# Music Hubs Investment Programme
# South East Group

**23rd 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 communities as part of their consultation on the Music Hub Investment Programme. We recorded these focus groups in order to create and publish anonymised transcriptions so everyone can access the conversations.

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

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

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

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

**Organisation type:**

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

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

# Beginning of transcription:

**Hannah Fouracre:** Good morning, everybody. We're going to get started. I'll do some housekeeping as we move through. We have got somebody that's late. We've had a few last-minute dropouts, so I think we're more or less there, so we'll get started. Welcome. My name is Hannah Fouracre, Director of Music Education, Arts Council England, for those of you who I don't know already. I just wanted to start by thanking you so much for putting yourselves forward to attend today's focus group. We really do appreciate it. Much appreciated, as well, that you've been able to get into Central London at this time of day. I imagine some of you might have had to set off as early as I did coming from York, so later on, when we're yawning a little, perhaps, we'll stand together in solidarity of our early start. So some housekeeping. Tea and coffee available throughout the session, so please don't hesitate to just get up and grab a drink or some water. If you need the loo, you need to turn right out of the meeting room, turn left through some wooden double doors going past some lifts, and then along the corridor at the end that you'll come to. It's very, very close by.

I've been informed that we're not expecting a fire alarm today, so if one goes off, follow our DfE colleagues, [redacted] and [redacted], who will introduce themselves in a bit. You'll have noticed, perhaps, the table in the middle with a recording device. We are recording today's session so that we can create an anonymised transcription of our discussion that we'll have. This will help our researchers to analyse what we've talked about, and also we're planning to publish the transcript, so anybody that's not been able to attend today is able to read what we've been talking about. We won't be sharing who is in attendance and who

has said what, so it will be anonymous. Because of that, I do request that each time you speak throughout the next three hours, if you could start what you want to say with your name, so that the person transcribing is able to attribute it to the person that is speaking anonymously.

Agenda. This is the plan for the day. After our introductions to each other I'm going to do some scene-setting, going over a little bit of context to help frame the conversation that we're going to have today. We're then going to go into our exercises. We're planning to have a break about 10:50 for ten minutes, and we're going to end at 12:30. There is a lot that we're going to try and get through. Everything that we're talking about is really important. It's important to us, it's important to the Department, it's important to you and all of your peers. So the session is going to be interactive, so please do speak freely, think innovatively. We will be exploring lots of different ideas, and I'm sure that there will be many different views and opinions, and we really welcome that, but I do request that we share and listen to each other with respect, please. So, before we all introduce ourselves, I'd like to specifically introduce Melissa Wong, our external facilitator for today. Would you like to say hello?

Melissa Wong: Hi.

Hannah Fouracre: We were also expecting Douglas Lonie to be joining us, but unfortunately he's had a family emergency and isn't able to join us today. So, Maria, from the Arts Council, is going to be supporting Melissa today with a little bit of capturing things on the flip chart and Post-Its, etc. So without further ado, let's go round, and let everybody know who we are and which organisation you're representing today. Sam, would you like to start?

**Sam Martin: Hi everyone, I'm Sam Martin. I'm the senior manager for music education at the Arts Council.**

Voice 10: Hi. I'm Voice 10. I'm the director of [redacted], which is a Hub Lead Organisation in [redacted].

Voice 12: I'm Voice 12. I am vice principal of [redacted], an independent music centre, and I was head of music at [redacted].

Voice 4: I'm Voice 4. I'm a freelance conductor and educator. I work a lot with Music Education Hubs and NPOs and others in the sector.

Voice 3: I'm Voice 3. I'm the chief executive of [redacted], which is an independent organisation. It's a lead partner for the Music Education Hub for [redacted], and a delivery organisation as well.

Voice 2: Hi. I'm Voice 2. I am head of opportunities for [redacted], and also lead [redacted] Music Hub.

Voice 6. Hi. I'm Voice 6. I am actually the music leader for a primary school, so some of your target, and previously, in a previous life, I used to work in the education department for one of the London orchestras.

Voice 8: I'm Voice 8. I am head of community at [redacted], formerly [redacted].

Voice 1: Voice 1 from [redacted]. It's a music service for [redacted], and it's the lead hub partner.

Voice 7: Voice 7, [redacted], which sits under [redacted].

Voice 11: Voice 11. I'm here as a freelancer. I was a tutor in the Music Hubs in London for many years. Now I write resources and do a lot of workshop and delivery in partnership with Music Hubs.

Voice 13: I'm a [redacted] at the DfE. I'm also a freelance cellist, and my background is teaching whole class strings in the Music Hubs. I've also recently become a junior trustee of [redacted], so I've got a community arts background as well.

Voice 14: I'm Voice 14, and I work in the music policy team at DfE.

**Maria Turley: I'm Maria Turley, and I'm Senior Manager for Music Education and Children and Young People at the Arts Council.**

**Hannah Fouracre: Thank you very much. I should have said apologies about how warm it is in here. There is somebody who is going to try and come and look at the air conditioning, so, hopefully, we won't melt before they arrive, but keep hydrated. Moving on, then, to some context, some of you may have seen or heard some of this before, but we thought it was really important to get us all on the same page before we go into the exercises that we're going to do today. So just a quick introduction to Arts Council England itself. We are the national development agency for creativity and culture. We're a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and we have a vision that's set out in our tenure strategy, Let's Create, that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. Children and young people are really at the heart of Let's**

Create, and we want to ensure that every child can participate and progress equitably.

We invest funding from the government and the National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver our vision. Since 2012 the Arts Council has worked really closely with the Department for Education to support the delivery of the government's National Plan for Music Education, and that has included our role as fundholder for Music Education Hubs on behalf of the DfE, as well co-investing in a national network of national youth ensembles, and a programme called In Harmony. The Department for Education provides the funding for Music Hubs, and the Arts Council, in our role as a development agency and funder, enables us to also support them more broadly. We fund many hub partners, such as music and music education organisations, venues and festivals, for example. We enable hubs to apply for our funding, like National Lottery project grants, and for music educators to apply for funding like Developing Your Creative Practice. We also have relationships with every local authority area, as well as many place-based partnerships. Our investment in youth music at £9.6 million a year also enables us to support many Hub Lead Organisations and hub partners.

Following the publication of the refreshed National Plan in June 2022, we're delighted that the Department for Education has confirmed that the Arts Council will continue as the fundholder, and to run an investment process for Music Hubs which is launching this year. We're really excited about continuing our journey with everybody who contributes to a fantastic and accessible music education experience for all children and young people across the country. So, the new National Plan for Music Education builds on the vision that was outlined in the plan in 2011, but responds to the changes that have been

navigated since then by the education, music education, and music sectors, and by young people themselves in the 11 years since it was published. The plan sets out the government's priorities until 2030 for music education for children and young people, including plans to strengthen the network of Music Hubs. It articulates a refreshed vision for the plan, which is that all children and young people should be enabled to learn to sing, to play an instrument and create music together, and 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 working together will best support children and young people to develop as musicians, providing a variety, reach and opportunity, and because of their key role, the National Plan outlines a refreshed strategy for Music Hubs. Now, Music Hubs are groups of organisations that work together to create joined-up music education provision for children and young people under the leadership of a hub lead organisation. The range of partners within each hub will continue to be determined at a local level, and each member of the partnership is expected to play a key role in supporting hub activity. The National Plan replaces the existing core and extension roles for Music Education Hubs with a refreshed strategy that is expressed by a vision, three aims, and five strategic functions.

The vision for hubs aligns with the vision for the National Plan as a whole, and its three aims are on the slide here. So, it's 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, and to support young people to develop their musical interests and talent further, including into employment. Underpinning, driving and facilitating the work of the Music Hub will be the responsibility of the Music Hub Lead Organisation. They are responsible for the coordination of the Music Hub partnership, and subsequently for the strategic development and oversight of a local plan for music education. They will be accountable for effective of the Department for Education's grant, and for the development of high-quality music education in the hub area, that will be delivered through the partnership and expressed in that local plan for music education.

Hubs are going to achieve that through the five strategic functions which are on this slide. Too small to read, but I think you will all have been sent it in advance, and will have read it in the pack. In summary, they are to facilitate the operations of an effective and sustainable partnership, to connect with and respond to the needs of schools, to implement a strategy to ensure that music education is inclusive for all children and young people, to implement a strategy which will support equitable progression for all children and young people, and to ensure the strategic financial and operational sustainability of the hub. As part of the plan, the DfE also confirmed continued investment of £79 million per year into the Music Hub Programme, including a grant of over £76 million per year directly to Music Hubs. As I said, it announced that the Arts Council will run an investment process for Music Hubs, inviting organisations to apply for the role of the Music Hub Lead Organisation, and those organisations will receive the government funding to coordinate the hub partnerships from September 2024.

So, some key dates. In the spring we will be sharing our guidance for applicants. Our online portal for applications, Grantium, will open for the Music Hub Investment Programme applications around the summer, and after we've carefully considered every application against the guidance for applicants, we'll be letting applicants know the outcome of their application to be a Lead Organisation in early 2024. So just a reminder, in the National Plan the DfE did share its intention to fund fewer, more strategic hubs through the investment programme, and that that will be achieved via prescribed geographic areas. We have published the Department's rational for that on our website, which you can read, and we can share a link if you haven't seen that. The DfE has also outlined some guiding principles that are outlined here, that we are consulting on, and we need to keep those in mind today as we have our conversations.

So the guiding principles are that new hubs will cover multiple local authority areas, and be more consistent in terms of size, coverage and quality of provision. Geographic areas should be agreed or prescribed prior to the application process, which means that respective Hub Lead Organisations will submit an application to lead a Music Hub for a specific geographic area. Those prescribed geographic areas will not be pre-determined by the current arrangements, but will be informed by open and objective consultation and evaluation, and they are clear about the role of the Hub Lead Organisation. There shouldn't be fewer organisations actually doing the designing, the developing and the delivering of provision and support in a local area, but Hub Lead Organisations themselves will become more strategic, overseeing and working with and funding partners to do that work locally.

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

So, to help achieve those recommendations we're running these focus groups, and supporting an open-access survey which mirrors the content of the focus groups, and that's because we can't talk to everybody in this format, so a survey is going to help ensure that everybody has got the opportunity to contribute. We'll be using the outcomes of this activity and the analysis offered by our external facilitators, Melissa and Dougie, to make some final recommendations to the DfE about prescribed geographies. So, that's a whistlestop tour of how we've got to where we are and what's going to be happening next. We have a little bit of time for questions. I think, because we only have a short time, if we concentrate on questions that you have that will help move you into where we need to get to, to have the conversations that we're going to about the prescribed geographies. Does anybody have any questions or comments and reflections? Voice 10?

Voice 10: I'm struggling to understand how the published rationale links to then what we have up on the slides here. You would normally come to a consultation about a significant restructure with a model - which we don't have - with evidence to support the rationale. It's very difficult, Hannah, because you're here on the Arts Council, and there isn't really anyone here at a decision-making level from the DfE, where, clearly, this has come from. When we look at the examples that we're being presented, there's a fundamental difference in what those hubs are to what our hubs are. It's using the same word in a very, very different context. All the current Hub Lead Organisations are delivery organisations - all of them, virtually - and if there is to be a fundamental change from that to the idea of a support hub, which is what the Maths Hubs are, Bridges are, Teaching School Alliances are, then that's a very different conversation and consultation, and there needs to be a model on which to consult. I'm glad you referred to this as a focus group, because it's not a consultation, it is a focus group.

In addition, those models, as I say, are all around supporting professionals, whereas, what we do is direct delivery with young people, primarily. So if we are talking about strategic hubs, then that's a totally different type of Hub Lead Organisation to the current ones that exist, and we need to be straightforward about that. If that is the case, okay, but then what we need is a rationale that tells us why that is proposed and happening, and I see no evidence from the examples, the very broad examples and statements in what is stated to be a rationale, that actually convinced me that there is a clear evidential reason for doing this. That's my stark point, about thinking about what might be best, has to come from why are we doing this, and I can't link that rationale to what I'm seeing here, and if you can help me with that, that would be really appreciated.

**Hannah Fouracre: Thank you, Voice 10. As you said, most but not all Hub Lead Organisations are currently delivery**

**organisations. There are some that are not delivery organisations themselves. I think what the DfE's rationale that we published is clear about, and also in the National Plan, is that they want to fund the strategic organisations that will manage the strategy and build the partnerships that will deliver. Now, that's not to say that a Lead Organisation shouldn't also be, or couldn't also be, a delivery organisation, but there needs to be the strategic basis on which they are then permissioned to do the delivery work.**

Voice 10: I'm sorry, but my question was, why? There is no evidence. Other things that they draw upon, like Multi-Academy Trusts, are very different animals. When schools come together they're all similar organisations with a very clear, similar purpose, and from a completely practical point of view, they'll also want very similar employment conditions and funding structures. There is no evidence that they have improved achievement or attainment. It's pretty much neutral if you look at the government's own figures as to whether a school is local authority or Multi-Academy Trust. The average Academy Trust size is 3.2 schools. They're all very local, and very locally focused, all the recent ones, after the initial tranche of super-MAT chains. Most of those big MATs are now reorganising to become local regional units, with an overseeing arm. As I say, I'm just saying, I'm just struggling to understand why this has been put in place. It feels ideological from the tranche of what's happened in the development of education in the last 20 years, speaking as someone who was a free school head. I understand that ideological underpinning. Evidentially, it doesn't appear to be based on something that says, 'This will make things better for young people engaging with music education.' I can't find that link anywhere, and that's my problem.

