January 2017

Dear Joan

At the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee meeting on the 22nd of December I offered to provide committee members with the Evaluation that has been undertaken on the Youth Music Initiative (YMI).

Despite considerable budget pressures, which have seen Scotland’s discretionary budget cut by 7.5% in real terms since 2010-11 with most culture expenditure taking a share of reductions, we have protected funding for the YMI at £10 million per year, a consistent figure for the last ten years. Our long-standing investment in the YMI well positions the programme to find the efficiencies we need to see next year. As I highlighted to the Committee we will provide £9 million for the Youth Music Initiative in 2017/18. This takes our funding for the YMI to £109 million since 2007.

The refresh of the YMI has been informed by independent evaluation. In 2014 Creative Scotland appointed consultants to evaluate the YMI. The first stage was a retrospective evaluation. The second stage involved a detailed focus on the YMI during 2014/15. The evaluation report, published in October 2015, brings together high level findings from both stages. Attached to this letter are ten hard copies of the executive summary and case studies. The full report can be accessed here: http://bit.ly/14-15ymievaluation. Also attached are ten copies of the key findings and case studies from the more recently completed 2015/16 YMI Impact Report.

The evaluation highlighted the valuable contributions the YMI has been making, including to the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors). Both the evaluation and impact report evidence how the YMI is contributing to Programme for Government priorities. Although positive the evaluation report also suggested areas for improvement, including the development of a new monitoring system, a recommendation it become more targeted at those not engaging, wider sharing of best practice could take place and greater sustainability.
Following the evaluation Creative Scotland appointed consultants to work closely with key stakeholders to develop a new YMI monitoring system to help set the new direction and focus of the refresh of the YMI. This work with partners resulted in 2016/17 in a refreshed vision, aims and outcomes for the YMI to focus on ensuring the YMI is aligning to the National Improvement Framework and complementing work to raising attainment and tackling inequalities in education. This has helped ensure explicit links are made and a more targeted approach is taken to ensure underrepresented groups have a genuine opportunity to benefit from the YMI. There are also more opportunities for partnership working and sharing of best practice with other projects focusing on delivering similar objectives.

A further change to be implemented in 2017/18 is the P6 target will be removed. This is in response to findings from the 2014-15 YMI Evaluation which highlighted challenges in interpretation and a lack of flexibility. The commitment instead will be for all young people to access a year of free music tuition by the time they leave primary school alongside a continuing focus on providing meaningful opportunities for those who otherwise would not engage. This will help to encourage more flexible (allowing provision to move into P7) and innovative approaches for LAs by potentially removing a number of administrative barriers.

I trust this letter and accompanying evaluation will help provide an insight to the range of positive impacts the YMI is having in communities all over Scotland. As I highlighted to the Committee I am absolutely committed to the Youth Music Initiative. Creative Scotland are offering local authorities and third sector organisations advice, guidance and support on delivering the necessary efficiencies in 2017-18. The YMI refresh will continue to build upon the programme’s positive impact on young people, jobs, volunteering and training opportunities; support the wider attainment agenda and provide meaningful opportunities for those who do not engage.

Yours regards

Fiona

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Yours sincerely,

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