



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 14 November 2018

Session 5



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EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

27th Meeting 2018, Session 5

CONVENER

*Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP)

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab)

*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

*Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

*Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)

*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Kenny Christie (Heads of Instrumental Teaching Scotland)

Andrew Dickie (Scottish Association of Music Education)

Kirk Richardson (Educational Institute of Scotland)

Professor Jeffrey Sharkey (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland)

John Wallace (Music Education Partnership Group)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Roz Thomson

LOCATION

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Skills Committee

Wednesday 14 November 2018

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Music Tuition in Schools Inquiry

The Convener (Clare Adamson): Good morning and welcome to the 27th meeting in 2018 of the Education and Skills Committee. We have received apologies from Iain Gray, Jenny Gilruth and Tavish Scott.

Our first item of business today is the second evidence-taking session in our inquiry into music tuition in schools. This week, we will hear about the experience and perspectives of practitioners. Earlier this morning, we held an informal session with a number of teachers in order to hear their experiences, and we thank those who took part in that.

I welcome to the committee John Wallace, chair of the music education partnership group; Professor Jeffrey Sharkey, principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; Kenny Christie, chair of heads of instrumental teaching Scotland; Andrew Dickie, committee member of the Scottish Association for Musical Education; and Kirk Richardson, convener of the Educational Institute of Scotland's instrumental music teachers network.

We have a large panel this morning and it may be a challenge to get through everything that the committee wants to cover. You do not all have to answer every question. When you feel that you have something to contribute, please indicate to me or the clerks to let us know. I start by giving you a chance to make some opening remarks. We will go from left to right along the panel, starting with Mr Dickie.

Andrew Dickie (Scottish Association of Music Education): Thank you for affording us this time. For some time now, there has been a degradation in the provision of music teaching in Scotland in terms of equity of opportunity for children to take part, and pricing has played a massive part in that. Children across Scotland have had music tuition taken away from them, whereas in some local authority areas it is free. In the area that I work in, it is free—children can roll up and have their lessons, and they are happy beings. However, we have seen the tears of children who have had their instruments taken from them, lost all the other aspects of music tuition and suffered social exclusion from not being

able to take part in activities that their friends are taking part in. To be frank, that is unforgivable.

I represent a group of over 1,000 teachers in Scotland, and I am here to say that we need to do something about it. The current arrangement is not acceptable. The 32 local authorities are taking different standpoints. Sadly, we are not represented today by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, which declined to come to the meeting, but we need to take a stand and make it more equitable and fair for young people to engage in music making across Scotland. We have such a rich cultural heritage in Scotland that we cannot let this go.

Professor Jeffrey Sharkey (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland): I am proud to be a new Scot of four years. This is an amazing, creative and vibrant nation. We have something that is precious and unique. It has some challenges at the moment, but we can put our heads together and solve this.

We need to get away from turf and look to creative solutions from all quarters. There are ways that we should be able to provide access and progression, which has often been the missing piece for music. We need to get beyond the urgent concerns that every local authority has to the important concerns that we have both locally and nationally. For the health of our nation, we need to have young people grow up with empathetic skills, team-building skills and creative skills to respond to an uncertain future, and those things will give an amazing return on the investment.

We can compare ourselves with other countries that have shown that, such as Finland. It has been investing in the arts and it has a partnership between the national level and the local level that feeds into its world-class elite conservatoire—not elite in standard, but with access for everyone. That institution is very keen to partner and benchmark with us, and we can learn a lot from a nation such as that.

There are new methodologies that we can explore. We want to maintain the standards of our teachers, who are working so hard across the sector. We are also producing new ones to join them, and I want them to have something important to do for this nation.

John Wallace (Music Education Partnership Group): Scotland has historically had a fabulous musical education system. Professor Sharkey's institution was set up in 1845 by Charles Dickens with the thesis that arts and commerce were indivisible in the setting up of a vibrant culture and economy, so let me start with a sort of Dickensian analogy.

Music tuition in schools in Scotland is a tale of not two but three cities. Edinburgh, which is a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization city of literature, strives to be a world-class capital city. Glasgow, which is a UNESCO city of music, strives to be a world-leading city in countering deprivation and social and economic problems in post-industrial society. Dundee, the third city, is the city of the V&A and of biosciences and is world leading in the digital economy.