**Hannah Fouracre: Voice 4?**

Voice 4: Yes, hi. I think if we're looking for evidence, a place, it would be, perhaps, Bridge organisations that you've had in recent years that are being gotten rid of. I think that's quite an interesting moment that you're looking to do something, potentially, like that where you're getting, let's say, ten, 12, 15 hub or lead hubs for regions of England, at the same time as those Bridge organisations, which the one that I work under is great, and they're really supportive, and they're there and open and helpful, and they have their fingers in all the pies of our region, and it makes sense to have that top-level overseer, if you like. So I'm not picking any sides in that conversation, but I'm just saying that there is some evidence, or something to work from, that they've done previously, and I've always found that quite a useful vehicle.

**Hannah Fouracre: Thank you. Voice 3?**

Voice 3: I'm with Voice 10 on this one. I don't fully understand the rationale, and I've been through the stuff on the website that talks about the rationale for geographies, and I can't see how that leads us to the discussion we're going to have today, and why it doesn't, for example, lead us to a conversation about, well, maybe there needs to be - I can't see how you can do this without going area-by-area around the country, and saying, 'Well, actually, maybe, why is Berkshire completely surrounding Slough? Maybe that is a thing. Let's talk about it with Berkshire and Slough', for example. Rather than have a set: this is what the geographies are going to be at the application point, and having to do that between now and the spring, which I think, given that the plan came out in June, to be having this conversation now, in order to get the application and stuff ready for the spring so we can apply in the summer, just seems to me like a very, very short timescale to be getting something that could mean significant change to the makeup of the thing.

It just seems too quick, to me, given that - I mean, I'd love to know, also, my sort of supplementary is, you talked about things happening during the autumn. What happened in the autumn? Was there any consultation that took place? That would be useful to frame this discussion I think, if we could understand what discussions were had and with whom, and how they've led us to this point, because I'm very confused, if I'm honest.

**Hannah Fouracre: So just to take us all back to before the National Plan was published, when we had the panel in place that were working together to decide what the future of the Music Hubs were, they were all involved in making the decision about what the future strategy for Music Hubs was, including the move towards having fewer, more strategic hubs. So that was a role of the panel, and a recommendation that the Department for Education and the DCMS decided to take forward into the National Plan for Music Education. Since then we have published our multi-local authority hub research. We've had an event on hub partnerships, where we had a lot of debate and conversation about that, and we've been working with the Department for Education to get their rationale published. Now, that is the rationale that we have to work with today, and it includes the benefits that the Department for Education thinks there is of having fewer, more strategic hubs. The Department will see all of the feedback from the sessions, so all of the key things that we're talking about today, in terms of clarity over the rationale will be fed back to them for them to consider how they move forwards with that.**

Voice 2: It's just really a question about today's session, in terms of the models, because I was having a look around at the maps and stuff like that, and I'm just wondering whether or not we're looking at those particular maps, so like the teaching hubs

and, for example, the Maths Hubs and the Bridge areas as being the areas, of whether or not it's just that sort of idea and actually it will be rough around that. That's sort of my query.

**Hannah Fouracre: Good question. So we have shared the three models as a starting point for the conversation, so what we want to understand is what might the implications be of having a regional model, a sub-regional model, or a more nuanced local model, and we've borrowed some examples from the methodologies that we've shared. So they're a starting point for the conversation. They won't be an exact fit for music education and Music Hubs, so you don't need to know the programmes in detail. You don't need to understand the work that they do, the type of organisations that are leading them, or even the exact specific locations that they're working in. We wanted to use those as an indication of a rough size and structure, so that we can think about what is the learning from those, and how we can reflect on what that might mean for Music Hubs moving forwards.**

Voice 7: I think this just needs saying. A consultation period of ten days that was announced after close of play before Christmas, and then having to book tickets for a Monday, is not going to engage relevant stakeholders about the methodologies. It was incredibly hard for myself to get here today when my child's going into childcare for the first time tomorrow, and I know there are other people missing this entirely because it's start of term, or because they're away on leave for various reasons. It is not an appropriate length of time for consultation.

**Hannah Fouracre: Thank you for sharing that. I do understand the difficulties of it. Part of the reason why it is so squeezed is that we're trying to protect time later on in the process, so we think it's really important that we're able**

**to share the geographies as soon as we can, so that the really important conversations and partnership building, if there is time for that to take place, and we want to make sure, at the end, that once we've made our announcements, that there is enough time for the new arrangements to be put in place. So we're trying to protect other, really critical points within the process, and having to squeeze the conversations, so that is kind of why it is how it is, but it doesn't mean it's easy, and I am hoping that a lot of people will be able to contribute to the survey.**

Voice 7: Yes, definitely.

Voice 1: Just going back to what you were saying and what Voice 3 was saying about the geography, and I know we're not discussing the geography today, but just I wasn't quite sure in the survey if there was anywhere where we can discuss at any point - and it might be coming later down the line - on what's already on the ground and working really, really well, so it's not an assumption on anyone's part. I know that it's going to be agreed, or it's going to be prescribed, but at what point is it going to be shared? Is it going to be after the application? Is it going to be before the application? Is there going to be an opportunity for everyone to say, 'I'm already working with these guys, and it's going really, really well', rather than prescribed things where something's split in half, or an area's split in half, or whatever it might end up being?

**Hannah Fouracre: The Department has made it very clear that we can't decide the future of geographies based on current arrangements, because we need to develop a really open, fair process for any potential bidder to be able to make an application that's not based on current arrangements. That doesn't mean that we don't want to understand the learning and ways of working that are currently in place when we're thinking about what the**

**future looks like in terms of geographies. So that's the position that we're in.**

**Maria Turley: I'd also say that when you're filling in the survey - because everybody who's here today, as well, you are welcome to fill in the survey, as well, so that you can spend more time and put in some really specific detail there, if it's helpful. There is a last question in the survey which is quite catch-all, which is like, 'What else do you want us to know?' If there's very specific intelligence you want to put in there, please do, and also, it's worth thinking about your experience as you're looking at the methodologies throughout the broader survey. So if you want to directly connect to your experience, if that makes sense, 'This works in this way in this place because...', that would be really helpful, as well.**

Voice 4: Just one final thing, sorry. Is it worth remembering that what you're asking for here is an entirely new organisation to be created? It doesn't identify itself too strongly with the current structure that you may be a Music Hub Lead Organisation currently, but the actual job that you're going to be asked to be doing next time round is slightly different to what we're asking what you've been doing for the last ten years. I'm just putting that out there. The clarification of what this new organisation is, needs to be made really clear that it's not, 'We're going to ask this county to take over five other counties'; it's, 'We're now going to ask for a brand-new organisation to come in on top of those five counties and sit them all together.'

**Hannah Fouracre: We're building on the success of the current Music Hub programme, but there is a new vision, new aims, new strategic functions, so there is a new strategy for Music Hubs, and we're looking for Lead Organisations that come in and take the strategic responsibility for creating and planning the work of that**

**Music Hub in that geographic area. Welcome. Would you like to quickly introduce yourself?**

Voice 5: I'm Voice 5. I'm the artistic director and CEO of [redacted]. We're becoming a new NPO in April. We're based in [redacted].

**Hannah Fouracre: Welcome. I'm Hannah Fouracre, director of music education. We're just at accumulation stage before we go on to our exercises. Voice 10?**

Voice 10: So sorry. I just want to clearly understand, therefore, to inform this conversation. I know you sort of half answered it, but on your slide it did say, 'prescribed (or agreed)'. Are they going to be pre-prescribed before the bidding process, or agreed after the bidding process?

**Hannah Fouracre: At this stage we are consulting on the basis that the geographies will be prescribed before the application stage.**

Voice 10: Thank you for that clarity. Also, for clarity, for the record, I've just had a message from someone on the expert panel. He said that the addition of fewer Hub Lead Organisations was not in the early drafts, and they didn't recall it being discussed by the expert panel.

**Hannah Fouracre: I'll have to refer that to [unclear words 0:32:24.6].**

Voice 10: Thank you. Please do.

Voice 3: Just to build on that, I have been through the plan, and the only reference I can really find to the geographical thing comes right at the end in the 'Next steps' part, and it's quite a short bit. So the way of threading this together is to read that,

which just says there will be fewer areas, and then go to the rationale. I still think this rationale needs to be gone through, because, to me, it doesn't spell a rationale for what it says in the plan. Those two things, for me, don't sit together particularly comfortably. Can I just also clarify that you've said - sorry, I'm just trying to get my head around the bit that says, 'Existing geographical areas.' Let's park that over here and not take any of that into consideration; we're sort of starting afresh. I think, regardless of how this makes up, because I'm not sure how it should be made up - I'm open - but there are some big issues about existing geographical areas, that if they changed, could cause big issues for the sector. I think those need to be considered, because there are buildings, people, equipment, etc., which could end up having to be divided or rehoused. There's lots of issues there. I think that's going to take time to work through, which is partly why I said the point about the time.

**Hannah Fouracre: So that's exactly what we want to hear from you about today. So, as well as thinking about the geographies, we really need to understand what are the issues around mobilising and transitioning to those arrangements - what would the impact be? - so that the Department can consider all of that holistically in the whole of each of the different geographies. Right, I'm going to suggest that we move on, and start our exercises. Melissa, are we swapping chairs?**

**Melissa Wong: No, I think I can stay here. So I'm just going to introduce myself again, I'm Melissa Wong. I am an independent researcher, evaluator, consultant. I work independently, and as an associate of organisations like Sound Connections, the Institute for Voluntary Action Research, and the Foundation for Social Improvement, and most of my practice is focused on children and young people, learning and participation, and social impact in the**

arts. I also used to work at Youth Music, so I'm very familiar with the music education sector, and I've also spent some time at Arts Council, so looking at it from that perspective as well. I was meant to be here today with Dougie Lonie, who some of you might know as well. He is co-founder and co-director of there is an alternative, a new agency for promoting innovative approaches to dialogue, research, consultation across multiple sectors. Like Hannah said, he had a personal emergency, so couldn't be with us today, but he was very much involved in designing this process, and is going to be very much involved in analysing everything that we talk about here today.

So just to tell you about our role in this process, we've been commissioned by the Arts Council to facilitate these conversations, to ensure that they run smoothly, and to make sure that we allow a range of voices to be heard as part of these focus groups. Neither Dougie or I have any directive responsibility on the final decision on geographies, but what we're going to do is we're going to ensure that your voices are clearly represented, and that we summarise all of the discussions and input from today into our report to the Arts Council. When we talk about how we're going to report to the Arts Council - I'm sure everyone is very conscious that there is a recorder in the middle of the room and that we're all saying our names before the start of every comment. This is just for transcription purposes, to help us make sure that we've captured your views clearly, to help us to understand what's being said, so we can differentiate between different voices, but the transcriptions will be fully anonymised before they're released, and also within our report to the Arts Council nobody's going to be named individually. We're not going to say who said what. We're going to be presenting a summary of the views on a regional level, as

well as on a national level. So I hope that puts your minds at ease on some level.

Let's just go to the next slide. So our role is carrying out this national consultation with everyone involved in the musical lives of children and young people across England, and the purpose of these focus groups is to help shape the new Music Hub geographies. So, across the week we're delivering five focus groups; one in each Arts Council area. We're also going to be delivering one digital focus group next week, and we're going to be helping Arts Council to analyse the results of the open survey that's going across the sector. So the focus groups and the survey cover more or less the same content, with some slight tweaks in the way that the questions are asked, to be more amenable to the different formats, but, fundamentally, if you just decide to do this focus group, but not the survey, you're not missing out on any opportunities, but if you do realise after today that there is something else that you forgot to say, something else that you wanted to make sure Arts Council know, you can click on that link, and you can submit a survey as well. Please do also encourage your colleagues to submit the survey.

So, what are we doing here together today? We're going to be focusing on three tasks. We're going to interrogate three different methodologies for prescribing geographies. So Hannah has described that these are a regional approach, a sub-regional approach, and a more locally-nuanced approached. We're going to work through some exercises to draw out the implications of these prescribed geographies, thinking about it in terms of transition issues, as some people have already pointed out, mobilisation, as well as the ongoing and long-term impact of the different models, and we're going to explore the DfE's guiding principles for these prescribed geographies, the ones that

Hannah mentioned in one of her earlier slides. What we're not going to do is we're not going to agree an overall geographic option. We are, of course, going to create plenty of space for everyone to talk about their individual preferences, and what that means within their local area, but we're not coming to a decision here today, and we're not going to debate the use of prescribed geographies within the Music Hub Investment Programme. I know that there are lots of questions about that still, but that's a decision that's already been made. So our role is to help make the best choice that's possible following on from that.

