**Better and Stronger Together**

It was really encouraging to see such a united front from [MEC](http://www.mec.org.uk/), [Music Mark](http://www.musicmark.org.uk/), [National Foundation for Youth Music](http://www.youthmusic.org.uk/index.html?gclid=CLzTu-uMr8QCFevJtAodWn4AqA) and [Sound Sense](http://www.soundsense.org/metadot/index.pl), sending out the “clear message of working together to improve Music Education and make sure children and young people get the very best offer” (Dick Hallam). I often wonder what forms of ‘Hubs’ and partnership working are happening at National Level to support us on the ground where we are expected to work in partnership. This ethos of collaborative learning and leadership must truly be at all levels, without fear or prejudice. - See more at: <http://network.youthmusic.org.uk/learning/blogs/emily-foulkes/reflections-music-education-expo-2015#sthash.eumPq3Dt.dpuf>

The above quote was equally encouraging to read as we strive, together, to continue to improve the music education offer for all. Over the past two years the Music Education Council and all of its members have been fighting for funding and policy decisions to support the excellent work so many committed people carry out day in and day out throughout the sector, in and out of school, for young and old. At the same time, MEC has been facilitating discussions ***within*** the sector so that we as a sector can become more proactive; take the initiative and agree our short, medium and long term aims for high quality music education for all.

It was also encouraging therefore to hear Nick Gibb speak so positively at the Music Education Expo and to hear Kevin Brennan re-asserting the importance and centrality of the National Plan for Music Education for the future. But we need more than the NPME. It was written whilst the curriculum review was still being undertaken and is relatively light on key areas such as Early Years; SEND and the implementation of music technology, initial teacher training and continuing professional development. GCSE, AS and A levels have also moved on since the plan was written.

In a session on ‘Do we need a plan B?’ the consensus was ‘no’ but we do need to clearer about what the NPME means for local implementation; guidance in terms of interpretation; better partnership working and clearer accountability. So here are some ‘NEXT STEPS’ that MEC will be leading on so that you can contribute either personally or through your professional music education organisation:

* April 21st: MEC Executive meeting (many key organisations are on the MEC exec)
  + Review of where we are on music education for all (long term aspirations); quality; progression; and the practical next steps and actions;
  + Details of summer seminars for each nation
    - England: w/c June 29th, to discuss priorities and plans for presenting to the new Government in advance of the autumn comprehensive spending review;
    - Northern Ireland (in discussion);
    - Scotland, in discussion in collaboration with SAME and HITS;
    - Wales, in discussion in collaboration with CAGAC;
  + Preparation for the ISME 32nd World conference (Glasgow July 24 to 29 2016) and associated commissions.
  + Preparation for the MEC AGM and elections to the MEC executive for 2015 to 2018.
* Summer Seminars w/c June 29th (see above and watch this space for details of content and venues).

If in doubt, contact me personally at [halla@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:halla@globalnet.co.uk) or phone 07850 634 239. Working together we are better ***and*** stronger. Dick Hallam, MEC chair 2013 to 2016