmanship of all the groups that we've done this week, so please do continue that!

[Respondents complete task 1:40:35.5 - 1:47:11.5]

Melissa Wong: Right, can we start getting our sticky notes up on the board, please?

[Respondents complete task 1:47:15.9 - 1:48:57.2]

Melissa Wong: Right everyone, let's get up our sticky notes please. It's still looking a bit sparse up there, so I want to get as many up as possible. Thank you, everyone.

[Unknown 1:49:39.0]: Thanks.

Melissa Wong: Right. It feels like there was a lot of discussion and reflection on this one, so I'm really interested to hear what you have to say. Oh, that one looks like it needs a bit more thinking. All right. Again, we'll start with partnerships. Just in time. We'll start with partnerships and work our way across the room. I'll again pick out a sample of stickies from each one. I'm just aware we're running a little bit behind so I won't be able to call on as many people this time, but I will still try to call on two or three for each function, and if there's anything else that you didn't get the chance to say and that you didn't already put in a sticky, please just write it and put it up when you get the chance. All right? Starting with partnerships, really good spread of thoughts across this one, across the three different colours. Picking out a few of the greens, opportunity for cross-sector, cross-geographic area work. Great opportunity to learn from partners in your area.

Opportunity for delivery partners in different local authorities to share knowledge and expertise. That's really nice.

Opportunity to establish more relevant partnerships than if Hub were larger. Able to access other fundings such as skills/health/LEPs. Does everyone know what LEPs are? Local Enterprise Partnerships. Able to operate at scale linked to local needs. Under the yellows we have; could three current organisations collaborate to become one? Some concern about the transition, and what that would look like. Opportunity to retain some established partnerships at local level/develop new ones but lose some. Potential for stronger wider regional partners that already work. Under the pinks we have; still huge area to cover geographically, population-wise, diversity of schools and partnership. Small and specialist organisations will get lost. Lack of local knowledge, so reflecting some of the things about scenario one as well. Does the Hub reflect the different needs of the area? Dot, dot, dot. Right. I think some real opportunities around collaboration and learning from each other, but then this thing around covering still a fairly large geographic area and what that means practically in terms of local knowledge.

Anything else that you would add to that, or anything that jumps out of that for you? I see your hand, [redacted]. Just seeing if there is anyone else who hasn't spoken up as much? All right, we'll start with you and then I'll come to you, [redacted].

[Unknown 1:53:15.5]: I think in this scenario, I think in this model, I think many Hubs already successfully work on some level across that wider geographical area with three, four, five more Hubs as well. I think there's already strong partnerships

potentially with those Hubs and the partners that they work with in those regions.

Melissa Wong: There's some precedent for this already.

[Unknown 1:53:37.4]: I think there's some history there already. It's maybe not taken account of, actually, in what's reported back always.

Melissa Wong: Could you write that on a sticky for me please? Thank you. Yes. Oh, sorry. I'll do [redacted] first and then I'll come to you.

Voice 1: Just really to follow on from that point about the potential of three organisations coming together, and really just to comment on the timescale to allow good governance is very, very tight. Actually, there may have been lots of scenarios where the preference would have been to dissolve three organisations and create a new one. Actually, in real terms, is that going to be possible to do that? That can potentially lead to scenarios where there's going to be looser governance, because one organisation takes the lead with the intention potentially for that all to become one, but that relies on an awful lot of trust in the lead organisation in order to do that.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. I think picking up on some concerns around governance and transition. One final comment.

[Unknown 1:54:44.4]: It's a comment about the same point. I don't think we should assume that becoming a Hub means everybody becomes one organisation, because the Hub Lead could well be a separate organisation from all the delivery partners. In fact, in the guidance that we've read, the expectation is that all our organisations, or the majority of them, will continue, but led by a local or regional or sub-regional lead

organisation, which isn't the same organisation as the partners. We may not need all that time to bring everybody together in one organisation, because I don't think that is being prescribed as an intention.

Melissa Wong: Absolutely.

Voice 1: Can I just counter that very quickly? Is that all right? I think that's right, and I think that's obviously the intention here, but the reality is that there could be a lead organisation who makes a choice to retender for all of their local partners and to not continue with those partnerships. I think all that work that's been done, there's no guarantee here that that is what they're intending to do, even though that may be Arts Council's intention and what lots of people in this room would like to happen. There's no actual guarantee of it.

Melissa Wong: Lots of different ways that you could go forward to transition towards this model, but how would it work in practice, and some of the pros and cons of that depending on who that lead organisation is. Thank you for that. Incredibly useful discussion. I'm going to move us on to schools. Interesting, there's a lot of greens, a lot of pinks, and nothing in the middle, so something to pick up on. Starting with the greens, we have; shared values and standards across the region for schools. That's really interesting. May be able to align with cross-local-authority MATs. CPD, sharing of expertise, may be easier to organise at this level but still with a good breadth. As long as there's a strong delivery lead in each local authority, good opportunity to develop effective approaches with schools. Some really nice comments there. Under the risks or challenges we have; concerns about equitable split of funding for rural areas. Outstanding schools, how defined concerned over expertise to deliver?