All three of those cities have free music tuition. When some of Scotland's largest population centres, for vastly different reasons, have free music tuition as part of a rich educational and cultural offering, why does the rest of the country not have that? It is just not fair. It is inequitable. It would take £4 million of new money and collegiate working between local authorities and the Scottish Government to sort it. It should be fixed—end of story.

Kenny Christie (Heads of Instrumental Teaching Scotland): Good morning. I thank the committee for holding its inquiry and for giving me and my colleagues the opportunity to be here this morning. I associate myself with the comments that Andrew Dickie, Jeff Sharkey and John Wallace have made so far.

In Scotland, we have a wonderful system where all 32 local authorities have an instrumental music service, and I am representing the heads of those services today. However, as we move forward, the system is becoming more and more inequitable. We have fee-charging policies that range from some areas, as John Wallace said, providing free tuition to all to some areas charging up to £524. We have 16 different concessionary rates depending on where people live, one of which is £117. I do not understand why we can provide free tuition in some places while another place has a concessionary rate of £117.

It is not all about money. It is about ambition for our country and aspiration for our children and young people. To me, it is about excellence and equity, which is the driving mantra of the Scottish Government when it comes to education. At present we are reaching a tipping point where we are not providing opportunities for all children and families.

It is great to be here this morning and I look forward to our discussion.

Kirk Richardson (Educational Institute of Scotland): Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak. I represent the EIS instrumental music teachers network, whose members are the workforce who deliver the product to the young people of Scotland.

We are calling on the Scottish Parliament to ask the Scottish Government to change the law to ensure that musical instrument tuition is available free of charge as of right to all children attending state schools in Scotland who wish it. I also want to ensure that the school curriculum truly reflects the cultural ambition of the nation. The status of instrumental music in the curriculum requires to be elevated and the funding increased and protected to enable wide and equitable access for all children and young people who wish to participate.

As a member of the workforce, I am concerned that the instrumental music teacher is separated from music education in classrooms. It seems to be an accepted policy for local authorities that we can have one without the other, but if we want a proper cultural educational music system in Scotland, we need the instrumental music system and the classroom teachers as well. Year on year, we are cut because we are not in education beside the other teachers in the classroom and we seem to be low-hanging fruit that councils can cut every year. Until that is changed, this may continue to happen. We would like that to change.

Over the past 30 to 40 years, we have grown a fantastic workforce of professional people, yet they seem to be regarded as low-hanging fruit every year, along with buses and breakfast clubs. I just think that we are comparing apples and oranges. We should not be in that bracket.

The Convener: Thank you. I open up the discussion to committee members, starting with Dr Alasdair Allan.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I am interested in what has been said about the relationship between instrumental music tuition and music education. One thing that came out of the working group on the subject and the report that it published some time ago was the undertaking that charges would not be made for work that was leading up to a Scottish Qualifications Authority exam. I am interested to hear from anyone who is working in the schools sector about whether that is being observed.

Andrew Dickie: I think I am the only member of the panel who is a schoolteacher and is teaching in classrooms. You have heard from the rest of the panel that there is not equity throughout Scotland. In the local authority area that I work in, there is no charging, but some authorities are charging students up to the end of third year. I always find that quite amusing, in that music tuition does not automatically start in fourth year for an SQA exam. There is a lead-up to that, yet in many local authorities it becomes free only in fourth year. I do not have the figures to hand, but I am sure that Kirk Richardson will have them. The problem is that those local authorities do not have free

education up to that point. It kicks in only in fourth year.

Professor Sharkey: I have just been speaking to our BEd class of fourth years—we train classroom music teachers—and it has to be a partnership. It is wonderful that students participate in SQA exams up to higher and in some cases advanced higher, but we will get progression leading to excellence only if that is matched by people starting young, at primary school, especially for certain instruments. If people do not start to play strings or piano in primary school, it can be too late.

In may be that it is being statutorily honoured, but I am worried about the ability of kids from all backgrounds to have access and progression in all instruments. It needs to be a partnership.

John Wallace: Instrumental teachers are essential if people want to go on to a career in music. The curriculum for excellence is brilliant in that many more kids are taking music, but they do not have to read music for the SQA qualifications.

In order to make the leap and go into the music business—I state in my written evidence how big that is; in the United Kingdom, it is worth £4.4 billion and it employs about 150,000 people—people have to start specialising quite early. Most instrumental teachers have degrees and teaching qualifications and they are teachers. They are teaching during the school day. This is not extracurricular work. It is not even co-curricular. It is curricular. Why would we spend our lifetimes beating our heads against a brick wall, doing the jobs that we have done, not to have the credibility of music in schools being a proper subject?