So, going onto the next slide, as you guys have already - it seems like people have already done a lot of research before coming into this session, and looked at the three example scenarios. So these example scenarios are drawn from real-world sub-divisions of England for service delivery in education-related sectors. As several of you have already pointed out, they're not an exact fit for music education, and they're not intended to be. The reason that we've drawn on these three examples is because it's really useful to have something concrete to look at when we're thinking about different approaches for prescribed geographies. We wanted this conversation to feel concrete, rather than abstract. The three examples that we've chosen, they don't necessarily reflect the views or the preferences of either Arts Council or the DfE, and neither the Arts Council nor the DfE, as I know from my conversations with them, have an exact number of [unclear words 0:40:18.2] in mind.

So what that means is that this is really an opportunity for you to make your views known about what you think will work best in terms of delivering the new National Plan, so that they can ensure that the final decision is informed by

your views. Next slide, please. So as Hannah has already said, we're going to look at the few examples in some detail, but you do not need to understand the particular nuances of the three examples. You don't need to know their work or focus; you don't need to understand the type of organisation that's leading them, or even the specific locations. It's more about the general approach that they've taken to dividing the country into different geographic regions. The specific number and geographic structures of the hubs in these three examples are not likely to be replicated. Arts Council isn't looking to take one example wholesale and to use it and to adopt it directly for music education, but rather they're testing the rough number and the rough geographic structure and approach to developing a Music Hub cohort.

The final number and geographic structure will ensure that there's national coverage, and organisations of all kinds are able to contribute as active partners in a Music Hub. So, having said all of that, let's breakdown our specific tasks for each scenario. So I'm going to present each of the three scenarios one at a time. We'll have an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions about the scenario, to make sure we understand the particular model that we're looking at. Then, we're going to have a time for individual reflection, where - you'll see that you have sticky notes in front of you in different colours - so you'll use these sticky notes to log your individual ideas or thoughts or questions against each of the five strategic functions of Music Hubs. So the question is: if a model like this scenario were to be used for Music Hubs, how effective would it be in delivering against each of the five strategic functions of Music Hub Lead Organisations?

So, essentially, we're using a RAG rating system: green for opportunities; pink for risks; yellow for not-sures or

unknowns. I'll give you a few minutes to do some individual reflection against each scenario. Then we'll come back and we'll talk about it as a group. We'll go through each of the five strategic functions one at a time, and look at the overall themes and responses, thinking about what we observed overall in terms of how the group views these five strategic functions, and what stands out. Finally, we're going to give an overall rating to each of the three scenarios. So we're going to rate them on a scale of one to five, one being not at all effective, and five being extremely effective. You'll see on this wall behind you, on the board, we've already put up some flip charts. So we have one flip chart for each of the five strategic functions, and we have this table here on the far left where we're going to be asking you to put your overall rating. So we'll do those just one at a time.

Let's just go through how we're going to work together. In terms of how we're going to discuss, have these discussions as a group, everyone's going to raise their hand and wait to be invited to speak. Everyone's entitled to speak without interruption, so make sure when somebody's speaking that they're given the time and space to complete their thought. As Hannah's already said, for the purposes of transcription only, please state your name before saying anything, and we'll make sure that the transcripts are anonymised before publication. Finally, please observe the Chatham House Rule. So just respect the confidentiality of the views and the discussion that we're having here today. If you go and you tell your colleagues about what happened in this focus group afterwards, you can talk about the general themes and conversations that came out of it, but please don't identify any specific individual and what they said. Is everyone happy with that?

Voice 1: Sorry, can you clarify the scenarios that we're going to be discussing?

**Melissa Wong: Yes. I'm going to be doing that.**

Voice 1: Okay, lovely. Ignore me, then.

**Melissa Wong: Any other questions before we start talking about the first scenario? So, scenario one, then, is Bridge organisations. Probably a scenario that many of you are already familiar with. So, Bridge organisations are an England-wide network of ten organisations working at a regional level, to connect the cultural sector and education sector so that children and young people can have access to great arts and cultural opportunities. You will know that the country is broken into nine official regions. There are ten regions within the Bridge organisations, because the South East is divided into two areas, but broadly-speaking, what we're talking about here is a regional approach to breaking up the country. So, any clarifying thoughts about what we mean by this scenario?**

Voice 11: I was just wondering about their equivalent size. Are they very different sizes, these Bridge organisations?

**Melissa Wong: So, when we talk about the regions of the country, the nine official regions are the North West, the North East, Yorkshire, West Midlands, East Midlands, East of England, South East, London, and South West. Within the Bridge organisations, the East of England is broken into two groups: one encompassing Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Peterborough and Suffolk; the other covering Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and North Kent, but broadly-speaking, this is the size of the groupings that we're talking about. So you don't need to know the**

**specifics of which local authorities they cover, but that's sort of a rough size.**

Voice 10: So the statement around consistency, does that refer to geography or to population?

**Melissa Wong: A really good question. Hannah?**

**Hannah Fouracre: Well, for the purposes of the regional one, we are just concentrating on the government regions, but I think what we'd like to hear from you today is what your views are on geography and population, and the impact of those in the different geographies.**

**Melissa Wong: Does that make sense?**

Voice 10: Yes.

**Melissa Wong: Any other clarifying questions about this scenario?**

Voice 10: Sorry, I just have one more. So, you're asking us to think purely about strategic functions, not about any level of delivery?

**Melissa Wong: That's right. So just to review the strategic function again.**

Voice 10: So, could you clarify what you understand strategic to mean?

**Melissa Wong: Well, what we mean when we talk about the strategic functions is the five strategic functions of Music Hub Lead Organisations, which are outlined in the new National Plan. So actually, you're right, it's worth taking some time just to review them and make sure we're all on**

the same page about what they mean. So the first strategic function is partnerships, and that's defined as taking a lead role and building a sustainable local infrastructure for high-quality music education and music-making, in partnership with schools, early years, and other education providers, community music organisations, and other regional and national music organisations in industry, capture this offer in a local plan for music education. So that's partnership.

Strategic function two is schools, and that refers to supporting all state-funded schools in their area through ongoing relationships, to help and deliver high-quality music education, including a quality curriculum support offer, specialist tuition, instruments and ensemble, and a broad range of progression routes and musical experiences for all pupils. That's schools. The third strategic function is progression and musical development, which means supporting children and young people to develop and progress with music, including international or specialist opportunities, higher education and employment, so that the chance to be involved in high-quality music-making is shared more widely in our society. It also means supporting children and young people to access the wider world of music, including live performance and community music. Strategic function four is inclusion, and that means driving broad access to music education, so that every child has the opportunity to participate, irrespective of their circumstances, their background, where they live, or their SEND.

Finally, the fifth strategic function is sustainability, which means ensuring the strategic financial and operational sustainability of the Music Hub by, 1) supporting a dynamic and multi-[?employer force 0:50:03.8]; 2) leveraging DfE funding to develop wider investment into young people's music from a range of sources and revenue streams; 3)

being accountable and transparent by publishing plans and needs analysis and impact data; and 4) considering and acting on the hubs' environmental responsibilities. So these are the five strategic functions that we want to reflect on, and what we're asking in this exercise is, if Music Hubs looked like scenario one, Bridge organisations, how effective would a Music Hub Lead Organisation be at delivering against each of these five strategic functions? Is that helpful? Hello.

Claire Toogood: Hello. Sorry I'm late. How are you? I'll find a chair.

Melissa Wong: You have very good timing, because we're just about to start the first activity.

Hannah Fouracre: Would you like to introduce yourself?

Claire Toogood: Yes, sorry. Claire Toogood. So, I am senior relationship manager in the Cambridge office, so I oversee the Music Education Hubs for the South East.

Melissa Wong: Great. Is everyone clear on what the question is that we're reflecting on? Brilliant. So I'm just going to start by giving you ten minutes to reflect individually. If you could write your reflections against colour-coded Post-It notes, so again, green for opportunities, pink for risks, and yellow for not-sures, and then just put them up under the respective strategic function as you have time. When you're up there, also take a look at what other Post-It notes people are starting to put up, as well. So you have ten minutes to do that. [Respondents complete task 0:51:58.6 - 0:59:57.8].

Melissa Wong: One minute left now for individual reflection. Then please do start taking a look at the Post-It

notes that other people have started putting up. [Respondents continue to complete task 1:00:50.9 - 1:01:48.0] Right, if you could just write your final Post-It notes and put them up on the flip charts, then we can start taking a look at them as a group? Has everyone put up all their Post-Its, and has everyone had a chance to look at the other Post-Its? If everyone could just take a final quick look, and then we'll start talking through these, finding out what everyone says. Let's get a read on what everyone said on their Post-It. So, I think it will be easiest if we just work through these one-by-one and get an overview of the reflection by each of the five strategic functions. So looking at the first one, partnerships, I'm sensing the responses are quite binary. There's a lot of green, a lot of pink, and not much in between. Did everyone look at the Post-Its or should I just have a quick read of them?

Melissa Wong: Green, opportunities. Many [unclear word 1:04:36.0] have wider reach than current hub geography. Scalability, cost savings, building further on existing regional networks, continuity. Pooling resources across the region may help with stretching budgets, sharing best practice and knowledge exchange. External partnership work, building relationships that work across areas. If umbrella and hands-off approach, it could give partners more freedom. Immediately sells the strategy, and evolves delivery more than others do? Potentially quicker to get running and operational. Less administration for NYMO/larger NPOs whose reach covers bigger regions. Personal economy of scale in some areas. So those are all the opportunities.

Risks, of which there are also many. Strategic functions are mainly defined as local NP, NP2. Regional approach versus local context is dichotomous. Interesting. Most productive partnerships are with small, local, relevant, and will be lost

**unless we are just creating [?ten mini places 1:05:50.1]. Lack of localised knowledge. Partners, areas too big to bring together effective partnerships, especially when those often need to be more local. By moving to a larger regional focus, will trusted developed partnerships be at risk of being diluted? Will local priorities be lost to larger areas? Partnership surely suffers in such a large organisation. Partnership relies on personal relationship and local knowledge. Larger organisations top-slicing, thus reducing on-the-ground funding. Will smaller, community-led organisations lose out on opportunities, as it's easier to contract larger partners to deliver? Hmm. Bridge organisations do not work, hence seized funding. Very interesting responses.**

**What's the general read of the room that you're getting from these Post-Its?**

Voice 10: I think what that brings out is that the other bit of the discussion that we haven't had is what will a Hub Lead Organisation be in this situation. Is it an umbrella organisation that holds the funding for that region and then devolves it to Lead Organisations in each area, or...? Because we had that session before Christmas about the lovely different models, all of which only work because everyone's gone into it voluntarily, so let's put that out in the remit there, as well. So I think one of the problems with doing this in a way that is really helpful to the consultation, is that the other part of the, 'Is it prescribed, or is it agreed?' conversation, is what structure will these Hub Lead Organisations actually have. Will they be a Bridge organisation or a mini-Arts Council - sorry, I've made that comment - or will they be organisations like a Multi-Academy Trust that then employs all the people who deliver in that region? Is that going to be prescribed, or will that be within the bidding process what an organisation for a particular area will decide for themselves? Because that's really, really important and significant as to how

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we try and understand the delivery of strategic functions, because there is this whole implication that strategic means big thinking.

That doesn't necessarily mean big area thinking. It means strategic thinking can be very local. Every school has a strategy for all sorts of things within the bounds of that school. So I think it would be helpful to try and understand whether that is still an open question, and whether it will remain an open question, or whether it will be prescribed before the bidding process starts, in terms of what the nature of that Hub Lead Organisation is, having had the presentation on umbrella, merged, whatever.

**Hannah Fouracre: I do want to say something about it. Voice 8, did you want to say anything specifically about that?**

Voice 8: Yes. I think that this is where everything you're saying, actually, is why this one, of all the three represented, is the most appealing, in my eyes. In that, presuming that the way Bridges work already, which is they are each allowed to work out what is best for them as an organisation in their Bridge region, I think this one feels the least disruptive to me, because it would allow that thing of taking into account what are the successes within the local - you know, where hubs already have good partnerships, etc. This one would allow them to be taken into account far more than the other two, where you could, potentially, risk splitting up those existing good relationships. That's my response to that.

Voice 1: It's really hard to formulate, because, obviously, we're going down these five routes, but just thinking about the strategic overview of it, it's really hard, just going back to what you were saying there, Voice 10 is that it's difficult to know what the HLO's job role is. Then, how much of this is top-sliced, talking about money - let's bring that one in - where the top-slice

is going to go, and how much that's going to take away from delivery, and who the leading organisation is, versus where it hits the ground running? What's the overview of the partner, and what do they know about actual delivery of the five strategic aims? I haven't formulated that very well, but it's just really hard to put that in those five categories.

Voice 12: Exactly. It's chicken and the egg, isn't it? You won't know what that organisation is, depending on what the size is going to be, or what areas you're going to be looking at. So we can't know until it's all worked out, and it is very difficult to try and discuss. If you do have a larger one like this, then you're going to need something underneath it, lots of things underneath it, and a bit of money comes into it somewhere, as you say. Those of us long enough to know what reorganisations were like ten years ago will remember that we had lots of plans, but, basically, it came back more or less as it was before. Yes, it's chicken and the egg, isn't it?

Voice 4: With my freelance hat on, anything that can make it easier for me to have a point of contact that then says, 'That's great. That would work. This would season really well in that part of this region', is a really helpful device. At the moment I have to talk to six or seven different Music Hubs if I've got an idea, 'Where is this going to land? Who wants it?' We'll have different relationships with each one of those hubs. I think anything that makes partnership easier, and disseminating that out into the relevant places in our community, is good. So, in my opinion, I don't care what I'm dealing with, as long as it's open and able to distil out to the right places.