I'm not sure if I've read that correctly, so if that was yours and I've read it incorrectly, jump in. How is the child/young person voice heard? Risk of not being able to drill down on local need of schools, especially if funding is taken away. Right. What are your reflections on what's been said? Yes.

Voice 2: [redacted]. Just looking at this scenario that it would be an outstanding school or college, thinking about it, as in the maths, obviously I'm a teacher, so much work has gone into schools with maths, and with music there really isn't. I would question who's going to have that expertise within the schools. A lot of schools don't, to take on this kind of scenario, where in maths they definitely do because there's been so much work and so much money put in. There would have to be amazing partnerships that the schools would have to take on to support them in that. They don't have the infrastructure to lead that. Then again I think, well, is that just going to go down the same route as the Music Hubs themselves will be those main partners that will actually have to take the lead because they've got the infrastructure to do it already? That's just my concern over that. I think it's a great thing to have schools really, really involved because they don't get a big enough voice sometimes, but it's the equality as well. Is every single school going to be reached through this way again?

Melissa Wong: Really useful reflection on the capacity of schools. Thank you for that context. Yes, [redacted]. Then [redacted].

Voice 13: I was just coming in on that one. It wasn't... It was just that, isn't it the size of the model? It's not suggesting that a school would be necessarily the lead in this model.

Melissa Wong: Oh yes, sorry. We're not making any assumptions about who the lead organisation might be. It might be a school, it might be a current music service, it

might be some other type of organisation. That's important to keep in mind, thanks for that reminder.

Voice 13: This scenario isn't promoting that it's a school that leads. It could be anybody.

Melissa Wong: We're focusing on the total number of Music Hubs across the country and the approximate geographic patch that they would cover. Yes. Thanks for that. Was there something else from you, [redacted]?

Voice 8: It was just... Yes, [redacted], [redacted]. It was just to add, I think, that with all these scenarios I've struggled, because it feels like it's between the two models. It's not as bad as option one in terms of responding to local need, so all my answers felt like I was half and half, just as a reflection.

Melissa Wong: I'm seeing a lot of nodding across the room. Is this the best of both worlds, or is it the worst of both worlds?

Voice 8: It depends on your philosophical stance. Half empty, half full.

Melissa Wong: [Laughs] The glass is twice as big as it needs to be. All right, let's move on to progression and musical development. Interestingly, not a lot that's been said here. Let's just read out all of them. May allow young people to see and experience better progression routes than larger HLOs. That's really interesting. Opportunity to extend and strengthen the local progression routes that already exist for CYP. That's really nice. Lots of upsides there. On the yellows; probably more manageable number of partnerships which can offer progression routes, but still in yellow, so that's interesting to observe. Then nothing under the pink, so it sounds like things are looking

quite positive in terms of musical development and progression for children and young people. Yes.

[Unknown 2:01:18.1]: I think this is the one for me that felt like jack of all trades, master of none. You know what you were saying about is it somewhere in between the two; you've lost that benefit of it being huge and having all of those partnership possibilities and progression routes there, particularly with the larger organisations, but you haven't got that really localised, which is why it was sort of orange.

Melissa Wong: I hear you. Anything else? Anyone else want to jump in? Is that a hand?

Voice 5: It's half a hand.

Melissa Wong: Half a hand!

[Laughter]

Melissa Wong: We had two hands earlier, and now we're having half a hand.

Voice 5: Just in response to that – [redacted], [redacted] - again I don't think a Hub Lead for a number of local authorities means that you lose the local offer. I think it can actually strengthen the local offer, and then you've got that extension into regional opportunities that maybe you didn't have before. I don't think we automatically think because there is a lead across a number of local authorities that we lose something in the locality. I think it can be the other way around, and you can strengthen it.

Melissa Wong: That's a really great perspective to have coming from you. Thank you for that. One last one.

Voice 18: Sorry, [redacted], [redacted]. I just agree with that, because I don't think you lose in any of these so far, you lose that local offer, because that's not what it's saying about. The local offer and the local expertise and knowledge and skills are still there in both of those offers, it just brings it in to one lead as well. It's leading, but you still have that. It's just advocating that.

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. Going back to what Hannah said at the beginning, we're not anticipating any reduction in the number of delivery organisations that work within a Hub, the level of activity that they might deliver. This is more about how it's facilitated and coordinated at a strategic level. Thank you, everyone, for that reminder. Moving on to inclusion, good spread of post-its here. Starting with the greens, we have; opportunity to learn about inclusive approaches of other local authorities and to create projects and work together. Opportunity for people to learn from each other and increase diversity. Under yellow; lack of local SEND knowledge/data. That's really interesting. I'm curious to hear more about that. Some of the pinks; difficult to capture and meet needs of all young people as the communities are still very diverse. Are non-local-authority schools, e.g., faith-based, across the same support for their needs? Access? Access the same support for their needs. This might belong... It's a bit about inclusion, and also a bit about schools, because the schools is only reaching all state-funded schools. Interesting what this would mean for non-state-funded schools. Finally, hard to respond to the needs of each child.