The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama was the first conservatoire in Europe—it was practically the first in the world—to have its own degree-awarding powers. We went into this having degrees so that a musician or a music educator would be a teacher in the same way as everybody else. The instrumental teacher is very important if the child wants to take music seriously and go into a career in music, but even if they do not, it is an enriching experience that improves all their other schoolwork.

Kenny Christie: I want to address Dr Allan's point about the 17 recommendations—I think that that is what he was referring to—and the SQA charges. I agree that a lot of preparation is required for people to be able to access the SQA courses and that tuition may become freely available at that point, but there was a specific recommendation in 2013 that no local authority should charge when it came to the delivery of music around the SQA level. That is the nub of the issue. The recommendations were accepted by Parliament. Since 2013, some local authorities

have conceded those charges, but some have proposed to reintroduce them.

We are talking about a shifting landscape. Perhaps recommendations are not enough and we are looking towards a set of stronger guidelines in the future, if not a commonly understood system or set of parameters that local authority music services all operate within.

10:15

Dr Allan: I am keen to hear your views on how music compares with other subjects. There are some charges associated, perhaps, with home economics and physical education, indirectly leading up to the work that needs to be done for exams. Will you say how you feel music is disadvantaged in that regard compared with other subjects?

Kenny Christie: People sometimes bring up home economics, physical education and the higher and national 5 drama courses, where people have to see and experience live theatre. The difference is that pupils in those subjects are not paying for the teaching element. In home economics, there are consumable resources and people can go home and enjoy the fruits of their labours. Schools are looking at how they offset some of those costs. The difference is that pupils are not paying for the teaching. That is where we are with instrumental tuition at present.

Andrew Dickie: To pick up on Kenny Christie's point about consumables, I note that students who are doing higher photography sometimes have to pay for photography to be published and presented. That is an essential part and a key element of the exam, because otherwise they cannot present their work as a folio. In art and design, some local authorities are making students pay up front for materials. Again, that enhances the product, and some would argue that it allows a better overall project at the end. They are advantaged by the fact that there is money to help. A number of subjects are helping with sundry items and consumables, but no others are charging for teaching.

The Convener: I suppose it is worth pointing out that consumables are involved in music as well, if people have to buy reeds, oils and such things.

Andrew Dickie: Absolutely—there are a number of things like that.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab): As someone who is the mother of a child who went through the system and benefited massively from it because we happened to be living in Glasgow, I recognise the benefits of it. I particularly appreciated the

skills of the instrumental teachers who were involved.

I think that somebody said that we were reaching a tipping point. Have we created a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby, because we are reducing the number of young people who take up particular instruments, tutors are not necessary, they go and the provision becomes very difficult to sustain? We have a table that shows that the number of tutors has reduced by 350 since 2007. Can you provide any analysis of that? Are particular instruments and particular areas suffering?

The point has been made about the SQA and the creation of a situation in which, because of tuition charging, young people are being directed towards voice and keyboard, and the other instruments are being lost. Is that issue significant? We are now creating a situation in which it will be very difficult to sustain provision in the longer term for the range of instruments that we might need.

Kenny Christie: We have reached that tipping point. The Improvement Service data that was included with the submissions shows that, for the first time, there was a reduction in the number of children who participate in instrumental music tuition across the country in 2017-18. That has been quite well publicised this week. The Improvement Service's report does not include up-to-date data—it is now a couple of months out of date—but we are hearing anecdotally around the country that the numbers are dropping. Therefore, we have reached the tipping point.

As Ms Lamont pointed out, the workforce has reduced since 2007. We would not say that that is because specific instruments are not being taken up. There have been efficiency savings in some local authorities and some teachers who have retired have not been replaced. In some cases, people are now teaching in larger groups, which means that additional staff members are not required. The concern that organisations such as HITS have is that, beyond the tipping point, as we look to the longer term, because there is a range of different fee-charging policies in the country and the landscape is ever changing, as fewer children participate in the system, we are reaching a standstill on staffing. We could say that the staff are hamstrung, with some having no one to teach in front of them.

Will that lead to fewer children participating and people saying, over the course of time, "Now we don't need the staff, because we don't have the kids"? Is it becoming, as you said, a self-fulfilling prophecy? At the moment, our narrative is that we have a wonderful system and that we want to develop and celebrate what we have, not dismantle it, but we are at a tipping point, whereby

we are seeing a gradual erosion on the participation side and on the workforce side, because of the decline in participation.