**Maria Turley: So it's almost like a triaging of information, like one central point.**

Voice 10: I think a risk, which I didn't put up, but I've just thought of it, is that that Lead Organisation is likely to be based

somewhere, and it needs to make sure that it doesn't focus on its immediate geography, and actually, if it's covering a huge region, is able to cover a huge region.

**Melissa Wong: Could you put that on a Post-It, please, and we'll get that up on the board?**

**Maria Turley: I was just going to say that. If anyone comes up with anything additional as we're talking, write them on Post-It notes and give me a shout and I'll come and get them off you.**

**Hannah Fouracre: I just wanted to say, so the role of the Hub Lead Organisation is to bring together and coordinate the Hub partnership, including delivery organisations, and to develop the strategy for the Music Hub, and to oversee the local plan for music education, and to be accountable for the DfE's grant. So they are the things that the Hub Lead Organisation needs to do. At the moment, I've been anticipating that, whatever the geographies are, that it will be up to individual applicants to tell us how they envisage delivering it in that area, and whatever the model they think will work best for them and their partners, rather than prescribing the model.**

**Melissa Wong: I'm going to move us on, because we've had quite a lot of discussion about partnerships, and there's still four more themes to get through, as well as two more scenarios. So, let's just move on to schools. Not as many comments here, interestingly. So I'll just start from the top. Actually, Maria, would you like to do that?**

**Maria Turley: I will do. Shall I do that, to save your voice?**

**Melissa Wong: Yes.**

**Maria Turley:** So in green we have SMEPs. Does everybody know what a SMEP is in the room? I always get this wrong, so I'm looking at Sam now. It's a School Music Education Plan. Equals more impact, especially with academies, which is interesting. Many schools identify with their local area and offering. Do we risk losing buy-in as expansion happens? Allocate schools a music premium with HLOs responsible for monitoring its spend. Then on to the pink Post-Its. We have bespoke support concerns. A strategic function to support all schools, will this be undermined? Management will be very detached from schools and children, presumably as users, so children as users. Schools rely on local partnerships, so may be helped by large-scale strategy at - is that exam? That's not exam.

**Melissa Wong:** Exam level.

**Maria Turley:** Exam level, but not so much in activities. Is that right, whoever wrote that one?

Unknown: [1:15:22.6] Yes.

**Maria Turley:** Schools. Managing relations with schools and MATs across such a large area. I can't read the end of that. Does anyone recognise the beginning of that? It says manageable and...

Unknown: [1:15:45.0] It might be mine. I can't read my own writing.

**Maria Turley:** I'm really sorry. Do you know what; it's Monday morning and it's been a long weekend.

Unknown: Oh, I don't think it's a word, actually, but I wrote it.

**Maria Turley:** Well, I feel better now.

Unknown: Nuanced, so could lack nuance.

**Melissa Wong: So what are we hearing from the room, in terms of schools?**

Voice 7: This is a slightly more general point, just looking about where the Post-Its are and this model, is that everything is sat in partnership and sustainability, which is very strategic. It's kind of showing that when we're looking at this size of model people are not strategically thinking about the schools' inclusion or progression. They're thinking about where's the money going, who gets it, what's going to go missing, and I wonder, as we go through this discussion, if later on we talk about those smaller models, are we going to be putting more things in schools inclusion and progression, which perhaps would be a positive for a smaller hub?

**Melissa Wong: Interesting question. We shall find out. Could you state your name?**

Voice 7: Oh, Voice 7.

**Melissa Wong: Overarching reflections on schools. I think that was a really astute observation. Let's move on to inclusion. Again, not that many Post-Its here. Starting with the green. Already strong models in place relating to regional inclusion strategies. In the yellow, boys' club. Interesting. That will require some explanation. Then this one says I can see that there could be reason for inclusion policies across a wider area, but that could also be national. Then risks. Inclusion needs local knowledge. Less likely to be helped by size. Area too large to have local impact or reach cold spots, and lack of localised knowledge. What do we think of all that?**

Voice 3: I think the cold spots thing is interesting, because if you take a place like Kent, for example, the cold spot of Kent is Dover. It's right off to the far South East of the county, and actually would benefit from better infrastructure in Dover, rather than trying to draw it from a region that is a long way away, most of it. So I think there is possibly an argument with trying to address the cold spot issue, which quite a lot of this is about, in having smaller areas.

Voice 4: Within East Anglia, as evidenced by the Arts Council's priority places list, a number of the priority places are coastal, including the Dover one. To prescribe Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire as one thing, actually, are we at the detriment, therefore, of if we went for coastal, so we got Kings Lynn, all the way down past Lowestoft and into Kent? Those have got lots of similar challenges and issues that you could have a specific team sent into coastal East Anglia.

**Melissa Wong: One more comment over there.**

Voice 10: I think that what's gone up there highlights the fact that there's a very big difference between inclusion as a strategic object, and inclusion as a delivery object, and the key question should be in terms of how an HLO has a strategic oversight of the implementation of inclusion. There's lots of fantastic inclusion strategies around, but they're irrelevant if there's not actually an action plan that gets implemented off the back of them. So is there a benefit in a wider regional inclusion strategy, or equity of opportunity strategy, as I would prefer to call it? If you look at schools as an example, pretty much every school's inclusion strategy is the same, but how it's delivered is radically different, depending upon its region and its clientele. So that I think is the key discussion, is that is there a strategic benefit to how things get implemented from this sort of size model?

**Melissa Wong: One last comment.**

Voice 1: I'd agree with that. So we've all had an inclusion strategy. When we did ours, we did ours jointly with the neighbouring local authority, thinking that would be a great thing, and it was overall, but we ended up coming away doing our own smaller one anyway, so it took twice as long to get to our own strategy. So I think if there is an overarching large organisation, and then underneath, for the localised areas, the work has got to be done again and again and again, I don't think it works for sustainability, because I think it's taking more time to do that.

**Melissa Wong: I'm sure we'll touch on that again when we get to sustainability. Before that, progression and musical development.**

**Maria Turley: Shall I read?**

**Melissa Wong: Yes, please.**

**Maria Turley: So, we'll start with yellows. Bridge, can this model respond to local need? Regional progression opportunities? Like mini-NYMOs, so mini-National Youth Music Organisations. Green. A centralised funding for meaningful top-level ensembles and career stuff. Do you generally like using the word stuff? Thank you for doing that. Opportunities to engage in multiple genres, and progression and musical support would be enhanced by top-quality activities, youth - I think that's ensembles, etc. - did I get that right, whoever wrote that? Let's go yes. Pink. Too big to understand local needs. NPO decisions in the South East re progression routes into performance are tricky... It feels like there's a story there. Engagement as a result of transportation barriers; that's an interesting point. Workforce concerns around sustainability of music**

**services. A challenge to take people-centred approach without lots of devolution and time spent monitoring - I can't read that word - connecting dots, is that right? Let's go with yes. Area too big for this. It's hard enough to get people to travel across a large county. So that's another transportation thing, as well, I think.**

**Melissa Wong: It goes back to the geographic issue.**

**Maria Turley: It does.**

**Melissa Wong: It goes under inclusion as well.**

**Maria Turley: Lastly, understanding of locality.**

**Melissa Wong: So what are we hearing back from the room in terms of progression and musical development? Some real opportunities around...**

Voice 5: I think what I'm hearing, and it feels like it's coming across all of the same areas, and for me, it just flags an issue around perhaps - [unclear words 1:22:51.7] a lot of the work that I've been doing over the last five years - has really been about how everything can be hyper-local, listening to local people's voices, the opinions that local people are having, what they want to happen on their doorstep. This approach feels like it's turning that on its head and going to something completely different, and that doesn't feel like it's necessarily connecting with the Let's Create strategy, for example, and the way in which arts organisations are really trying to push their work to a hyper-local focus, and there might start to become an issue around how we can work in a best-practice kind of way.

Voice 11: I've just seen a few of us have put on the red that it's going to be too big an organisation to actually meet local needs, and it just seems what we have currently is smaller, local music

hubs that actually know exactly what's happening in their own area.

Voice 2: So I think what I'm seeing from all this so far is that there's quite a lot of things around localities and stuff like that, and I think, just because you've got a strategic overview of something, doesn't necessarily mean that you're not able to take the local viewpoint into play, for example, as we talk about inclusion. We have an inclusion strategy that is between three hubs, and we also have one that's regional as well, so we're working against two. While, sometimes parts of that are quite easy to strategically work around, some of it really needs to be local. So I think it's about looking at this model not just as ten people just in charge of everything. Actually, it's about taking everyone's viewpoint into consideration, and really looking at it in a locality-based approach, but with a strategic overview.

**Melissa Wong: A lot of the conversations that we're having here I think are starting to move us towards sustainability. I think this had the most Post-It notes out of any, and very split amongst the three colours. So I'll just read them first, so you get a sense of what everyone's said, starting with the positive. Always start with the positive. So, already in people's brains a little bit? Nearer existing strategies more than the other two. Good management structure, good streamlined services and opportunities. Many partnership opportunities already in place equals strength. Larger size probably allows opportunity to take into account current organisation structures and relationship successes more than other two models. Higher likelihood of connecting with larger bodies emerging, e.g. LAPs. Does everyone know what LAPs are? Environmental plans could be written across regions. Income generation may need to be more local. Less chance of splitting MATs, upper-tier local authorities, and therefore risking its - finding? Does someone want to interpret that for me?**

Unknown: Funding.

**Melissa Wong: That makes more sense. Yellows. Reduction in breadth of relationship. Would anyone like to help me with this?**

Voice 4: Leading to greater consistency.

**Melissa Wong: There's a word missing here.**

Voice 4: Management.

**Melissa Wong: Reduction in breadth of relationship management, leading to greater consistency? Pros and cons? Yes, there are pros and cons. Will smaller areas within a larger hub need to redo strategies to address local need? We've talked about that a few times already. Sustainability. Swings and roundabouts. Overall view good, as well as some nuanced views. Possible existing regional models, MM regional meetings. Music mart, I think? Could bid to sustain current success. Size of staff needed to administer? Balance admin budget with delivery budget hard to do? Relationships/conflict between areas prehistoric? Then the reds. Potential loss of funding to existing good deliverers; that is a risk. Very big structure with many sub-sections. We talked about that a few times. Money-saving exercise, meaning redundancies. Yes, absolutely. Too big for funders to see me. Yes.**

**Might, say, funders say they have lots of other opportunities, and not fund in favour of a more vocal impact. So fundraising would be a risk. Strategic vision, will this be effective if not education or on-the-ground delivery? Very big organisation needs very experienced management. Maybe not from existing fund management? Geographic versus population. Larger local authority areas**

**dominating. Bridge, too watered down, lacking room to respond to local need. Staff working across a larger region may be spread too thin to have impact. Less funding at local level, existing threat to delivery services. Quite a spread here. Quite a range of responses. What do you all read in the room?**

Voice 10: I go back to what I was saying before, but with an extra question, really. Is it envisaged that all of this comes out of the same existing budget, or is there some extra funding that's going to go to these if the model is bigger Hub Lead Organisations...? Well, clearly, it is, because if there's fewer being funded, they are bigger, because you are, inevitably, creating an extra tier. Even down to the point of someone saying, 'Well, you're going to need someone who's the boss of that.' Therefore, they're going to be on a salary that's probably three times of all of us in this room, and you've got to create all the structures that do that. Even if it's an umbrella organisation that the funding comes through, is that coming out of a top-slice of existing funding, or is there more going into it, and therefore, isn't that what the Arts Council are currently doing?

**Melissa Wong: Yes, some real questions about the funding model.**

Voice 7: Just to add to that, obviously, at the minute the Arts Council have the relationship managers that are overseeing a lot of this type of level of strategic work, and the current funding is not paying for that in that way, and I think what you're saying is, in this model we've got the same funding, but if it goes to a big person, they're going to create lots of relationship managers which then detracts from the funding that ends up coming down to the bottom. So there is a real risk of losing on-the-ground funding for the £6-a-head per child.

**Melissa Wong: Yes, a really good question. Any other themes we've picked up on?**

Voice 4: Just ever so quickly. I think sustainability and progression of musical development are really linked. I'll put my hand up. It was me that was talking about the NPO decisions in musical development, and it's a personal belief, but I think some great decisions were made in the NPO decision, and I'm not trying to take this off-topic, but what we in [redacted] have lost is, with the loss of [redacted], a top-end performing professional organisation as part of the Arts Council-funded portfolio. So, actually, progression routes, where now are the 'best' performing places for children and young people to aspire to get to at the end of their educational journey and into Let's Create? It becomes about buy-in into places like choral societies. They pay about 50 per cent of my annual income. That's like the top-end music level that I can get to in Suffolk. I work with [redacted], and I work with the Music Hubs around the place, but we need to have a vibrant end product that's seen to be a place that people can aspire to get to. Otherwise, that whole thing is pointless.

Other than the good bits of Let's Create, as well, the health and well-being and community cohesion and all that stuff is fine, but there needs to be a part of any hub organisation getting somebody in there like [redacted], or whatever, as a touchable high-quality delivery group, a place for you to get to, is vitally important. I'll just put that - those two are quite well linked.