Great. Thank you for all of those reflections. What's jumping out at you? Sounds like there are a lot of opportunities for sharing of practice about inclusive approach, but there's this risk that those who actually have the least opportunity to engage and are hardest to reach,

that it will be more difficult to reach those young people. Would that be a fair summary of what's been said? Okay. Yes.

Voice 17: [redacted]. I think that so far, what we've heard on all of this is, for me, is striking more of a balance between quality and quantity. Going back to my comments on the previous scenario, it seems that people are believing that this would be more manageable and would provide more opportunities, as you've said, for combining resources and working with other people, and that would be more manageable, but that there's still concerns that the young people are missing out. I guess it's about balancing our needs, balancing the Arts Council's idea of should it be young person-focused, or is the good CPD and the good collaboration enough to make this a worthwhile scenario?

Melissa Wong: Brilliant summary of what's been said so far. Let's move on to sustainability. Again, a spread of comments here. Under greens we have; greater capacity, i.e., lead for fundraising. Able to access both local and regional funding such as city region and Local Enterprise Partnership funding. On the yellows; will this become Hubs of activity rather than Hubs of areas? Not quite sure what that means. Maybe that person who wrote that can explain. How can geographic areas be split equitably in this scenario? Finally, one pink; in predefining geographies, existing multi-area Hubs need to be considered. There are those cross-boundaries with combined authority that could be split up. Something to take into account if this is the scenario that goes forward; how exactly will those boundaries work? What are your reflections on what's on the board? Yes.

Voice 15: [redacted]. There's a question going around in my mind which I don't quite know the answer to, but there's something around economy of scale, that when you don't have

a lot of shared services you can actually free up money to do a lot more things. What I don't know without getting out a lot of spreadsheets, and I'm not across enough of the detail, to know which of the three models you start... There becomes a point in economy of scale that you need to start employing more people at a certain scale. Does that make sense? It starts to become uneconomic. Which of the three models is more efficient and effective in terms of using budget, which is the biggest challenge we have going forward. There's not a lot of money on the table no matter what we do. To do everything we want to do is probably impossible.

Melissa Wong: With this size of Hub, are you creating economies of scale or are you creating additional bureaucracy?

Voice 15: Question mark, yes.

Melissa Wong: Yes. One more from this side.

Voice 16: [redacted] from [redacted]. I had a half-formed thought, and just thinking about these two models, it's easy when you talk about this to always think about it like a giant music service, which is obviously not what we're talking about. It's about the connection between the different types of delivery. You have music services, you have cultural organisations, you have higher education, who've got different agendas but are delivering in similar areas. I think you can't get away from, actually, the internal structure of whatever scale it is. To a certain extent the scale mightn't matter. It's what the structure within the scale is, because you could find the perfect scale, but if you're not aligning those different areas of delivery in a strategic way it won't work. The internal mechanisms of it are one of the most important things.

Melissa Wong: What I'm hearing is, regardless of which scenario goes forward it's all down to how it's implemented in practice. Thank you for that. Thank you so much for all of this discussion on scenario two. I think this has been really, really illuminating. Dav, just want to check; is there anything else from general thoughts that we haven't already picked up on?

Dav Williams: Dav, Arts Council England. A lot of the comments that were on the board in terms of general thoughts echo what's been said, particularly around jack of all trades, master of none, and the economies of scale conversation that just happened then. It's interesting to see a lot of direct comparisons between this scenario and option one, so some comments saying it's a similar model but in terms of the benefits and risks presented it might still feel quite similar. There's one opportunity at the top that I'd like to pick out around saying that this might be a useful scenario for someone who's a lead partner, who's also able to focus on delivery as well. Then, in terms of the risks, there's one that I'd like to tease out if this person's happy to elaborate. There's one that says conflict, question mark. It needs to be well managed. Then there's another related to terms and conditions for teachers and managers. I think they're two really interesting points, if either of those two people are happy to elaborate on those specifically.

Melissa Wong: Thanks, Dav. Does one person who wrote those want to jump in?

Voice 18: Sorry, [redacted], [redacted]. I think I wrote conflict and terms and conditions and all those sorts of things, because those have to be considered. It's not... You can look back at where Hubs started and it's a very different process, especially as we're going, being asked for the [unclear word 2:10:39.1]

and all those sorts of things. When that comes out and is more in... We've got more knowledge of that. We have to sort of think about... It comes back to those economies. Okay, so if we are working more collaboratively, why have we got people on different terms and conditions? Is there economies of scale? Is there a change in how we employ people? Is there different management structures needed? All of those kind of come into play because that relates back to the economies of scale one, and increased costs. Those are going to increase the costs on your layers of management. You're going to restructure that management to want to put it back to the front line. That's a bit more exploration about what that means.

