our customers needed. And then we had to work faster and smarter than ever before.'

SUCCESS IN SCHOOLS: DON'T TURN UP WITH A MENU

Emma contacted all 67 schools to arrange meetings – not an easy task, as many were dealing with multiple deprivation factors and struggling with lack of resources.

'Sometimes we managed to get a meeting – at other times it was just a phone call,' she remembers. 'Our opening questions were usually, "How do you feel about music in your school? What would you like it to look like? How can we help?" It was a matter of spending the time finding out from them what was going to work for their school. Then I'd give an outline of our provision, but always keep an open mind – they often came up with new ideas. So it's never about going to the head with a menu of services and asking: "which one do you want?".'

An important part of the approach has been to focus discussions on what's on the headteacher's mind – and as Emma says 'That probably isn't music. So we research what they're dealing with by keeping up to date with policy, and being in tune with education.'

WHAT DID SCHOOLS WANT?

Emma found that schools wanted a diverse range of services and outcomes. Some were struggling with delivering the music curriculum with teachers who weren't music specialists – so the team's job was to provide the music curriculum in the short term, upskill staff and build their confidence.

With others, the starting point was finding out what resources the school already had – including teachers who had musical skills and instruments available in the school. In all cases, the team tried to base their work around the instruments a school already had, suggesting low cost 'top up' instruments where necessary, like ukuleles and djembe drums.

'One of our long term aims is to empower schools and build capacity within them,' says Emma. 'And that's about helping teachers to feel more confident about music, modelling behaviour and skills that teachers can build on, and inspiring both teachers and pupils.'



Sallie Maclennan works with MDC students

This part of the work has included performing 'rock assemblies' in schools (in one case, resulting in a hard-pressed headteacher booking weekly sessions for all Key Stage 2 pupils), running African drumming sessions for staff, and running school choirs and orchestras.

A CROWD-FUNDED SERVICE AND INCREASED ACTIVITY

In March 2014, 18 months after MDC's budget was delegated to schools, the 67th school signed up. The team has secured more than £270,000 worth of tuition (£105,000 in addition to the original devolved budget), has increased revenue by 38%, protected jobs and created six new teaching posts.

In one of the most successful examples, a school that receives £5,000 of devolved funding has added an extra £8,700 from its own funds to create an annual music budget of £13,700.

In a typical week, MDC now has 23 tutors delivering to thousands of children. There are 27 schools learning ukulele, resulting in 1,500 pupils having an instrumental lesson for the first time, and other provision includes recorder, guitar clubs, folk ensemble, class orchestra, iPad composition, GCSE and BTEC support, djembe, samba, steel pans and school singing.

It was recently confirmed that MDC will be moved to the core of schools work within the Council, the Schools Improvement Team. Emma concludes: 'With the knowledge we've gained from deep listening to schools, and by focusing on our core values, we've ended up with a stronger, more robust service.' MT



The Cardiff Summer Harp Festival

Anita Holford is a writer and communications practitioner specialising in working with music education and community arts organisations.

The ISM has recently announced that it will be spearheading a campaign to protect music education in Wales – visit the ISM website or search #protectmusicwales on Twitter.