**Maria Turley: Could you write that on a Post-It?**

Voice 4: No!

**Maria Turley: In four words or less.**

Voice 1: Just something that's popped into my head that I hadn't thought about until this moment, so apologies if it doesn't come out very well, just about leveraging funding. At the moment, as a local authority, there are only certain places that we can go. If we were part of a bigger - we might be part of somebody who isn't a local authority - that would be a yellow - would that be a plus or a minus? Because it could stop you getting funding, because some of you are in local authority, or it could open doors because of it being LA. It's just a thought.

Voice 10: That's part of what I was meaning about existential threats, because the current organisations have a huge variety of what type of organisations they are. So if you constructed a business model on not-for-profit with no local authority funding, if you top-sliced five per cent, you're in trouble, quite frankly. The time scales that we have in order to get to a point of restructuring that aren't there, because I've spun out an organisation from a spin-out, and I know how long it takes. That took two years of planning. So to say that we can bring those organisations together, which, again, gets back to the thing of what's the actual model here. I think there is a - and, as you were saying, the conflict between sustainability and progression is then even more highlighted by the fact that you've got strategic functions of inclusion and schools, which are about music education for all. Your progression example is about a very, very small number of young people. Whereas, we should be talking about progression for every young child in music education, and that's not about necessarily going into high-level performing, but it's gaining a passion for life, for music, that has a positive impact on you.

That's where the equity of opportunity and inclusion stuff comes in, which has to be very granulated, and it's hard to make these comments and judgements without a better idea of what model we're actually talking about here. I'm struggling with that.

**Melissa Wong: One last comment.**

Voice 3: I think one of the things we maybe aren't considering is the fact that we are all based around London, and there is a big London effect here. If you look at the NPO breakdown, I think it's something like £16 a head per person in London. It's £2.50 in Kent. So, the ability to make partnerships, etc., may not be that much improved by extending the region that we're already in. It might be better improved by making better connections with the vast number of organisations that are based in the capital. I don't know what that means, but it might lead us to a different way of looking at this. You might not make that much of a difference by making the South East a bit bigger. You might make more of a difference by leaving it the same, and actually encouraging more conversations with other organisations that we're all surrounding, really.

**Melissa Wong: That's a really good point, especially in terms of the South East. Could you put that on a Post-It note? So I have good news for us. We are half-way through our session. We've talked incredibly thoroughly and with incredible nuance and detail about scenario one. The bad news is we've gone slightly over. So I think that we have two options. Either we take a short five-minute break, and we have a little bit less time to talk about the two other scenarios, or we keep working through and you just take your break as and when you need to. Which would you prefer? You want five minutes, yes? Let's take a quick five-minute break, then. So we'll come back at 11:13. Oh, but before you do, if during your break you could take the time to take a dot and rate the scenario on a scale of one to five just in the top row there?**

Unknown: Number one.

[Break 1:36:55.0 - 1:44:15]

**Melissa Wong: Okay. So, now that everyone's had a chance to caffeinate themselves…**

**Maria Turley: Would you like to introduce yourself?**

Voice 9: Hi, sorry, I'm late. It's the trains from Kent. They had power cuts and then they got diverted to Victoria. I'm Voice 9, Artistic Director of [redacted]. We're based in Kent, [redacted], Our priority is working in the coastal areas of Dover, Folkestone, stretching into Margate. [redacted]. We do music workshops in schools, and we do have links with various schools in that area.

**Maria Turley: Thank you.**

**Melissa Wong: Great. Now that we're all back, we're going to start taking a look at scenario two. Before we do that, I just want to check that everyone's had a chance to put a dot up to rank scenario one. If you haven't yet, please do that before we jump into scenario two. Scenario two, this is what we're calling the sub-regional scenario. As an example of this type of scenario we've given you Maths Hubs. Maths Hubs are a collaborative England-wide network of 40 hubs. Each Maths Hub is led by an outstanding school or college, and is made up of a partnership of schools, colleges, and other organisations working together to provide support for maths teaching in a particular sub-region of England. The network is coordinated by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics. Just to give you a little bit of a sense of what this means, currently we've got 118 hubs, and in the sub-regional scenario we'd be looking at approximately 40. Try to imagine what that would mean within your specific local area, and what that would mean in terms of how the size of the hub would be reflected.**

**Do we have any clarifying questions about what we mean by this sub-regional scenario? Yes. Again, if you could just state your names before you ask your question.**

Voice 4: Yes, it's Voice 4. Just the only thing that needs clarification from me on this is, are we to ignore or embrace the led by an outstanding school or college section of this example?

**Melissa Wong: I think that's specifically within Maths Hubs, to tell you what it looks like there. This is completely open in terms of what the hub organisation might be for the purposes of if a similar type of model were adapted to Music Hubs.**

Voice 4: So, it could, for example, be an NPO?

**Melissa Wong: Yes.**

Voice 3: Voice 3. We're getting slightly more specific now in terms of the geography. Do you want us to consider this geography, or if there were 40 areas how might they look? Do you see what I mean? If you look at the specific Maths Hub geography, there might be particular comments to make about the groupings of the areas there, but if you're looking at how would you divide the country up into 40 hubs, you might think completely differently about that. How do you want us to do that?

**Melissa Wong: That's a really good question. I think, if you've had a chance to look at the scenarios and to analyse and work out what the particular groupings are then that's great, but we're not expecting that people will have had a chance to do that level of detailed analysis before they come into the room. What you could do is, you could think if we were scaling down from 118 Music Hubs to 40, which is roughly about a third, so you're imagining**

**about a third of the Music Hubs we have now, then what types of groupings would be most effective? You might reference specific groupings of local authorities that are geographically close to each other, and that already have good links on various types of other levels, or you might reference challenges that particular local authorities might have working with each other, if that makes sense. We're talking about it in more a theoretical sense, rather than what specifically we like or don't like in the particular sub-regional groupings for Maths Hubs.**

**Maria Turley: Yes.**

Voice 4: Just to throw out, if it helps thinking, that an equally good model to look at, possibly better, would be Local Enterprise Partnerships which were referenced before, of which there are 38.

**Melissa Wong: We did look at that as well. The difficulty with Local Enterprise Partnerships is that some of them have slight overlaps. What we liked about this particular scenario with Maths Hubs is that there is no overlap across the different hubs. Originally, Local Enterprise Partnerships, they don't cover every local authority in England, whereas Maths Hubs do.**

Voice 4: Sorry, there is overlap between Maths Hubs, because some hubs commission people from other hubs to deliver things.

**Melissa Wong: Okay, yes. That's fair. I think the main reason that we were interested in this is just because of the comprehensiveness of the coverage, but really good point. That's another example of a sub-regional approach to breaking down the country. Yes.**

[Unknown 1:49:48.4]: Can I just check this one? The Maths Hubs at the moment are groupings of lower-tier local authority areas, so they're not upper-tier. Are we to imagine that these would take into account a similar thing, so they would be using the existing borders of lower-tier local authorities?

**Melissa Wong: I think that's something that you could feed back on and critique in the discussion. If you felt that lower-tier groupings were a particular useful approach to the sub-regional division then that's something that you could feed back, or if you felt that there were challenges with that type of approach then you could feed back on why. Great questions. Anything else? All right. Let's give you guys, again, a few minutes just to write down your reflections on this scenario. Again, we're using green for opportunities, yellow for unknown, and pink for risks, and as and when you have time just put them up on the [unclear words 1:50:49.0].**

**Maria Turley: If you want a reminder of strategic functions as well they're all written up on the wall here too, if you want that slide.**

**Melissa Wong: Thank you so much.**

**Maria Turley: What we'd like you to do is...**

[Respondents complete task 1:51:08.2 - 1:58:33.3]

**Melissa Wong: One minute left to write your final thoughts and put them up on the flipchart. What we're going to ask you to do this time, to save our voices from reading everything out loud, is if everyone could just, when you're done, go up and read everything that's on all of the flipcharts, and that way, I won't have to read all the Post-Its out. It'll save time as well.**

[Respondents complete task 1:59:00.6 - 1:59:45.9]

**Melissa Wong: Please do take a look at all the sticky notes that are on the flipcharts. I'm not going to read them out this time, just to help save time and move us along. Once you've read everything on the flipcharts, if you could just sit back in your seats so I know you're ready.**

**Maria Turley: Did everyone get that okay? Rather than read out post-it notes this time, if everyone could do a quick read down the line, make sure you know what's on each flipchart paper so we can go straight into a conversation.**

**Maria Turley: Thanks, Maria.**

**Maria Turley: That's all right.**

**Melissa Wong: Have you read everything?**

[Unknown 2:00:19.9]: Yes.

[Respondents complete task 2:00:24.4 - 2:01:49.7]

**Melissa Wong: One more minute to read the post-its, and then if everyone could have a seat and we'll start our group discussion.**

[Respondents complete task 2:01:57.0 - 2:02:49.2]

**Melissa Wong: All right. If everyone could grab their seats. We're going to start talking about each of these five strategic functions again, and just work our way down the line one at a time and think about our overall reflections, the key themes that have come out of reading everyone's post-it notes on each strategic function. Let's start again with partnership. We've got quite an even spread here**

**amongst the three colours. Having read all the post-it notes, what did you pick up on as the overall response in the room to the partnership function in scenario two? Yes?**

[Unknown 2:03:39.8]: Okay. Seems like there could be more opportunities for partners because it's smaller, but it just occurred to me that I was probably writing my comments compared to the previous model, so this to me seems slightly better than the previous model, but maybe not for this model.

**Melissa Wong: Okay. It'll be interesting to see what you have to say in our next one, then. Anything else that we've picked up on in the room?**

[Unknown 2:04:10.3]: To be honest, I haven't read them all, so I don't know.

**Melissa Wong: Okay. Are we going to have to read them aloud again?**

[Agreement]

**Melissa Wong: Very quickly, the greens. Existing partnerships already exist. Sub-regional approach would allow greater likelihood that local needs could be heard and acted upon. Leveraging funding through partners allows more nuance than current 118 and temp options. More partnerships possible on a local level. NPOs could work across hub areas spreading excellence. Sharing of expertise between partners and schools. The yellows. Politics/historic issues in smaller groupings. Could reflect existing strengths across wider areas as long as good scheme of delegation. Would this also proscribe partners to just these areas? Good question. Cultural areas less likely to get lost. Find an opening in order to develop strong partnerships. Could build on existing hub**

**partnerships? It's very hard to know if this will aid partnership, because it will depend individually in each area. The reds. Partnerships could still suffer from large size. Larger hubs dominating the hub. Areas could not make sense for some partners, e.g., drawing boundaries where they don't exist already. Interesting. More administration than last example for cross-boundary workers of organisations, but less than now.**

**Right. Is that helpful? What are we picking up on as the overall themes in terms of partnerships? Yes**.

Voice 3: Voice 3. I think for a number of the green ones, you could actually also argue it the other way around. [Laughs] You know, it's interesting to... I mean, I think we're not really getting into that detail today, but actually to understand when somebody says, and I can't remember what they were, where it might be better in that area to do X, I'm thinking well, actually it could make it more difficult. Can we have that conversation, please? There are going to be two sides to all of these things, I think, inevitably.

**Melissa Wong: I think that's a general read that I'm picking up on. It's quite evenly spread across most of these categories, especially this one in partnerships. People are feeling like there are some real benefits that are going to come through in terms of partnership development, but also some real challenges and risks as well, and those things will probably coexist with each other. Would that be a fair summary?**

[Unclear 2:06:48.1].

**Melissa Wong: Anything else?**

Voice 4: Voice 4. Is it too radical to think that this type of setup might enable hubs to be partners with each other, but not actually geographically next-door to each other? Just as an example, when I was coming down here I was thinking actually, Cornwall and Cumbria probably have very similar issues and things to deal with. It might make sense for them to be quite good friends. On a music service level, not so, but on a strategic and hub delivery kind of thing, possibly. If you've got this sort of setup of 40 or so, could you, again, from my part of the world link Cambridge, Norwich, and Ipswich together as one hub organisation, because practitioners can go to all of those three places, kids can go to all of those three places and stuff? There's great cultural offering in those three places versus the rural stuff that's going on outside of that part of the thing.

**Melissa Wong: Having a smaller cohort, but still larger than only ten, would allow hubs, these medium-sized sub-regional hubs, to find hubs in other geographic areas of the country with similar issues and exchange that knowledge and practice with each other more easily, potentially.**

Voice 4: Yes. I mean, whether that's worth investigating or not, but...

**Melissa Wong: I think that's an interesting question.**

Voice 4: Geography doesn't have to be the... Geography's a difficult thing, because a county of Suffolk is made up of different parts to it, in and of itself, and there's different areas and different issues.

**Melissa Wong: Yes. Capture that on a Post-It!**

Voice 4: [Unclear words 2:08:39.9]! [Laughing]

**Melissa Wong:** Let's move on to schools. I'll just read these out loud for everybody. Greens. Small numbers. Easier to manage in terms of localised approach. Schools able to work in partnership easier. Allows some local nuance and get rid of separations that currently don't make sense. Local example, Lowestoft/Great Yarmouth. The yellows. How will children benefit from this change? What will management structure look like? Will schools notice the difference? Another good question. An NPO... I can't really interpret this. Does anyone recognise this handwriting?

