

Newsletter #2 Summer 2023

Well, what an exceptionally busy first few months! So much of the initial work of the National Music Plan has already been achieved in the first two terms. Thank you to everyone who has joined us on the journey, and we hope that you, like us, are excited about the progress in provision.

'First Experiences'

The first steps in any plan are the most important steps, which is why so much of the emphasis has so far been placed on ensuring that the First Experiences plan is well rooted.

The aim of First Experiences is to ensure that as many children as possible are offered the opportunity to have a go at learning a musical instrument, or live a musical experience, enriching the musical and emotional development of primary school children.

All Welsh music services now provide their 'First Experiences' scheme, providing 6 weeks or more of instrumental training to classes at no cost to the school. We are excited to see so much variety in the offer across Wales, with this scheme giving class teachers the opportunity to shine alongside our tutors. ALL primary schools in Wales will receive this offer over the next three years. If you haven't been offered a session yet, it will come to you shortly. To find out more about that timetable contact your local Music Service. Their details can be found on our website www.music-service.wales

The response from the schools that have already received this scheme is extremely positive, with some children picking up an instrument for the first



time ever. When working with a musician in the classroom for an extended period it is an opportunity to increase the confidence of a classroom teacher. Amanda Williams, Deputy Head of Ysgol Twm o'r Nant, Denbigh said:

"It's very nice to have a musician into the School... someone different. The children's confidence has risen. The quiet little children have been able to play with everyone else and give it a go. Before, if there weren't enough instruments, they wouldn't go over to the box and choose an instrument. But there is an instrument for everyone, and that is of great benefit."

As a result of the First Experiences lessons, some children have been encouraged to continue with music education by undertaking individual lessons, and others have already joined local ensembles for the first time.

Lucas, Betsan, Scarlett, Hazel, Billy, Leo and Olivia from Ysgol Castellau, Beddau, had their first glockenspiel lesson in January 2023 as part of the First Experiences offer. Such has been the group's enthusiasm since that first lesson that each has joined the Junior Wind Band of their county, Rhondda Cynon Taf, to practice their skills further.

Celebrating First Experiences

From January to July several First Experiences concerts have been held across Wales - from Cardiff to Neath; from Gwynedd to Wrexham. As part of these concerts, children performed on stage, some for the first time ever. This was the highlight for the schools that have already received the First Experiences offer, and we have seen infectious enthusiasm on every single stage as they have performed together. In several of these concerts we saw children playing a pBuzz instrument, which has been shared with all the music services.

Charanga Cymru

Charanga Cymru is a digital music platform that has been available for free to all schools in Wales since October 2022. It has been an exciting first year to see so many schools using this new resource in the classroom.

So far, over 700 schools have logged into their accounts, and more than 3,100 teachers in those schools have their own personal link to the platform. It's a similar story in local music services, where over 300 tutors take advantage of the content to facilitate their lessons, and to support classroom teachers. Together, teachers have been using the platform for a total of almost 21,000 hours!

When holding training sessions, Charanga listened to your feedback as teachers across Wales, to learn more about what you would like to see on it. So, here's a summary of what's coming for the start of the Autumn Term:

Curriculum resources

- More of the music units on popular work for Progress Stage 1
- Eight brand new units for Progress Stages 2–3
- Additional YuStudio Projects in Progress Stage 4 to help expand access to music technology.



For 'First Experiences'

Charanga Cymru is also taking the existing library of resources for 26 instruments and producing progressive 6–10 week projects to make it easier for you to introduce the programmes to children. New materials will include Ukulele and a sing and strum course for guitar.

Additions to the platform

Based on your feedback, you can look forward to three new areas specific to songs, creative tools, and materials from your local music service.

Training

The aim of the **National Music Service** is to ensure that we are at the forefront of offering the best possible music education to our children and young people, and to you as teachers and schools. With the arrival of the National Music Plan we have the ability to invest in training, which is extremely important, because we have tremendous musical talent here in the ranks of Welsh music services.

