

Darren Henley takes over as Chief Executive of Arts Council England

✘ Darren Henley has been appointed as chief executive of Arts Council England, replacing Alan Davey who recently took over a new position as controller of Radio 3.

Darren Henley is well known to those of us working in music education having led the Government's review into music education which resulted in the establishment of the National Plan for Music Education. He also conducted a similar review into the provision of arts education.

Darren takes over control of Arts Council England at a difficult time. Many commentators are predicting further significant cuts in their budget whoever comes to power in next year's general election. Arts Council England has already lost around a third of its total Government funding and has had to implement a 50% reduction in administration costs over the last few years.

The position of music education hubs is also precarious. There is no news of precise funding levels for the period from April 2015 onwards despite there being a commitment to additional funding. Arts Council England are demanding new budgets from every music education hub in early January despite hubs not knowing what their allocated funding is. This is clearly ridiculous.

However, it is important to remember that the funding for music education hubs does not come from the Arts Council directly. It is funding that is paid by the DfE to the Arts Council. My understanding is that the Arts Council has still to receive notification from the DfE about the funding being

made available for hubs despite their constant requests for clarification and further information.

Looking further forwards, there is no additional information for any funding for music education hubs from April 2016 despite the National Plan for Music Education covering the period to 2020.

Many music education hubs are in a fragile state. My understanding is that many are facing yearly deficits and having to access funding from their reserves as Local Authority and other sources of funding are diminishing. The political and financial uncertainty caused by all of this is worrying. It really is a shoddy way to run music education in this country. Let's hope that Darren's appointment to this new role will sharpen up the relationship between ACE and the DfE and lead to a period of more stability where hubs can plan confidently and effectively for the future of music education in their local areas.