**Maria Turley:** An NPO offer goes... Is that goes with kudos, equals top pros work in our school.

**Melissa Wong:** Depends how it is divided up. Better knowledge of local schools and communities. Might academy trusts be heading in a slightly larger direction by 2023, and could this match them more suitably? Interesting question. The pinks. Schools. Large size could or would be a problem. Academy chains could end up split into multiple strategy areas. Interesting. Allows cross-county cultural offerings, e.g., theatre, art galleries, museums, from different counties. Right. What are we picking up on in the room in terms of schools under scenario two?

[Unknown 2:10:14.5]: Better than the previous model, perhaps not as good as the next model.

**Melissa Wong:** We shall see. Would others agree that this is better than the previous model in terms of the way that hubs would work with schools?

[Unknown 2:10:29.6]: It's being talked about more, which has got to be a more important scenario. Schools had very few post-its last time. It has more now.

**Melissa Wong: That's an interesting observation.**

[Unknown 2:10:36.9]: At least it's being discussed.

[Unknown 2:10:39.5]: I think schools are in a very strong position for having all that local knowledge, and also dealings with the local communities. There are issues that can then be projected nationally in terms of areas that have similar issues. That sort of level of experience from schools is crucial.

**Melissa Wong: Interesting. Do I see a hand here? No? Okay. All right. Let's draw a line under schools, then, and move on to...**

**Maria Turley: I've themed it.**

**Melissa Wong: Oh my gosh, Maria!**

**Maria Turley: I'm writing at speed.**

**Melissa Wong: Amazing. Maria has picked up on these key themes for us. Let's see if we all agree with what she's picked up. The key themes she's identified are opportunities for connection/strategy into communities, between organisations, between areas, sharing info. Idea of local strategy more authentic, and specifics of local barriers. Would you agree with the themes that she's picked out from your sticky notes on inclusion?**

**Maria Turley: I should have said able to respond to the specifics of local barriers, in case that didn't make any sense.**

**Melissa Wong: I'm not getting a very strong reaction from the room on this one. Is it because... Okay. Let's find out. Your name, for the record.**

Voice 10: Voice 10, sorry. It just seems to me like all of these things could be affected, regardless of geographical groupings.

**Melissa Wong: Yes. I think the question is, given these three different approaches that we're looking at, will any particular geographic grouping allow hubs to tackle these strategic functions more effectively? I don't know if there's anything...**

Voice 10: Yes. My statement still stands.

**Melissa Wong: Okay, all right.**

Voice 3: Voice 3. I think for me a similar issue to the last one, which is that the delivery needs to be very local. If there are fewer hubs, how are we going to make sure that happens? Strategy maybe could be bigger, but actually in the end you've got to devise a plan for delivering something in a fairly local area if you're going to make a difference to that area. It doesn't really make an improvement on the last one.

**Melissa Wong: What about in terms of geography? That was one of the things we talked about a lot in the last scenario. Would geographic inclusion and reaching cold spots be any easier or more effective under the sub-regional scenario?**

Voice 1: I think for my area in particular - I'm in [redacted]; I'm surrounded by Luton, which is highly populated, Bedford, same, Milton Keynes, same - we are in the top five per cent of rurality because we've got a couple of market towns and just lots of A1 in between them. I think it still stands from the last comment on the bridge scenario, that you still have to rewrite your own... There might be an overarching thing, but we pretty much have three inclusion strategies within our one because we've got

different needs. You'd just be multiplying that at times, like anything, the smaller you go.

**Melissa Wong: Interesting. Shall we move on to children and young people's progression and musical development? The things that Maria has picked up for us from your post-its; layer of...**

**Maria Turley: Progression possible, generally better for the top levels than for first levels.**

**Melissa Wong: What do you mean by top levels?**

**Maria Turley: Top levels as in children who have progressed further. Older young people, for example. Something around opportunities for connection and sharing and collaboration. Very similar to inclusion, actually. Quite a lot of similar themes there. The ability to respond to specific needs and barriers for kids and communities. Because it's more locally focused there's a better understanding. A few which is around the idea that it's still too big for the ways in which children and young people practically live their lives, so in terms of where they might go, how they might get to somewhere, those kinds of things came through.**

**Melissa Wong: Thank you. Would you agree with the themes that Maria has picked up from your post-its? I'm seeing some nodding across the room.**

[Agreement]

**Melissa Wong: Yes?**

[Unknown 2:15:23.8]: I just think there's a little bit of a danger here of pre-thinking because of the order we're doing this in.

We're using words like more or less than the previous scenario. Would we be thinking differently if we'd done them in the other order, for example? I think, myself included, we need to clear our thoughts, as it were, before going on to the next one. Have a mental sorbet!

[Laughter, over speaking 2:15:53.1]

**Maria Turley: Wow, that's a t-shirt.**

**Melissa Wong: I think, given the temperature in this room, I think...**

[Over speaking 2:16:03.2]

**Melissa Wong: I think there is absolutely some comparison that's happening with the previous scenario. I'm picking up on a general sense of, this feels better and more responsive to local needs than the previous scenario, but there are still questions about the level of attention and detail that it can give to specific localities within the sub-regional divisions. Is that fair to say? Okay. How are we getting to with sustainability, Maria?**

**Maria Turley: I'm not there yet. I wasn't quick enough because I read those ones out, but I can do my best. Shall I do my best?**

**Melissa Wong: Yes.**

**Maria Turley: Right. Something about size mattering, so the size of the geographic areas matters when it comes to sustainability. The idea that it might make quite a good case for support, working in a larger area. There might be some potential around funding. Something about local authority areas themselves, and around split and divided**

**local authority areas, and what might the issues be there, like small-P political issues. I'm reading into that a little bit as well, correct me if I'm wrong. I think this connects to that, that idea of the geographies not being easy to divide necessarily. Making the decision about who is it that goes into those groups is quite challenging. What have I missed here? Have I read this one yet? That's fine, I think we already said that. Still something about things being very big. Getting to know an area. These new geographic areas as they're formed, is it going to be the size, an area that people understand, that users understand, that schools understand?**

**Still too big to support local needs. This kind of localism and place-based thing still coming through. Something about merger. I'm going to read this one out, actually. More likely to be mergers, expensive and structurally threatening, which we might want to get into. Financial risks, the idea of top-slice again, and concerns particularly around larger counties. I think that's it.**

**Melissa Wong: Great, thank you. How do we feel about Maria's summary of these sticky notes that you put up? Is that an accurate reflection of what you've said? Yes.**

Voice 4: Sorry, Voice 4 again. I'll say this tactfully. We need to remember that Music Hubs are different from music services, and not... I've just said it, really.

[Laughter]

Voice 4: You can do... A lot of this concern about losing the local is the job of the music service, and/or many other partners that are working in and of that area. What we're talking about here is the hub lead organisation, and the hubs that... This is a big, top-level thing. Do we need 118 of these things, or do we

need 40, or do we need 10? That's not about can that child play viola in a weekly class.

**Melissa Wong: I think this goes back to a question that's been raised several times throughout this focus group, which is what is going to be the relationship between the hub lead organisation and all the partner organisations within the hub? How will that strategic oversight function relate to the on-the-ground service providers, and where will that division of... How will that responsibility and division of responsibility break down? Those are all questions that are still to be worked out, but might perhaps have very local responses. Let's draw a line under scenario two. Maria, have you been picking out some general thoughts for us?**

**Maria Turley: Most of these are from other people actually, but I'll read them out, shall I, because they are quite interesting. Very similar concerns to the bridge model. Still this idea of it being too big, I think I'm interpreting that as. Does that feel right?**

[Unknown 2:19:56.2]: Yes.

**Maria Turley: Regional model? Maybe not led by the actual number 40. I think that's a fair point. Forty isn't a suggestion. It's a rough idea. Challenging to dilute regional politics. It's easier to do that in model one, which is interesting because it's... The local politics between local authority areas are felt to be more challenging in this scenario than one, is how I'm reading that. Tell me if I'm wrong. Being careful not to break up counties. I'm assuming is that... Did something happen with Maths Hubs where that might be happening?**

[Unknown 2:20:31.8]: Hampshire is breaking up.

[Over speaking 2:20:35.7]

**Maria Turley: That's very helpful. Then some just additional... Oh, sorry. Opportunities for cross-hub collaboration. That felt like a general theme, and it came out across all of those boards, I think, the idea of sharing and connection. Then just some additional ones that I added to was just making a note about the point around comparing between different models as we go through, so that we know we're taking a mental sorbet moment, and then also the point which is around Music Hubs being different from music services, and the connection to delivery. Where does delivery happen? Being clear that we understand where we're placing that when we think about this at all.**

**Melissa Wong: Thank you so much. Anything to add to the general thoughts?**

Voice 2: Voice 2. Just one gentle comment about this one, and I know obviously, Voice 10, you don't want to compare this to the last one, but I just wanted to pick this particular one out. Something that's really strong in the current hub model is hubs working together to achieve different aims. I see in this model very much that hubs would still continue to work together. Forty hubs working together with the same aims would be phenomenal. I don't necessarily see that in the first scenario. That's not to say what my preference of scenario is. I'm just saying that in terms of this particular aspect of working together, I see that being far more strategic and very, very regional, where people can still have the opportunity to work together, which I love.

**Melissa Wong: Brilliant, thank you so much for that. Right. Can we draw a line under scenario two, then? The last thing that I'll ask you to do for scenario two is just once**

**again, grab a dot from the stickers that are in front of you and give the scenario a rating on the scale from one to five. I'm going to ask you to please put your dot in a box rather than on a line. That would be very helpful.**

[Respondents complete task 2:22:20.5 - 2:23:29.3]

**Melissa Wong: Hello, everyone. I'm just very conscious of time, and I'm really going to try to work hard to end on time because I'm sure you all have very busy days ahead of you. I want to just keep marching on forward to scenario three. Scenario three is [unclear words 2:23:47.8] teaching school hubs. The teaching school hub programme is a network of 87 centres of excellence, teacher training, and development focused on some of the best schools and multi-academy trusts in the country. Again, just by way of comparison, there are 118 Music Hubs currently. Eighty-seven, we're not looking at the specific geographic boundaries of these hubs. We're more looking at the overall model and approach that they've taken, which is what we're calling a locally nuanced approach. We would be moving from 118 hubs to approximately three-quarters of what we have now, just to give you an idea of the change in scale. Does anyone have any clarifying questions about this scenario?**

Voice 7: I think this one and the previous one... Oh, sorry, was that not me...

[Over speaking 2:24:38.7]

Voice 7: Just to clarify, I know we've said it before, but we're not talking about this actually being linked to a teaching school or a lead school. That mention of that in the National Plan is a totally separate element to any of this discussion.

**Melissa Wong: That's correct. We're more looking at the concept of a locally nuanced approach. [Unclear words 2:24:58.8] for example what are possible ways of creating locally nuanced groupings, but we're not looking at the specific boundaries drawn up within the teaching school hubs model. Right? Okay. I'm going to give us seven minutes to...**

[Unknown 2:25:16.5]: I've already written mine.

[Unknown 2:25:18.0]: You've already gone, haven't you?

**Melissa Wong: Individual thoughts and reflections on scenario three.**

**Maria Turley: Don't forget, you can also fill in the survey if you miss anything.**

[Respondents complete task 2:25:30.1 - 2:30:50.4]

**Melissa Wong: Right, two minutes left for your post-its, and we're just going to read them out and ding them, so don't worry about reading everyone's post-its. Make sure you have all your post-its up. It you want to already, you can also start putting your dot against scenario three in the one-to-five rating.**

[Respondents complete task 2:31:24.0 - 2:32:13.8]

**Melissa Wong: One minute left to put up your post-its. You can also put up your dot and tell us your rating of this scenario.**

[Respondents complete task 2:32:26.7 - 2:32:57.0]

**Melissa Wong:** Right. Can everyone please put their post-its up and take a seat? Let's start working through these five strategic functions. It seemed like it was helpful to read them out loud, because not everyone will have had a chance to have a look at them. I'll start with partnership. Under partnership, the greens. Most likely to preserve existing good work/organisations. Partnerships. Easier with larger number of hubs, assuming the role of hub is more similar to present, as already stated many times. Strong partnerships promoted across wider local area. Matches more of most organisations to a more local focus. Oh, matches move of most organisations to a more local focus. More opportunities to work together. Local needs and priorities can be focused on. Progress and partnerships existing less likely to be lost. Local, smaller sounds better. Smiley face! [Laughs] More partnerships possible locally. Under the yellows. Likely mirrors the discussion already happening. Some ground work already being done? Interesting.

Rationale might be sticky. Why 118 and not 40? Would mean some existing hubs are left alone. Really interesting question. Problematic in areas with existing issues between partners. Many missed opportunities for collaboration with existing collabs. More potential for local conflict, unless partners willingly come together. As a freelancer, 87 hubs is still too many relationships. Maybe less sharing of ideas and activities. Still risk of random boundaries as there are now. Partnership. It all depends on the role of the hub, strategy or delivery. Right. What are we hearing back from everyone? What are the key themes we're picking up on? Yes.

Voice 8: I think it's interesting that a lot of pros here are around delivery, when we're being told that hubs are going to become more strategic. I think that's an interesting...