Over the past six months there have been several training courses, nationally, regionally, and in county. In many counties, due to the financial

challenges, this was the first training for some time. We have been sharing good practice across all counties, and developing our pedagogy for learning the various essential elements that are part of the National Music Plan.

The need for training becomes more and more important as we prepare for the new Curriculum. We are working closely with the different education consortia to create a new module, to facilitate the change in the way of learning.

"The fact that music is coming back to the classroom, which is really going to have an impact on children, it's important that we realize how valuable that is going to be. Music is part of our lives every day, but it offers so much more than that. It offers to open your imagination, your ability to work together, your resilience. These kids are now going to have opportunities that have been missing for a few years now, and it's exciting to see things starting to come to fruition."

Alan Thomas Williams
Swyddog Cwricwlwm,
Cyngor Sir Caerdydd
Curriculum Officer,
Cardiff County Council



First Experiences Conference

At the end of January, we held a **First Experiences conference** in Aberystwyth, where teachers from all the music services received special training from Rachel Cooper from Music Masters, as well as a further training session on using Charanga Cymru within the classroom. We had a great response from those who were there, who said: *"I enjoyed it all, it reinforced my own practices as a teacher as well as new ideas. Thanks!"* Another response we received was: *"So important to all get together as a service and as a country. For some staff it was a first for many years, but it is much appreciated."*

That day we also had a presentation by Dr Beth Pickard on the provision for children and special needs. Since then, we have completed research to identify the need for training for musicians who would like to develop skills in working in special schools. We are now in the process of creating that training, and that information will be shared with you in the Autumn term.

Good news

Over the past few months, you have been sending us your photos of all the activity related to the **First Experiences** offer. It has been wonderful to share in the

national excitement as children benefit from the variety of musical lessons. Remember to contribute and share your musical experiences with us:

- on Twitter [@musicservwales](https://twitter.com/musicservwales)
- on Facebook [@Gwasanaeth Cerdd Cenedlaethol Cymru](https://www.facebook.com/GwasanaethCerddCenedlaetholCymru) National Music Service Wales
- Use the hashtag [#nmsw](https://twitter.com/hashtag/nmsw) and [#firstexperiences](https://twitter.com/hashtag/firstexperiences)
- Go over to our website to see the latest news as well www.music-service.wales



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What else is happening?

On **Welsh Music Day (Dydd Miwsig Cymru)** in March, teachers, musicians, politicians and even James Dean Bradfield from the Manic Street Preachers shared their memories of their first musical experiences, to encourage more children and young people to take part in music activities.

I hope that you, like us, have been enjoying the concerts of choir, band and ensemble concerts that have resumed after the long Covid period. After the Welsh Government has invested heavily in instruments over the past year, it has been wonderful to see so many of those instruments in action in concerts and in classes.

Much of our work as the National Music Service also involves developing partnerships with agencies that offer musical experiences and opportunities for children outside the classroom. To ensure that we share news, identify opportunities and celebrate the musical offer available to the children and young people of Wales we are offering you the opportunity to join the Open Forum of the National Music Service of Wales. Three times a year, we will travel to various artistic locations all over Wales, also taking advantage of the opportunity to shed light on the activity of that area. If you would like to apply to speak at one of the Forum meetings, or if you would like to come and listen, please contact us at post@gwasanaethcerdd.cymru

Llŷn and Eifionydd National Eisteddfod

We will be at the **National Eisteddfod** this year, thanks to an invitation from the Gwynedd and Anglesey Music Service. Come and look for us - look for the Gwynedd and Anglesey Music Service tent, come and try instruments. We will be there, sharing information about the National Music Service, and to help you find out more about the music services, organisations, partners and groups that give opportunities to kids making music in your area.

There will be so much more to discuss in our next newsletter. Until then, thank you once again for your hard work and cooperation. Have fun!