Johann Lamont: I think that some of the figures are masked. Somebody might retire, but if an expectation is created that pupils can do the keyboard, instruments such as the French horn are less likely to be taken up by a large number of kids. We are creating that expectation, because we are deciding to teach in bigger groups and are telling pupils that it is easier if they all do X and Y rather than instruments that fewer pupils would take up. To what extent is the present situation not just happenstance? Is it the case that there will be issues to do with the range of instruments that young people will be offered?

Andrew Dickie: If you will forgive me, I will give an anecdote to illustrate what we are seeing as part of the efficiency savings. We have the situation in which a violin teacher is being trained to teach cello. A range of instruments have been expected, but those instruments are real specialisms—I cannot find anyone who can do both equally well. It is like going to hospital for cardiovascular surgery and being seen by a neuroscientist. As much as he or she is gifted and a specialist in that particular field, it is not what you need. That is what is happening—people are now being taught by non-specialists. That might be part of the degradation in quality that I mentioned. It is not just the numbers that have been lost; specialism has been lost, too.

Many years ago, Brian Duguid from West Lothian, who is no longer with us, talked about the pyramid of provision. He said that if Scotland wanted to reach for the highest levels, the base of the pyramid had to be wider. We have changed it from an equilateral triangle to an isosceles triangle—we have made the base of the pyramid much narrower, so the provision that we can offer is greatly reduced.

Professor Sharkey: I can give some challenging stories and some good stories. Some local authorities are having to make choices—they are saying, "You can study these instruments, but not those ones." What if the young person really wanted the instrument that was not on offer? What if they cannot afford it? What if they cannot travel to somewhere that offers it? We see that coming through in our Scottish admissions into the Royal Conservatoire. We had auditions just last week, and more young people are coming through on some instruments than on others.

However, there are some good stories and some partnerships. We partner with schools in East Ayrshire, where group lessons in strings are being taught. We work in a hub in Dumfries house to supplement that group teaching by giving some individual lessons. Some of those pupils come into

the junior conservatoire. There are examples of partnership and practice that are stemming that erosion, and I would like to see more of those throughout the country.

John Wallace: The learning and teaching of music is very rich and different approaches are used, as in most subjects.

To answer Ms Lamont's question about whether the figures are masking stuff, yes, they are masking stuff. There is a lot more group teaching in quite large groups going on out there. I would say that the productivity of the teachers has gone up about twofold, because they are reaching more students than they were in 2002, when the "What's going on? A national audit of youth music in Scotland" report was produced, but they are spread much more thinly, with the result that the child who wants to progress into music has a much harder job getting the specialised attention that they need to really excel, because grade 8 or an Associate of the Royal College of Music qualification or whatever is no longer high enough to get into a conservatoire. The Royal Conservatoire is at a world-class level and entry into it is set at an international level, which is a great bar for Scottish children to aspire to, but it is now a sad fact that a young person who attends a fee-paying school in Scotland has a much better chance of getting into the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland, because that allows them to get the rich education in music that used to be available in the state system in Scotland.

The figures mask the greater productivity of teachers and the fact that there is less critical mass in certain instruments, such as strings. Another anecdote that I always remember is that, where there was one good young cornet player, you would suddenly find two, three or four. Children rise on the tide with everybody else, and we have seen the tide receding in standards in instrumental music in Scotland over the past few years.

Kenny Christie: We are talking about further education, higher education and the curriculum, but Ms Lamont's point about the range of instruments also affects broader music making in the community and in people's life-long participation. If the decision is taken that everybody will just play the keyboard because that is the only tuition that is available, we will end up having a nation of keyboard players and we will not have the feed-in that we need to our local orchestras or our community bands and groups. We want to retain the diversity of music making and the choice that is available to our young people. They do not want to live in an area where tuition is provided in only one instrument, and that is what everyone plays.

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to make the point that we have some great group teaching in the country in terms of quality and pedagogy. However, in relation to the pyramid of provision, ideally we would like to have a structure that offers fantastic access opportunities through group teaching but, as others have said, when it comes to the excellence factor, in some areas the group teaching approach is reducing the capacity for one-to-one specialist work.

The Convener: Mr Richardson has been waiting very patiently.