Voice 7: It is... Oh, sorry.

**Melissa Wong: Yes, just for the record, could you just state your name?**

Voice 8: Yes, Voice 8.

**Melissa Wong: Thanks, Voice 8.**

Voice 7: Is it a strategy? Certainly, as a representative of a small hub, a lot of our strategy is around the way we deliver. When we're saying about strategical, sometimes - I think this was said earlier - we lose the idea that actually locality and on-the-ground nuanced delivery is strategic. We see it as something else. Oh, they can deliver the whole class ukulele, when actually getting to know every school, knowing that that headteacher's got three kids, knowing that that headteacher is not a fan of music because their teacher at school was rubbish, is a strategy. It's just not one that's favoured when we're talking about finances and big areas.

**Melissa Wong: Thank you, and your name?**

Voice 7: Voice 7.

**Melissa Wong: Thank you, Voice 7. Really interesting question. When we talk about strategy versus delivery, you're asking is that a false binary, because delivery can and also should be strategic in itself. Thank you. Anything else we've picked up on?**

Voice 1: Just to go on that... Voice 1, sorry. It's just that our decisions, obviously, in this room are based around the child and the young person at the centre of all of this. I think that's probably where you're getting at, is that's the thing that we should all keep that focus on. What's the point in having a

strategy if it doesn't make any difference to the children and young people?

**Melissa Wong: Your name?**

Voice 1: Voice 1. I think I said it.

Voice 11: Voice 11. I just wonder if reducing to 87 is enough from where we are currently.

**Melissa Wong: Oh, okay. Interesting.**

Voice 11: That's on a note somewhere.

**Melissa Wong: There will be room later on to state your preferences amongst the three scenarios, so hold that thought. Did I see a hand here? Okay. Yes?**

Voice 3: Voice 3. I was just going to ask Voice 11 to elaborate.

Voice 11: Well, since we've gone through the process from 10 to 40, I just wondered. It seems like a few hubs are going to disappear in this 87 number scenario. Which hubs are going to disappear, and how are those decisions going to be made, and who's going to partner with who geographically? I'm not advocating it, but maybe 87 is too close to where we are now.

Voice 1: Voice 1. Can I just respond to that, because mine was the sticky comment, when I said about something being sticky, it's why not, say, keeping it at 118 and why isn't it 40? It's like, it's completely taking the idea of what hubs were, and is it completely new? Is that conversation something that's going to be said out loud? Some people might be like, 'Well, this county's been left completely alone because it's massive already, and all the smaller ones have been shoved into this

group because they're not big enough. Is that fair?' That's what my sticky thing was on that point.

**Melissa Wong: I think there's a question that's emerging around, if we are moving from 118, which is a little bit arbitrary in itself, to 87, which is also a bit arbitrary, then what would be the approach to grouping local authorities under this, what we're calling the locally nuanced option, and is there a methodology to creating those groupings that would be fairer or more effective?**

**Maria Turley: In the back.**

Voice 2: Just in response to you, Voice 1, there could be the other side of that, the flipside where a larger county actually gets split in two. I think that's also worth bearing in mind as well.

**Melissa Wong: One last comment here.**

Voice 10: Yes, Voice 10. It comes back to this link to the rationale, because part of the stated rationale is that we have seen a reduction in the number of hub leading organisations since the start of hubs, but all of those have happened positively and voluntarily by people going into partnership together because it works, because it makes a difference. It comes to that whole thing of, is this seeking to find a solution to a problem that isn't actually a problem? You could have a rationale to say, 'We encourage hubs to come together and form larger hubs where it makes sense, and it's feasible, and it's economically viable because you're not going to have to TUPE a load of people and then bankrupt one organisation through pension strain, etc., etc.' As soon as we get prescribed, you've then got all of those transition issues to go through. We totally lose sight of the fact that what we do is about young people, and music. The reductions that we have seen have all been

because people have had a problem to solve, and merger or umbrella or whatever has worked for them on a local level.

It's back to this idea that strategy has to be a big, big thing, where it doesn't necessarily. Your point's really valid about the fact that the delivery is music services, but again back to the point that the vast majority - I know that some aren't - but the vast majority at the moment are both. They're the strategic organisation and the delivery organisation. There is sense in that. That's what a school is. We keep talking about multi-academy trusts. Let's not get our ideas skewed by the fact that we have a very small number of large multi-academy trusts. The vast majority of multi-academy trusts in this country are very small, and they're locally formed. They are out of a small number of schools. The government's policy is actually to encourage MATs of eight to ten schools, locally formed. The big MAT chains are a vestige of the first implementation of multi-academy trusts, and they don't work. The ones that do work well, because they have then split themselves into different geographical groupings like REAch, or Oasis, etc. I think we just need to be clear about what it is we're trying to achieve.

**Melissa Wong: I think what I'm hearing from you is, what are the pros and cons of these mergers happening organically, and being driven on a local level versus them being engineered at a higher level, and what are the challenges that will need to be navigated when they're engineered from a higher level. I'm going to move us on to schools, so...**

Voice 3: Sorry, can I just add to that? I wonder whether it might be useful - sorry, Voice 3 - in this whole conversation, not now but as part of this exercise, to actually just take some particular areas as examples and just work them through, because I could see... If you look at a place like Brighton, for example, in the South-East, it has loads of organisations in it. You could say it's

complete. It's got everything it needs. Why make it any bigger? It's a small area, a small hub. I think there are unwieldy things about already being in a large county, like Kent. I just wonder whether... I don't know if there's time, but actually just to spend a bit of time going, okay, well if we did that in that area would the people be willing? What would be the benefits? What wouldn't be? That might give a better sense of what some of these groupings might end up as.

**Melissa Wong: I think that's a really valid and useful exercise, but for the purposes of today we're not at that level of conversation yet, because there's still...**

Voice 3: That's what I say, not today but as part of this.

**Melissa Wong: Absolutely. I think that's definitely something that's worth doing.**

**Maria Turley: I'll write a note.**

**Melissa Wong: Thank you. Let's move on to schools. Very quickly, the greens. Clearer understanding of local need. Easier for schools to work with more local hubs. Delivery plans will have a more local flavour. Hub A and Hub B merging helps reduce grass is greener, postcode lottery. Better knowledge of local schools in supporting weaker schools. Existing hard work is not lost. More knowledge of individual schools in local area. The yellows. Familiar pros and cons to that! Schools won't notice much change, which will be welcome at the moment in a landscape of much other change. Interesting. The impact of the specific timing of this move. Scope to address local need. Only one red, interestingly. Continued issues for MAT-wide strategies. What would you say is the overall read that you're getting from the room on schools?**

Voice 3: I'm at risk of alienating the whole room. The green ones seem to be responding to the previous area, because yes...

**Melissa Wong: Again, we might have had a bit more mental sorbet.**

Voice 3: If you go from 118 down to 87, it's harder to deal with schools. If you go from 40 up to 87, it's quite easy.

**Melissa Wong: I think that is the reality of the conversation that we're having, is we know that we're not going to have 118 Music Hubs going forward. We know that the number's going to reduce, and these are the three potential scenarios that we're looking at. It is useful to have that comparison, and if what we're hearing back on schools, for example, is that this is more preferable to the first two scenarios, then that's actually really useful feedback to here. Yes?**

Voice 4: Voice 4. I just wondered actually, as a parent of children who are at school, where mine are it's easier to get to cultural offering that's in a different county at the moment than it is to get to some of the stuff that's in my own county, and where my children are at school. I wonder, if you did the same exercise with London-based hubs, the fact that you're in Haringey means you can get to Wimbledon very easily in a day and back on the tube. I wonder whether it's about accessibility rather than anything else. It's kind of like, how does my school feel? Sitting in [redacted], am I actually closer to [redacted], than I am to [unclear word 2:45:15.3]? Well yes, I probably am, so why do I get grouped in with... I love everybody, but I'm just saying that you'll identify closer to some other things that are over a county border.

**Melissa Wong: It goes back to the geographic inclusion and transportation links which we talked about in some of the other scenarios as well, doesn't it?**

Voice 4: Yes.

[Unknown 2:45:32.2]: We also have that same issue though, being on the very edge of the South-East, that it's actually easier to get into London provision than it is to get further into the regional.

**Melissa Wong: Yes?**

Voice 1: Voice 1. Just to go back to my question at the very, very start and ask about... When I said, 'Are we going to talk about scenarios?' and you said, 'We're going [unclear words 2:45:51.2] scenarios,' are the scenarios of 10, 40, and 87... It was my comment about, does it need to be... On the 40, does it need to be more organic, is what I was thinking, but 118 is completely out. Eighty-seven might be.

**Melissa Wong: I think that there's been a very clear steer that the existing hub structure is not going to be carried forward, but I'll leave it to Hannah to speak more to that.**

**Hannah Fouracre: Yes, Hannah. The existing guiding principles that we've been asked to consult on are that there won't be any single local authority Music Hubs moving forward, which inevitably means that there will be less than 118.**

Voice 1: Okay.

**Melissa Wong: Right. Shall we move on to inclusion? Just a quick scan. I'm seeing a lot of greens, so I'm getting a read that this might be good for inclusion. Let's find out.**

**Clear understanding of local need. Needs analysis would already be partially available. Not completely starting from scratch. Most local, most person/individually centred. Existing hard work not lost. Generally easier to manage. Development of musical skills possible in different levels. One yellow. Still work to ensure that inclusion plans are local. Still need to ensure that inclusion plans are local. Lose existing strategic gap between local and national. Less strategic accountability to make it happen.**

[Unknown 2:47:20.4]: The other one straddles two.

**Melissa Wong: Oh, I see. Thank you! There's this one that straddles two strategic functions. It's a green. Depending on the make-up of the hubs, this should allow fewer overlaps and greater diversity of provision. Actually, I'm just going to talk about these, because I think these are very closely related to each other. Progression of musical development. Clear understanding of local need. Existing hard work not lost. Varied progression models possible, and diversity of learning and teaching practices possible. The yellows. Progression and development still possible with smaller hubs, county-wide institutions. Fairly similar to status quo. The red; ongoing restricted access to larger-scale hubs. Would you agree with what's been said on the board for these two strategic functions?**

[Unknown 2:48:31.1]: Yes.

[Laughter]

[Over speaking 2:48:36.8]

**Melissa Wong: We're almost there, guys. Just one last strategic function to talk through. Sustainability. On the greens. Reduce hub slicing of funds. The most localised**

option. Most direct impact. Resources can be focused where they're really needed. Local voice can be integrated easier into plans. Multi-local authority groups possible without significant transition issues and costs. Strong sustainability possible as well as... Maria, can you help me with this?

Maria Turley: Strong sustainability possible, as well as...

[Unknown 2:49:19.2]: Future development.

Maria Turley: There you go. Future development and keeping up to date with new technology.

Melissa Wong: Thank you.

Maria Turley: Got there.

Melissa Wong: Right. Helps deal with underperforming hubs by mergers whilst causing minimal disruption to status quo. Doesn't go far enough [unclear words 2:49:34.4] quality hub access. Least abrasive model. Just a few hubs will cease to exist, dot, dot, dot, question mark. Easier to diversify income streams. The smallest reduction from current number. Who disappears? Sustainability possibly less easy. Not enough clout. Interesting. Less disruption equals more sustainability. Current local success/development lost. Creates cold spots. Lots of money spent on overheads across multiple hubs. Less admin, logistical costs, centralisation. More competition for some [unclear word 2:50:13.0] could result in less strategic planning of money. Is this the best deal for our CYP? More competition nationally? Quite a mixed board for sustainability. What are you picking up on from what's been said?

Voice 4: Voice 4. I think the familiarity of that number, and it seems like the most sustainable thing, is that's the safety in that. We look at the people in this room. There's many vested interests in the status quo, keeping things as they are. Clearly, there's an inherent feeling of that, possibly. I'm not surprised there's a spread of feelings, but actually lots of people went for that one, put answers down on that one. It feels like the most identifiable in terms of what we currently have.

**Melissa Wong: It seems like a lot of the greens are relating especially to the transition and mobilisation that will happen. To me, it seems like there are still some questions around the ongoing impact. Is this the most sustainable on a longer-term basis as well? Yes?**

[Unknown 2:51:33.8]: I just think, what the natural impulse to look towards the status quo tells us is that this is something where we don't really understand what the proposal is. Having fewer hub lead organisations or big strategic funding organisations, bridge-like things, all of that, in some ways I'm not averse to that, but we're not being presented with an actual model of how it would work, and what the nature of those organisations are. How the paybacks and the financial arrangements are. Those of us who run organisations that employ a lot of people, for example, hopefully we are responsible for their jobs and their livelihoods. That's the nervousness that puts you in that. It's not about vested interest. Our vested interest is in what is the best for young people? That's why we all do this job. Having been through enormous amounts of change in the 25 years I worked in the secondary sector, and then the five years running staff training services for a learning trust, you begin to understand that you need to be able to see what the proposal actually is.

I can't see it, because I don't think one's there. There's this idea about fewer geographical areas, but there isn't alongside that

an actual model about how each of those broad ballpark numbers will work. If we said, we're a bridge, organise ten areas, but this is going to be an umbrella organisation and it will have to top-slice four per cent, and blah, blah, blah, fine, I can get my head around that. I can do the numbers and I can approach and say, 'Actually, there might be huge benefits to that.' I can't see it at the moment, because it isn't there.

