

Instrumental Music Tuition

Guidance to support local authorities in their decision making in relation to instrumental music tuition policies

Developed in Partnership by COSLA, Scottish Government and MEPG

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Guidance – Instrumental Music Tuition

Section 1

Context for the guidance

The benefits for children and young people derived from participation in music and from learning musical instruments are well recognised. The Curriculum for Excellence recognises the value of music and it is taught as part of the expressive arts as one of the eight curriculum areas in Scotland.

Scotland's local authorities recognise the role that instrumental music tuition plays in the development of children and young people, improving attainment and achievement, supporting health and wellbeing, and contributing positively to school and community life. All local authorities currently provide an instrumental music service with models of provision varying between local authorities, reflecting local priorities and circumstances.

Concerns have been expressed about the impact of charging for instrumental music tuition on families and young people least able to pay, as well as the impact on Scotland's culture and economy. However, many local authorities take the view that due to financial pressures the sustainability of instrumental music tuition is at risk without some level of charging.

COSLA the Scottish Government and the Music Education and Partnership Group (MEPG) have worked in partnership to produce this guidance. The provision of instrumental music tuition, and the policies adopted in terms of charging, concessions and other aspects of the service, is a matter for local democratically elected representatives who have to balance a range of priorities. This guidance has, therefore, been written in a way which recognises the need for local authorities to manage budgets and provide a service that is accessible, particularly to those on low incomes.

It should be recognised that this guidance is being produced at a time of change in Scottish Education. Work is underway to deliver an empowered school system where headteachers, teachers, pupils and parents have a greater role in how education is delivered locally, working collaboratively with one another and with local authorities. This should lead to more decisions about curriculum, improvement, staffing and budgets being taken at school. The guidance should be read with this in mind.

Purpose of the guidance

This guidance seeks to support local authorities in their decision making in relation to instrumental music tuition policies, and includes examples of good practice in relation to approaches to charging and consideration of the impact of any charging policies.

This Guidance does not change the position that decisions about charging are a matter for local discretion including the decision to provide tuition free, or to charge, or the level of any charge, or to apply concessions beyond those outlined in this paper.

The guidance draws on the recommendations from the 2013 [report](#) of the Instrumental Music Group. Many of the recommendations in the report have been implemented but this guidance is aimed at consolidating and advancing a number of these recommendations.

Who is the guidance for?

The guidance is aimed at elected members, Chief Executives, Directors of Education/Children's Services, Directors of Finance, head teachers and other officials in local authorities with a role in instrumental music tuition, including Heads of Instrumental Teaching Scotland (HITS). It will also be of interest to teachers, instrumental music teachers, parents, pupils and others.

What does the guidance cover?

The guidance addresses the following areas:

- What is meant by instrumental music tuition
- What local authorities have collectively agreed
- Good practice for reviewing charging and concession policies
- Concessions and exemptions practice
- Good Practice and sharing information between local authorities
- Engaging with parents/carers and pupils
- Potential unintended consequences of charging policies
- Reviewing impact

Section 2

What is meant by Instrumental Music Tuition

Music education in schools is part of the universal provision, available to all children and young people, throughout a Broad General Education. Instrumental music tuition is an additional offering and does not replace or limit music education in schools, although it does enhance it and will be integral to the delivery of SQA qualifications for many pupils.

What local authorities have collectively agreed

- Generally the level of concessions to be offered are for individual local authorities to decide, however COSLA's Children and Young People Board agreed in November 2018 that as a minimum there should be no charging for students who have entitlement to Free School Meals, and no charging for students who are studying for SQA qualifications.
- Local authorities should consider the balance between the need to apply charges in order to improve the quality or scope of Instrumental Music Tuition against the impact on those who are charged. The duty in section 3B of the Standards in Scotland Schools etc. Act 2000, which was inserted by the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 requires local authorities, in making a decision of a strategic nature about the carrying

out of its functions relating to school education and decisions about their implementation, to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome arising from socio-economic advantage.

- Charging policies should be co-produced with the people likely to be affected by a charging regime, including instrumental music teachers, parents and pupils.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that the parents and carers of those who use services for which there is a charge understand the reasons for charging and its contribution to IMT provision.

Good Practice for Reviewing Charging and Concessions

COSLA's Children and Young People Board have agreed that there should be no charging for students who have entitlement to Free School Meals, and no charging for students who are studying for SQA qualifications. Local Authorities should review their charging policies and concessionary schemes to ensure that pupils in their area are not prevented from learning a musical instrument because of their background, location, disability or financial circumstances. This might include:

- Equity and poverty impact assessments and comparison with charging/non-charging approaches and fee levels across the country
- Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment
- Exemptions policy reviewed in line with appropriate tax/benefit changes

Consideration should also be given to the sustainability of the local instrumental music service.

In reviewing charging and concessions policies, local authorities should consider:

- Good practice and sharing information between local authorities
- Appropriately engaging with parents and carers
- Giving full consideration to the potential unintended consequences of changes to charging and concession regimes

Concessions and exemption practice

The Improvement Service annual [survey](#) highlights that various other concessions are in place in some local authorities which could be considered. These may include:

- Concessions for families in receipt of benefits
- Concessions for families in receipt of clothing grant
- Free provision in initial year of tuition
- Discounts for siblings
- Discounts for pupils taking a second instrument

- Close work with Primary and Secondary Headteachers to ensure continuity of access for pupils, in order that impact is minimised e.g. school fully funding/part funding some pupils
- Set up of flexible payment plans such as iPay allowing parents/carers to pay fees weekly, monthly, or per term, as they choose
- Full payment to be made by the end of the school session, allowing parents/carers the full year to pay and avoiding upfront costs.