Kirk Richardson: There is a lack of equity in the access that is given to pupils in charging authorities where the instrumental teachers' time is under financial constraint. Often, the pupils who could be described as the high flyers—the ones who might go on to further education and so on—do not get the one-to-one tuition that they need, because they are in a group situation. That really holds them back. The fact that group teaching is the norm, because time is money, has acted against everybody. If there was a non-charging policy, we would have flexibility in the instrumental teachers' timetable that would enable them to cater for those pupils' needs, but they are being excluded a little at the moment.

On Ms Lamont's point about instruments, most charging authorities do not charge for tuition in years 4, 5 and 6, but they charge for tuition in years 1, 2 and 3. If a pupil decides to take music in secondary 3, they will be charged for that year, but some pupils do not have the means to cover that. As a result, they are guided towards, say, four classroom instruments. They are not offered a wide breadth of choice of instruments, covering woodwind, brass et cetera. The choice is restricted, so there no equity there, either. That does not help the situation.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): Good morning, panel. I want to go back to the general issue of the effect of charging on uptake. From the helpful statistics that we have received from local authorities across the board, we see that the situation is very varied and that most authorities offer concessions for families with low incomes. How effective is that approach?

10:30

Andrew Dickie: I work in a school in the west coast of Scotland, where the trigger point for free music education is free school meal entitlement. Our colleagues in the other place south of the border talk about people who are just about managing, and they are the ones who are having to say no to their children. They cannot afford it, because they are just over that borderline. It is not a lot of money. We have talked about the choice

between heating or eating. Playing the clarinet is way down that line in many households across Scotland. Although there is free education for those who are on free school meals, that entitlement is not there above that parapet.

Rona Mackay: So you feel that a 50 per cent concession is not enough to make a difference.

Andrew Dickie: If at the end of my working week I have £6 left in the kitty, it does not really matter whether we are talking about 50 per cent, 80 per cent or 90 per cent. I attended a lecture at my teacher training college at which Professor Brian Boyd said that the biggest issue for most teachers when they go home at the weekend is which bottle of wine is most appropriate to take to a party. Some parents cannot afford 10p for swimming lessons. Those are the biggest issues facing parents across Scotland who are just about managing to survive on their incomes. The issue of music tuition is kicked out completely.

Rona Mackay: So the concessions are a bit of a red herring in that sense.

Andrew Dickie: Yes. A lot of people are just on the cusp. We have talked a bit about people having to justify their poverty and the fact that many people do not want to do that. It is embarrassing for people to have to write to school to say that they cannot afford something. Of course, there are local decisions in terms of families who we would never know about, although maybe we should know, but it is not sustainable.

Rona Mackay: I suppose that many parents would not want their oldest child to have the opportunity of tuition and then deny that to the rest of their children, so it cancels itself out.

Andrew Dickie: Absolutely. We have talked about the sundries and other items—the support things. Those are sometimes barriers to people taking part, because they cannot afford it. They know that there will be reeds and books and then they will be told, “Oh, by the way, there is going to be an excursion, with a bus fare.” They know about all those additional things that arise and they think, “I’m not getting into this.” That is a real shame.

Rona Mackay: Are there any factors other than charging that might affect uptake? Is there anything else that could be contributing to the downward trend?

Kirk Richardson: There is a stigma for children that we do not often recognise. At the recent HITS conference, someone spoke about poverty and where it lies. He said that, because children who are in that bracket are ashamed of their situation, they will lie and deceive friends and peers so that they are not exposed. I have evidence of local

authorities that have offered some free lessons, free transport and even free accommodation and free residential weekends, but the uptake is not there. Children are refusing that because of the stigma of being found out. That stigma is a huge thing that we really underestimate. People do not come forward. We have to be careful that information on application forms for people who want to participate is not seen by staff and pupils. It should be really confidential.

Rona Mackay: It should be anonymised.

Kirk Richardson: Yes.

Professor Sharkey: We run a transitions programme for the conservatoire, which is based on the ability to pay. That is oversubscribed and the ability to continue it is up to the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. Every three years, we lobby to keep it going.

There will be inconsistencies in Scotland if we do not solve the issue. We have a wonderful cultural strategy for the health of the nation, but we want young people growing up to be able to play in the orchestras or to be in the audience and appreciate them. We have to connect the education policy. We have an admirable widening access policy that the world looks to, but where will those students come from if they do not have access to free or affordable lessons and progression?