Melissa Wong: Thanks for teasing that out. One final comment from [redacted], and then we'll move on.

Voice 12: Because I'm not working for a Hub directly I'm not sure whether this is stating the bleeding obvious, but I've been wondering about which model might encourage schools to then throw money into the pot. Are there schools that aren't putting enough budget towards music, and that means that then our budgets are limited, even more limited, and if aligning with a model like this would encourage a catalyst of change for schools to then throw in and work together to chuck that budget... To encourage budgets within schools and partnering Hubs, then you could see that it could top up everybody's impact.

Melissa Wong: That's a really interesting question there around which model will ensure the best buy-in and leverage the most funding from schools.

Voice 12: If I'm a secondary school that's outstanding but I've got someone coming and doing a music centre on a Saturday, do I not put as much into my music budget? This is something

you're probably working with all the time in a Hub, but where's the pressure on schools to support this strategy?

Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. Could you just put that in a sticky note, and we'll get that up on the board as well? Anyone else? I know I haven't been able to call on everyone in this discussion, but if there's anything else that you've thought of that you want to add to the board, please do get those up on sticky notes. Again, one last task for you before we move on from scenario two. I'm going to ask you again to take a sticky dot and tell us, if you had to rate this scenario on a scale from one to five, how would you rate it? One meaning not at all effective, five being extremely effective. Please stand up and put up your dots, and any other sticky notes you've thought of.

Hannah Fouracre: Hannah. I think we might be missing one sticky dot in option one.

[Over speaking, laughter 2:13:24.5]

Melissa Wong: All right.

[Respondents complete task 2:13:38.5 - 2:15:58.0]

Melissa Wong: All right, everyone. If you've put up your dot, grab a seat. If I could bring your attention back to the front of the room. Thank you. Right, we're just about to get started again on scenario three.

[Over speaking 2:16:19.7]

Melissa Wong: Great. Thank you everyone. We've just got one more scenario to work through. Can I just get your attention to the front? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, everyone, for putting up your dots. Thank you so much for

your hard work so far. We've just got one more scenario to work through today. This is scenario three. It's what we've been calling the locally nuanced option. We've been starting with the biggest geographical areas and working our way down to what is the smallest of the three. This scenario comes from Teaching School Hubs. Again, you don't need to know the specifics of what Teaching School Hubs are to think about this scenario. The main thing for you to understand is that there are 87 of these hubs across the country, and the geographies are reflective of the fact that there are more of them. By comparison, there are currently 118 Music Hubs. This is about three quarters of the number that we have now. Something to bear in mind.

The other thing to be thinking about is that we're working on the guiding principle that there won't be any local authority music hubs going forward. There are approximately 150-something local authorities across the country, so we're imagining groupings of two or more local authority areas within this scenario, and of course a much larger number of Hubs than the previous two scenarios. I just want to check, do I have any clarifying questions about the scenario before we get started? Yes.

Voice 18: Sorry. [redacted], [redacted]. Sorry, can you just clarify that; there won't be any local authority music?

Hannah Fouracre: Single local authority.

Voice 18: Single local authority.

Melissa Wong: Single. Sorry!

[Laughter]

Melissa Wong: Missed a word there!

[Over speaking 2:18:22.3]

Melissa Wong: Thank you. All right, and [redacted]?

Voice 13: Sorry. I mean, I'm not up on how the country's currently broken down exactly, but how would that work if it's a massive local authority area?

Melissa Wong: That's a good question.

Voice 13: There would have to be just one local authority, if you say you're not going to split or...

Hannah Fouracre: Hannah. At the moment, we're consulting on if there weren't any single local authority hubs, but I think the question about size and what that means is something that we'd like to capture in the feedback today and the post-its.

Melissa Wong: Thanks, Hannah. I saw [redacted]?

Voice 5: Yes. Just for clarity, am I right in thinking there are 150 local authorities?

Hannah Fouracre: One hundred and fifty-two.

Voice 5: If there were 87 Hubs, some of those would need to be individual areas.

Melissa Wong: I wouldn't focus so much on the exact number 87.

Voice 5: Right, so 87 isn't a critical number.

Melissa Wong: It's approximate.

Voice 5: It's around that area.

Melissa Wong: Exactly. Basically, the main thing is that this is double the number that we had in the previous scenario.

Voice 5: Okay.

Melissa Wong: Thanks for that. Any other clarifying questions? All right. Let's take again a few moments to capture our individual thoughts. I see that we are starting to run low on stickies, so if you need a colour just raise your hand and we'll run them over to you.