Good Practice Example

A local authority was faced with the choice of reducing the service or looking to maintain tuition by increasing charges. Whilst there was a slight increase in the charge, a bursary scheme was introduced so that those who were eligible – low income families not eligible for Free School Meals, amongst others - could apply for financial help towards their tuition. The scheme has been successful in attracting applications. As well as looking at what additional financial support can be offered the local authority is working closely with a local Music Foundation to explore what they can do in partnership to support the service.

Good practice and sharing information between local authorities

Sharing information with other local authorities can help to support the provision in individual areas by spreading good practice and innovative provision. There is an increasing emphasis across the education system on collaboration and capacity building some of which is focussed on the Regional Improvement Collaboratives. Some of the existing support mechanisms that can be used for sharing information are:

- Heads of Instrumental Teaching Scotland (HITS) provides a beneficial network for sharing areas relating to best practice and policy development. Instrumental music teachers who are members of the Educational Institute for Scotland (EIS) benefit from the sharing of experience through a dedicated IMT Network. Frequently, instrumental music teachers and managers alike will look to colleagues from other local authorities for guidance and assurance. Such communication networks enhance opportunities for collegiate working across the country.
- Scottish Association for Music Education (SAME) committee, National Expressive Arts Network (Education Scotland), National Conferences. Building capacity for professional learning through joint In Service Events with colleagues in neighbouring Instrumental Music Services.
- MEPG is another valuable national forum which brings together 54 organisations across the formal and non-formal sectors in Music education for sharing information and best practice in a collaborative setting.
- The annual Improvement Service Instrumental Music Survey is an invaluable way for local authorities to share and analyse pertinent and beneficial data on an annual basis.
- The Scottish Government's [Youth Music Initiative](#) is administered by Creative Scotland and helps provide music making opportunities for children in all 32 Local Authorities. Opportunities to share best practice and enable shared learning on music education will appear here in due course:-

- <https://www.creativescotland.com/funding/funding-programmes/targeted-funding/youth-music-initiative>

Engaging with parents/carers

Parents and carers should be appropriately engaged when considering the introduction of charging or when making changes to fee levels and local authorities should avoid issuing invoices to the parents/carers of children receiving tuition without warning and explanation. Examples of good practice include:

- Meeting with local Instrumental Music Service parental groups
- Communicating with all parents and pupils (Some local authorities engage via social media, such as Facebook)
- Outlining the options being considered
- Instrumental Music Services producing comprehensive Parents Information Booklets which clearly and concisely sets out what is offered, what the associated fees are and also sets out the fee exemption criteria
- Holding parent/pupil information evenings at the point of recruitment to music groups to ensure that parents have all the information required to make an informed decision along with their child
- Instrumental Music Services giving an annual progress report to parents and pupils.
- Parents/Carers being consulted on a regular basis on all areas of the Music Service
- Engaging parents through a parental committee (some local authorities have parental committees for orchestras and ensembles).

Good Practice Example

A local authority instrumental music service produced a comprehensive Parents Information Booklet which set out what was on offer in clear and accessible language. This includes what the service offered, what the associated fees were and what the exemptions criteria were. A parent/child information evening is held when children and young people can sign up to the service and there is an annual report on progress to parents and pupils.

A local authority discussed its budget proposals in relation to instrumental music tuition at length with the Parent Teacher Association who then cascaded this to parents and pupils using social media and other methods.

Potential unintended consequences of charging policies

Charges are often introduced by local authorities in an effort to maintain local instrumental music service. However, the introduction of, or increases in, fees can have unintended consequences that local authorities should be aware of. These can include:

- Reductions in uptake which can lead to instrumental music teachers being underemployed, without a full allocation of students, and can also impact on participation in ensembles and orchestras, impacting on other pupils. This can threaten the sustainability of a service that fees were introduced to protect.
- Reduced participation from children and young people from lower SIMD backgrounds. This can happen even in areas with generous concessions in place due to uncertainty about the longer term and stigma.
- Uncertainty and reduced morale among instrumental music teachers due to decision making and the threat of cuts on a yearly basis. This may have longer term implications for the viability of the service.
- Reductions in instrumental music teachers can lead to pupils being taught in larger groups which can reduce the quality of the offer to pupils.

Local authorities also need to consider the quality of the service provided and balance this with extensive participation.

Section 3

Reviewing Impact

The Improvement Service carries out an annual survey on behalf of HITS as a means of sharing a national picture of instrumental music services and best practice within these. The report from [2018](#) is the 6th consecutive year that the survey has been conducted.

The report and its [summary tables](#) provides a wealth of information from across the country on the areas covered in this guidance.

Based on this information, COSLA, Scottish Government and MEPG will meet to review the impact of this guidance in Summer 2020.

Good Practice Example

A local authority introduced a framework to consider the impact of charging for instrumental music tuition. As part of this an impact assessment was carried out. If cost was an issue in any parental feedback, each case was considered on an individual basis in confidence with the principal teacher for music. The local authority worked closely with the school to ensure that the impact was minimised including contributions being made by the school. In addition there was close monitoring of uptake from those eligible for free school meals and those on lower incomes using SIMD.

Conclusion

Considering this guidance when making decisions about their local instrumental music services, will help local authorities to sustain those services while maximising access for children and young people.

This can be achieved through the sharing of information and good practice, better engaging with parents and carers and fully considering the consequences of decisions.