**Melissa Wong: I think you're absolutely right. We're not at that point yet. I think it's perhaps a little...**

[Unknown 2:53:27.2]: But we're going to be within weeks.

[Unknown 2:53:29.0]: Yes, exactly.

[Unknown 2:53:30.1]: Yes.

**Melissa Wong: Yes. I think that there's still a lot of decisions to be made to get us to that point, and a lot of those decisions will have to be made very quickly. Let's just focus on the conversation that we're having now, because there is still one big decision that needs to be made on what the approach to creating these new geographic areas is going to be. There's still a lot of room to shape that approach. I'm seeing a couple of hands. I really want to make sure everyone gets a chance to talk. Are we okay if we go ten minutes over? Yes? Okay. Great, thank you. Yes.**

Voice 3: Voice 3. I think this shows us that there is more concern about which hubs might go, are people going to be forced together. That seems to have come through more strongly in this. I share Voice 10's concerns entirely about the need for a very clear picture of what this is going to look like. What I said right at the beginning of this session was, we're doing this far too quickly. This shouldn't be taking a few weeks

when the National Plan came out at the end of June. This should be taking enough time - and I don't know what enough time is - but this should be taking enough time to do the exercise properly. I don't think we are, frankly.

**Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. I know that this is really difficult for everybody. I know it's certainly been difficult for Arts Council as well as for myself coming in. We've worked incredibly hard to get this all together, so we're as aware of the difficulties around the timeline as you are. I think in an ideal world there would be much more time to be having this conversation, but as Hannah's already said the reason that this is happening so quickly is to preserve time where Arts Council thinks it's most needed, which is for you to... Once those decisions have been made, for you to have those conversations on the ground, to do that planning, to do that thinking around the application. It's about preserving that time for you down the line, and that's why this process is feeling a bit rushed at the moment. I do appreciate that it's been challenging for you. Yes.**

Voice 1: Voice 1. Just to follow on from that, we know it's not personal. It's just that we all know that we have to do this as humanely as possible, and it is a restructure at the end of the day. With any restructure, it's all about communication so everybody knows what's coming, rather than just saying, 'This is going to happen to you. It's going to be prescribed. This is going to be this, that, and the other.' This could be an opportunity. I'm not against change at all. Handled correctly this could be an absolute winner, but it's embracing that organic bit is the bit that I really feel strongly about. Knowing, from speaking to different colleagues in my area local to me, further afield, is that organically so much is going on already, and conversations to make steps further were already on the cards for the next three years, five years, ten years. I find that really encouraging, that people want to work together more and with partners more. It's

just about embracing it in a positive way. People don't like change, I know that. I know this has to happen, and there is a timeframe, but slowly, slowly. It will be much more appreciated, I think. I do get that you've got lots to deal with.

**Melissa Wong: Hannah, do you want to respond to any of that, or...**

[Over speaking 2:56:49.9]

[Unknown 2:56:50.9]: I mean, looking at the fact that we are going to be reduced as music hubs, I think this model, from an NPO point of view, is definitely the best, really, because NPOs are making links with schools anyway directly. This links brilliantly, so it's like a third... It's like a piece of the puzzle really, because many NPOs work directly with schools. They don't go behind hubs. This actually links in very well, and if there's investment coming from NPOs, there's investment coming from the hubs, this model will probably, in some areas, work better than what's on the ground.

**Melissa Wong: Thank you for that. I see two hands, so very quickly. Two comments, and then we'll give it to Hannah.**

Voice 4: Sorry, Voice 4. Just quickly. Talking of this jigsaw puzzle, where does this sit within the whole of the Arts Council's thing? The NPO decisions are up for tender every four years ago, versus this one that... Is this still up for ten years, this particular plan that we're thinking about? When this one comes...

[Unknown 2:57:58.5]: The plan is for ten years, but the funding is for less.

Voice 4: The hub tender will be shorter than the ten years that we had previously?

[Unknown 2:58:04.6]: Yes.

Voice 4: My apologies. What the offer looks like at the start of September 2024 might be different to what it looks like at the end of that contract based on other things that are going on with the other funding decisions. Can I just put that... This is such a tiny thing, but can I put a mention out for joined-up thinking on wider Arts Council principles versus this hub thing as well, so that clearly it all sits together and is well thought through? It's hard.

**Melissa Wong: Okay, really good question. Let's hold that thought.**

Voice 5: Voice 5. It just struck me, as we were talking about NPOs and the relationships with Music Hubs, education hubs, is also the relationship with LCEPs as well, and having to go to all of these different things can be quite intensive and a lot of resource cost to be able to make those things happen. If there was a better way of LCEPs and Music Hubs working together as well, it would be really useful.

**Melissa Wong: Great, thank you. Some [unclear words 2:59:12.1]. Hannah, is there anything that you want to say in response to...**

**Hannah Fouracre: Yes. Hannah. I think it's worth reiterating that the Arts Council delivers the hub programme on behalf of the Department for Education, so whilst we look for ways that we can add value to the hub programme, the department sets the strategy and the investment timeline and process. We deliver that on their behalf. It is always good practice with public funding that you would recompete a programme like this every three to four years. It's extremely unusual that 10 or 11 years would go by without an open application process. That's partly why this**

is all now quite difficult, because new organisations should always have the opportunity to be able to make an application to lead a programme. That's what we need to make sure that we're designing now, a really fair, open, transparent programme where any organisation can throw their hat in the ring and all of the applications be assessed across the [unclear word 3:00:15.1] period will be developed. That's why it's quite hard when you've got organisations that have been doing this for so long. Before the first one, many of the organisations have been doing it for decades directly funded by the Department for Education.

There's a lot of history, and we're not looking to throw that out. We're looking to build on that. We want to build on the relationships and the partnerships. We want the really brilliant delivery organisations to be able to continue to deliver to children and young people. It's the strategic role we're looking to recompete to make sure we've got the strongest leadership leading the Music Hubs across the country.

Melissa Wong: Thank you. I think that was really well said, and I think that brings us to a really good place now just to do some final reflection on those three scenarios. We've talked in detail about three different approaches; regional, sub-regional, and a locally nuanced approach. I appreciate that there are pros and cons to all three of these different scenarios, and they'll have different implications in different local areas and different types of relationships that organisations and individuals might have to the way that hubs work. What we're going to ask you to do, just by way of final reflection, is there is a flipchart page on the right here which Maria's walking towards in the green, where we're going to ask you to...

**Maria Turley: I feel like Debbie McGee.**

**Melissa Wong: If you had to pick from amongst these three scenarios, which would be your most preferred scenario and why? That's first reflection question, is just write one post-it note and stick it under your preferred scenario with a brief one-or-two-sentence rationale, or whatever you can fit on a post-it note. The second final reflection question is, is there anything else that DfE should be taking into consideration in making its decision about prescribed geographies for Music Hubs? A lot of these thoughts have already come out through the conversation today, but if you could just put those in a sticky note and put them under the anything else flipchart as well. I'll just give you three minutes to do that thinking, and to put your sticky notes up on those two pages. If there is anyone... It looks like there's one person who hasn't had a chance yet to put a dot under scenario three. If you could just do that as well when you get the chance.**

[Respondents complete task 3:02:49.9 - 3:03:07.9]

**Maria Turley: The anything else is the same as on the questionnaire, anything else, so that's why you have a [unclear word 3:03:10.5]. It's a good point though. The survey is open, so if you do want to contribute to the survey please do. If you want to go into more detail about anything, you can use the survey as well.**

[Unknown 3:03:25.4]: Is there any way that the open answer in the survey can have a greater character count?

**Maria Turley: I think it does, but I'll double-check.**

[Unknown 3:03:41.1]: I haven't done it yet. I was told by someone else that they got...

**Maria Turley: I'll double-check for you.**

[Over speaking 3:03:45.2]

[Respondents complete task 3:03:51.1 - 3:04:01.4]

**Maria Turley: We also have blue and orange, if anyone wants a change of post-it.**

[Respondents complete task 3:04:05.7 - 3:04:55.9]

**Melissa Wong: One more minute to state your preference and anything else...**

[Respondents complete task 3:05:03.1 - 3:05:43.1]

**Melissa Wong: Great, okay. I'll just give you a quick read of the room, what everyone said on their preferences. I think you'll see that there's a strong preference for scenario three across the room, but let's just take a look at what people say about scenario one. Why do people prefer this? Most opportunity for things to continue. Stronger accountability for fewer leaders. Fewer relationships to manage means more time doing. Greater flexibility for areas. New start. Change or don't change. Half change more problematic. Another person said, this option offers the best possible outcomes for CYP. It works on existing networks, reduces overall spending with opportunities available, locality-led. Finally, let's strategically plan with a clear vision across the region. Strong model. There was one person who preferred the sub-regional option. They said, caters best to both the micro and the macro. Then there were lots of people who preferred scenario three. Just to pick up on your reasons for that; localises the strategic approach. Minimise negative impact. Preferred option depends on what it actually is. Fair point. Local**

knowledge and current strategies. Local priorities where smaller Music Hubs are likely to be merged, more likely to be considered and not left. Could strengthen the offer in areas with small music hubs.

Dependent on so many factors, but to liaise with organisations to see where an organic partnership is/has formed, communication is good. This is my preferred, but I am very concerned that the ramifications locally won't be thought through. Progression and inclusion and community...

Maria Turley: Strongest. Community... I can't read that.

Melissa Wong: Something local needs strongest in this model.

Maria Turley: I think is it towards local needs, strongest in this model.

Melissa Wong: Thank you. Let's go with that. Finally, hubs will be more aware of what is in their area from schools, demographic, venues, etc. Thank you, everyone, so much for sharing your preferences with us, and especially for sharing your rationale, which is also incredibly useful to understand. Maria.

Maria Turley: Shall I read these ones out? Anything else. How will geography be decided? Local or similar area [unclear words 3:08:10.3] etc., so similar to demographics. Well done and good luck. Thank you very much!

[Laughter]

Melissa Wong: Save that for last, Maria.

Maria Turley: I didn't know what it said until I started reading it. Priority places, and the deprivation indices, i.e., areas with social and cultural need. Does the timeline need to be shared? Could DfE be approached for more to allow 'proper consultation'? Consider whether prescribed could be locally agreed. Scenario testing is essential, whichever option is proposed. The DfE needs to take more time to consider the issues and perhaps look at some local scenarios and their implications.

Melissa Wong: Great, thank you so much. There's lots more to be taken into consideration. It's worth just saying that there's only been limited time and a limited number of people who we could bring into this focus group today, and across all the other focus groups we're doing this week. This is only part of the work that we're doing. Just to give you an idea about what my role is and next steps, and then I'll pass it over to Hannah to talk about next steps from Arts Council's front, we're continuing to run focus groups in each of the five Arts Council areas this week. This is just the first of five that we'll be running this week. There is a survey that I'm sure you're aware of. That's going to be running until midday on Sunday the 15th, so if there's anything you didn't get the chance to say in the session, anything else that comes to mind afterwards, please do feel free to submit on the survey. Please encourage your colleagues to respond to the survey as well.

Finally, there will be a digital focus group that's going to be taking place on Tuesday the 17th. I think that's got about 75 people in it.

Maria Turley: There are 75 people.

Melissa Wong: Plus the 20 people or so that we're talking to in each of these focus groups, so we're really keen to

talk to as many people in person as possible and to make sure that everyone who doesn't get the chance to attend in person is able to respond online. Once all of these focus groups are completed and the survey's closed, Dougie and I will be analysing everything that we've heard back from you and making sure that we report it fairly, and that we are representing your views in the way that we analyse and report it to the Arts Council and DfE. I'll just hand it over to Hannah to talk about what will happen beyond that.

[Unknown 3:10:47.0]: Can I just very quickly ask for clarification? You said, 'Please encourage your colleagues to do the survey.' As I understand it, from the rubric that went with it, it's only open to one person from each organisation.

Maria Turley: That's right.

Melissa Wong: Sorry.

Maria Turley: One respondee from organisation, so I think we mean colleagues more broadly, so partners, other organisations that you're working with, that kind of thing.

Melissa Wong: Sorry, I should have been clearer. Thank you for pointing that out.

Hannah Fouracre: Hannah. After the focus groups, we'll be publishing how many of each type of organisation has attended each of the focus groups, but not the list of individuals, alongside the anonymised transcripts of each of them, so everybody that's not been able to hear can read through what we've talked about today. All of the ideas and feedback that we get through the conversation and consultation phase is going to be analysed by our independent facilitators as Melissa has described, and that will be used to aid the decision-making process for the new

geographies of the Music Hubs. We're hoping to be able to share the new geographies in spring '23, and how your feedback has helped shape those. The Music Hub investment process guidance, as I've said, will be published in spring '23 ahead of the formal opening later in the summer. They are the next steps from us.

Melissa Wong: Great. Thank you so much, and thank you especially to all of you who have made the time out of your busy days and weeks to come here, travel into London. Really appreciate your honesty and your candour in these conversations, and the challenge that you've given to both myself and to Arts Council. Thank you, and we'll be in touch.

Hannah Fouracre: Thank you all.

[Transcription ends 3:12:16.0]

**[End of Transcript]**