[Respondents complete task 2:19:41.7 - 2:22:34.5]

[Unknown 2:22:34.5]: What do you think? [Unclear phrase 2:22:36.6].

[Unknown 2:22:36.6]: I know. A little bit of me is thinking that it moves away from... It gets to the numbers where you don't have that influence nationally to raise music up. Is it really different from what we've got now? Enough.

[Unknown 2:22:48.8]: No, it's not. No.

[Unknown 2:22:52.1]: Is it brave enough?

[Unknown 2:22:53.1]: Then it's going to get, locally, more people reached, because I think the national one won't, with that being just overarching.

[Unknown 2:22:59.3]: Yes, that's it. Where you lose that, you gain...

[Unknown 2:23:03.1]: You get the more personal [unclear words 2:23:04.9].

[Unknown 2:23:04.9]: This might lead to more flexibility for each area to define itself.

[Unknown 2:23:10.2]: Which is what I think is important as well.

[Unknown 2:23:15.9]: Less fractious change, which could [unclear words 2:23:24.1].

[Respondents complete task 2:23:29.6 - 2:26:20.4]

Melissa Wong: Right. Can everyone finish writing their last sticky note and put everything up on the board?

[Respondents complete task 2:26:30.1 - 2:27:04.3]

Melissa Wong: Really good to see, again, a lot of reflections again on this one. Lots of greens, which is always nice to see lots of greens. I see that you've done a wonderful job of self-organising the colours as well, which is very helpful! I think there's still someone writing comments, but I'm just going to get started just to keep us moving. Partnership seems to be where you had the most reflections, and a lot of greens in particular on this one. I'll pick out a few of them and see what people have said. Better links with LCEPs/LEPs. LCEPs are Local Cultural Education Partnerships. LEPs are Local Enterprise Partnerships. Wider network to learn from than currently for all involved. Schools, young people, staff, and partners. This is interesting, because even though this is the smallest geographic area, someone's saying it's still a wider network to draw on. Less likely that partnerships already established would not be lost, but may be strengthened. Better local knowledge than the other models. Good opportunities for local working. Maintain links/visibility/accountability between local delivery and

budget holder/Hub Lead Organisation. That's some of the greens.

On the yellows we've said; doesn't encourage conversations outside current boundaries. That's interesting. More HLOs doesn't mean that large region partnership working to provide breadth of provision isn't possible. Interesting. Then, on the pinks people have said; perhaps risk of too locally minded? Limited wider partnership capacity and development opportunities. Again here, limited partnership development and relatively small hub area. What are you picking up on from what's been said? I'm going to encourage those who haven't spoken up as much to, because this is the last scenario. Love to hear from those we haven't heard from yet.

Voice 11: [redacted] from the [redacted]. I think it's really interesting, the collaboration and the accountability of organisations would be easier with this level. I think, in terms of the management of it as well, a lot of those relationships are already established and Hubs have probably worked together already in this scenario.

Melissa Wong: On a very practical level, this feels very manageable to you. Thank you. Anyone else? I see your hand, [redacted]! Anyone else who we haven't heard from yet? All right, [redacted], and then over to you in the back.

Voice 1: Yes, [redacted], [redacted]. I think it highlights so clearly how key partnership working is for what we do now and what we want to continue doing, which is really important, but also there is currently activity that happens with Hub partnerships that happens on a regional level. There not being a regional HLO doesn't stop that. We can still work on a regional level if we want to, but we can still have the localised knowledge and localised offer.

Melissa Wong: Brilliant comment, thank you for that. I'm going to call on this gentleman here because his hand is up, but [redacted], if you could put your comment in a sticky that would be wonderful, thank you.

Voice 9: Yes, [redacted], [redacted]. Only that the revised National Plan stated that these new organisations would respond to local need, and what's jumping out at me is that this would best respond to local need.

Melissa Wong: Is this because this is the most local out of the three different options?

Voice 9: Yes. It's as simple as that.

Melissa Wong: All right, brilliant. Thank you. Thank you for that. I think it's really interesting to see a lot of comments around the partnerships that are already established, the locality, or attention to locality, that could be given within this scenario. Let's take a look at schools. No pinks here. Great news. Let's start with the greens and see what people have said. They said; more opportunities for local schools to share good practice without being unmanageable. A lot of things coming out around the manageability of this scenario. Relationships with schools and young people not threatened, but the potential to grow with - again - a manageable increase in partnership. Able to develop face-to-face with schools to develop work. Under the yellows we have; rural authority areas are already large in terms of geography. It sounds like yellow potentially leaning towards a risk. Then this one reads, would enable effective conversations with schools but could limit range of cultural partners which schools have access to, so presumably because it's a smaller area with a smaller number of cultural organisations within it.

Any reflections on what's been said about schools under scenario three? Yes.

Voice 8: I think, picking up on [redacted]'s point as well - sorry, [redacted] from [redacted] - obviously in the Plan it's tasked that every school has a music development plan. By having a greater number of Hubs, it means that from a strategic level you can capture all of the individual needs of the schools far greater. Yes, you can still do that with a larger partnership, but actually the management is far more aware of the individual needs of those individual schools through conversation, through dialogue, again responding to the needs of the children as defined by the schools themselves.

Melissa Wong: Brilliant, thank you. Again, coming back to that local knowledge and understanding. Yes...

[Unknown 2:33:24.0]: I think, with the organisation I work for, it's a Teaching Hub and lead organisation, and all of those schools already work very closely together and maintain that relationship so that, in terms of collaboration between schools especially, it's there. It's just then tapping into it in a musical way as well, which I think would be really a great opportunity for schools to work more collaboratively together.

Melissa Wong: That's really nice. Nice to hear someone with experience of Teaching School Hubs, and interesting as well to think about the relationship between schools as well as with the Hub Lead. Great. Really useful discussion on schools. Let's move on to progression and musical development. On the greens we have; more localised musical opportunities can be given, which will be easier for all children to access. Ability to build strong connections and relevant support for local organisation which in turn will provide a more individualised experience for young people. Able to continue to develop relationships and

progression routes that already exist. Brilliant. Thank you for that. Then, on the yellows; progression can be national. Doesn't always follow county lines. What does that mean within a more locally nuanced scenario? Same, more partnerships. Not sure if I've read that correctly. Let me know if I haven't. The pink says, some of the progression issues re cold spots may remain, depending on reach of cultural partners.

Great. What do we think of what's been said around progression and musical development? Something about individual needs that's interesting.

Voice 10: Yes, I'm [redacted] from [redacted]. I think the point about progression on the national level, and those young people that are that skilled and that able that they are looking at that massive progression into the regional orchestras and [redacted] and all of those kinds of things, they're already on people's radars. They're already getting a level of support. What the localised support offers is better support for those young people who are vulnerable, who are not on the radar of the music services necessarily. I just see more opportunity for those young people to get support through a more localised provision.

Melissa Wong: So, something about how this scenario offers the greatest focus and attention that's able to be given to those who don't already have lots of support available to them. Picking up on things about individual need in the greens. [redacted].

Voice 13: That was my point exactly. We've already got a network of great national organisations, [redacted], and more regional ones opening up, all these things that we already engage with on a wide regional thing. Like you said, this scenario has the advantages of not threatening that local need, and it's not going to undermine the fact that we still work with all

these people, [redacted] and all these fantastic organisations that are there to support us. That's sort of... The other models that you think might have that benefit, well, we've already got that structure that's funded, that many of us engage with.

Melissa Wong: That doesn't have to be lost. Absolutely. One last one from [redacted].

Voice 8: It might be in the partnerships as well, [unclear words 2:37:09.2] [redacted]'s talking about. This model also allows a flexibility of partnerships. There's a danger that actually, if it's concrete that partnership must work on a larger Hub, you've always got to work with that partner to deliver a certain thing, whereas actually if that's not responding to need you can look elsewhere and work with a different partner from a different authority or different area. It allows you again to respond to the need and be a bit more fleet of foot.

Melissa Wong: I like that. Interesting comment about flexibility there. We've already sort of started talking about inclusion, because I think these two functions are quite closely related to each other. I just want to dig into this a little bit more. On the greens we've said; greatest potential to understand the needs of each child. Youth voice is stronger and heard more clearly. More chance for a young-person-centred approach. More ability to consider the individual school, individual organisation, and individual person. Then, on the yellow; could limit capacity for the development of a range of approaches to SEND. More focus on the particular individual, but what does that mean in terms of learning and sharing of expertise? Anything else you're picking up on under inclusion? I see you, [redacted]. Just want to check if there's anyone else who wants to jump in who hasn't had a chance to speak yet. All right, [redacted].

Voice 13: Yes, [redacted], [redacted]. Just back to the last part, once again many of us work with funded organisations that promote and put out best practice for inclusion. We've come a long way in the last few years with that as well. Once again, that's still there. That wider, that national, that regional offer is still there in that support, but not at the risk of losing knowing the needs of all the young people in your area in all the settings, not just schools. Pupil referral units, wherever, SEND settings. Yes.

Melissa Wong: I think it's really nice to hear that you think that regardless of which scenario things move towards, there's still so much good practice and good connectivity there that won't be lost. That's really reassuring to hear. One final comment.

Voice 10: Just to pick up on that, losing the capacity, my experience is that the specialist organisations that are delivering that have their own networks anyway outside of the Music Hubs, so you won't lose any of that shared knowledge across those specialists.

Melissa Wong: Good to hear that there's lots that won't be lost in the midst of change. One last one now, sustainability for scenario three. Only one green here, so let's read it in whole. Local people know how to spend the money in their area more...

[Unknown 2:40:05.1]: Let me see? Effectively.

Melissa Wong: Effectively, thank you! Local people know how to spend the money in their area more effectively. Think of cash-based international development. I think it's saying, let local people decide how to spend the money. On the yellows we've said, is it possible to deliver a quality offer in this scenario with the funding available? We've

also said, will this have less of a top level of management, ensuring more money gets to young people? On the pinks, question around sustainability... Oh no, sorry. Economies of scale are limited because of the smaller geographic area. Limited fundraising. If this is to improve standard of some music hubs. Need to know which ones those are and the criteria in order to improve. Finally, limited opportunities to belong to a larger network. Right. What's jumping out at you? Quite a range of comments on this one. Range of perspectives. Yes.

Voice 9: [redacted], [redacted]. There's an interesting one there about how Hubs will be monitored, assessed, quality assurance, those kinds of issues. I haven't got so much information in my head about how that's envisaged.

Melissa Wong: Is that a question specifically around scenario three, or would that have implications for the other...

Voice 9: I think that's a more general point.

Melissa Wong: Okay, all right. Great, thank you for that. Yes.

Voice 6: [redacted], [redacted]. This model give you the opportunity to use existing management structures in whatever organisation becomes the lead. Rather than having to create new ones, it might be that you don't have to put that extra layer in because you're dealing with smaller, and capacity issues are... In terms of management structures, the bigger you go the more issues you're going to have.

Melissa Wong: Absolutely. I've called on you quite a bit, [redacted], so I'm just going to give a chance for...

Voice 7: [redacted], [redacted].

Melissa Wong: Thank you.

Voice 7: I think sustainability and success of any of these models for me kind of always comes back to being dependent of schools, I think. I think I see them as the gatekeeper to getting to lots of our children and young people. I suppose, for me, this model keeps that decision-making as close to schools as possible, and gives them a chance to have their voice heard. A lot of these other models, the bigger they become the more top-down their decision-making starts to look. Somebody made an interesting point here about buy-in from schools, and somebody said here about local people knowing how to spend their cash. In this part of the world, in [redacted] we devolve the funding to schools to allow them to make their own decisions and choices. I think it would be really interesting to explore that a little bit further. This model allows us to keep that ethos and explore the successes of that most effectively, I think.

Melissa Wong: Perfect, thank you for that. One last one from [redacted].

Voice 8: I think it's all about all of us, in a way. It's my point about the quality. If part of it is to raise standards, we kind of need to know where DfE or Arts Council don't agree the standards are high enough. We can all make our own assumptions, but actually we don't have... The two models we've been given for Teaching Schools and Maths Hubs, they've both come out of outstanding or very good schools. I think there's a disconnect here in terms of how are we going to improve standards if no one is actually telling us that you are not a good enough Music Education Hub, or that Music Education Hub that we want a Hub Lead to come over the top isn't good enough. Just by predefining geographies, it could still

be the poor organisation that gets the lead because they write a good grant application.

Melissa Wong: Right. It sounds like the question is not just about the prescribed geographies. It's about what the standards are, how people are held to account to those standards, and something else for Arts Council and the DfE to be thinking about in this new investment programme. I think that will belong very nicely under anything else, which we're just about to get to. I see your hand, [redacted]. Unfortunately, I am going to have to move us on, so if you could write that on a sticky note that would be brilliant. I do want to ensure that we're capturing all of your thoughts. Just before we close out scenario three, Dav, could you just tell us, is there anything else that's come out under general thoughts that we haven't already discussed?

Dav Williams: Dav, Arts Council England. A lot of it builds on what we've already said, or has already been said, in terms of opportunities, particularly around the opportunities through understanding that local context. There's things like youth voice mentioned on there, recognising current geographical structures. It's interesting, in the opportunities see a lot of use of the word easy, so there's a lot of things around easy transition and easiest model to include youth voice. Then, in terms of challenges there's some comments around, or a general sense that it's not different enough, or how is this improving the current structure? Then, in the middle ground there's some comments that have been raised recently, particularly around schools' budgets and which scenario out of the three would encourage schools to increase their budgets for music in general terms, and then which of these options would lead to increased buy-in from schools. I think it would be really interesting to see some of

those comments on the anything else, as [unclear words 2:45:42.9] three.

Melissa Wong: Thank you so much for that recap. Thank you so much for all the work that you've done today. I'm just going to ask you to do a couple of final tasks before I let you go. Dav, can I get you to unlock the screen, please?

Dav Williams: Of course you can, no problem.

Melissa Wong: We do of course still want to know how you would rate scenario three on a scale of one to five, so I will ask you to put up your sticky dots, but I will also ask you to do something else. If you could do both of those at the same time, that would be wonderful. The last thing we're going to do is just some final reflection, just a couple of slides ahead. There we go. We have two final questions for you. The first question is, of these three scenarios that we've looked at and explored in detail, which is your most preferred scenario and why? I want you to take one sticky note, tell us which is your preferred scenario, and just write a one-to-two sentence summary on that sticky note with your rationale for why that's your most preferred. Stick it up in the relevant box, one, two, or three on the side. The second question is, is there anything else that needs to be taken into consideration in making the final decision about prescribed geographies for Music Hubs?

We've had a brilliant conversation today, but we've already acknowledged that that's only focused on this particular aspect of the investment programme. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that DfE should be thinking about in this decision? I'll just give you a few minutes to write those sticky notes. A reminder; put up the dot for scenario three, tell us your most preferred scenario, and tell us if there's anything else to take into account.

Melissa Wong: Right. I know we're almost at the close, so I'll just do this very quickly and just give a brief scan of, overall, what were the preferences across the room. I think it's very clear there was a strong feeling across the group that Teaching School Hubs was the most preferred, but let's find out just a little bit amongst the people who preferred scenario one and scenario two, what were the kinds of things that they said. This person said, bridge organisations provide the greatest opportunity to be more inclusive of music provision to reflect the different cultural needs. This is perhaps the most inclusive option for that person. Scenario two, Maths Hubs. We have, enables effective collaboration and peer learning without being too large, and without the risk of becoming autocratic. Again, it's about being that balance of the bigger, but not too big. Then, finally, just a sample of what people have said about their preference for the Teaching School Hubs, the locally nuanced option. We said, balance of broad opportunities and economies of scale. Change needed without complete disruption.

Another one is, best for local understanding and ease of delivery. A lot about the practical transition and practical implementation, and as well around the local understanding. Thank you so much for sharing with us what your preference is. I know it's not easy to make a decision. There probably isn't one perfect option, but it's good to get a sense of what your preferences are leaning towards. Finally, I just want to take a moment to reflect on anything else. We gave you quite a structured approach to talking through the three scenarios today, and I'm sure that there's lots that we didn't get the chance to touch upon. That's reflected in the fact that there are so many sticky notes here. I'm not going to read through all of them,

because I'm sure that there are a lot of comments and that they'll be quite wide-ranging. What I'll say is that Dougie and I will read through all of them, and we will report back everything that you've said to the Arts Council and DfE, so thank you for taking the time to share these additional reflections as well.

I'm just going to tell you a little bit about what next. Hurrah, we have done all five focus groups across the country. It's been so wonderful to see so many people from across the sector this week. You've all been an incredibly engaged group. It's been really fascinating to hear about your comments, the perspectives and experience that you've been bringing into this room. It's been absolutely fabulous, so it's just been a joy to work with all of you. We've finished the in-person focus groups now. If there's anything you didn't get the chance to say, or anything else you think of afterwards, you do have until midday this Sunday to submit to the online survey, so please do that. The survey is one response per organisation, but do encourage other organisations that you work with who ware involved in the musical lives of children and young people to respond to the survey as well. Finally, we are continuing to speak to people, albeit virtually. We're running a digital focus group next Tuesday the 17th, where we'll be meeting with another 75 people across the country.

Once all of that is said and done, Dougie and I will be trawling through all of your responses and seeing what are the themes that come out of them, and reporting that back to Arts Council and the DfE ensuring that we're representing your views fairly. From there, Hannah will tell you a little bit about next steps.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you. After the focus groups, we'll be publishing how many of each type of organisation has

attended all of the focus groups, plus publishing the anonymised transcripts of each session so anybody who's not been able to be here today can read what we've talked about. As Melissa said, all of the ideas and feedback that we've gathered through this exercise will be analysed by her and Dougie, and that's going to assist the decision-making process for the new Hub geographies moving forwards. In the spring we're hoping to share what those geographies will be, and how your feedback has helped to shape those. As I said earlier, the guidance for applicants should be published in the spring with the portal opening later in the summer, which leads me just to end by saying thank you very much for participating today. You've all contributed so constructively and positively, and I really thank you for that. We've been talking about a subject that's really hard to think about and work out.

It's also been ten years since we last had an open investment process for this programme, which brings very many challenges in itself as well. We've also been focusing it on something very specific, and also something very abstract. I think the anything else sheet shows that. When we publish the guidance for applicants, that will make it very clear; all the things that have been set out in the National Plan for Music Hubs, what we will be looking for in terms of quality and inclusion and leadership and governance and accountability and impact and data and evaluation, and what good looks like from a Hub Lead ord. All of that information will be coming later on. I'd like to personally thank Melissa. As she said, this is the last one. She has unexpectedly handled just over 15 hours of focus groups by herself this week. Thank you very much, Melissa.

[Applause]

Hannah Fouracre: It's been a real pleasure to be face to face with lots of people throughout the country. I've really valued seeing people, getting to meet lots of new people, and I'm really excited about moving forwards with the Hub programme and making sure that we're still continuing to make a really positive impact on the musical lives of children and young people across England. Thank you very much, and safe journeys home.

[Break 2:58:34 - End]

[End of Transcript]