Kenny Christie: To answer Rona Mackay’s question on concessionary rates, many local authorities—for example, Dundee—operate a policy whereby, if someone lives in a household with a combined income of less than £15,800, they are eligible for free instrumental tuition. However, that does not mean that every family in that situation is accessing instrumental tuition when it is freely available to them. There are hidden barriers to participation, which can include geography, travel and access. Rona Mackay mentioned siblings. If there is more than one child in the house, does mum want three trumpets on the go at the same time? There could be issues with a lack of rehearsal or practice space at home.

There are lots of ways to overcome those barriers, but the issue is not all about cost. We should promote more different and flexible ways to participate, but a lot of local conversations are needed for that to happen.

Rona Mackay: Should schools be doing that? Could they make it easier or more accessible for children to participate in a way that would not incur extra cost?

Kenny Christie: As I said, it is not all about cost. It is about knowing the local area and schools and talking to parents and families, schools, family development workers and

headteachers to say, "This is available" and to consider how to make it work in the area. Is it better to operate in a group teaching context? Is it better to have something after school? Is it better to get parents more involved in opportunities?

However, if an authority has a charging policy, that becomes more of a barrier to those flexible approaches, because it becomes more of a client-based service, in which someone expects 20 minutes of something for the money that they pay. The opportunity to have more creative approaches and to make them work for different communities and schools is reduced, because there is a very businesslike income-generating structure.

John Wallace: I will try to answer Ms Mackay's question on the sort of philosophical level. Scotland is a country with many socioeconomic problems, and the issue is not only about charging. In Glasgow, 47 per cent of the population—around 287,000 people—are in the lowest quintile of the Scottish index of multiple deprivation, so the city does not have charging and does not have the argument there. However, we have gone round smaller local authorities such as West Lothian and Clackmannanshire, where there are vast differences in socioeconomics. In West Lothian, you have leafy Linlithgow and the wild west. In Clackmannanshire, you have the Hillfoots and Alloa and Alloa academy. On our travels, we have seen that the mindset seems to build up poverty of ambition.

I know that music tuition can radically change that mindset but, in Clackmannanshire, the charging has resulted in the Hillfoots having more kids in music tuition. The people who have, have more, and the people in Alloa have less. In West Lothian, it seems to be working the same way. The demography of the 60,000-odd kids in music tuition has changed. That is what the research that we are doing now, 15 years after the first study, is showing. It is really depressing me that, as the figures are coming through, we are seeing a change relating to postcodes in Scotland. Philosophically, Scotland has always been about equality. We were one of the first countries with universally free education and we are the country of "A Man's a Man for a' That", but we are not heading in that direction with music tuition. The results of the research will be launched in Parliament in late January or early February of next year.

Kirk Richardson: When pupils see other pupils performing, that is a great catalyst for them. For instance, if I ask an S2 ensemble to go and play to the S1s who have newly come to the school, they watch and think, "Wow—I could do that." The class teacher may ask, "Who would like to go for a trial and get involved?" and you get a big list of children who all want to come along. There is a

trial for three or four weeks with a big uptake, and they love it. However, if the teacher says, "Who would like to do this? But before you put up your hand, there is a charge," the hands go down, whether they know their parents can afford it or not. Perhaps they think they should go home and ask. With that approach, you will probably get two or three children, not the group that you would get if you do not mention the charging at the start.

I read in the Connect submission that the concessions are a minefield for parents. We have 32 variations of concessions. There are reasons why parents are not keen to fill in forms. There is also the stigma issue. To me, charging is the biggest barrier that I come across on a daily basis. I have just had a primary project with 15 children, who have now all come up to secondary school. They turned up on the first day wanting to continue the process. I said, "Here, take this form home to your parents," and of the 15, I got one return. The issue is staring me in the face on a daily basis.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I think that we are all very much persuaded by what I think is compelling evidence about the problem that we face; I do not think anybody is in any doubt about that evidence. However, the key question for us is what we do.

I am very interested in some of the international evidence that Professor Sharkey mentioned but, before I come to that, I will ask Mr Wallace to confirm something. If I heard you correctly, you mentioned a figure of £4 million in your opening remarks. Could you explain where that comes from?

John Wallace: The local authorities spend about £28 million a year on their instrumental services and collect £4 million in fees from parents to deliver the services. Ergo, if you changed the structure slightly and worked with the local authorities, with £4 million you could take away the fees.

Liz Smith: Is that the total figure that would solve the problem from a financial angle? We have had it put to us that the true figure is rather more than that. I am interested in hearing from the experts' point of view whether £4 million is a realistic figure.

John Wallace: That would maintain and sustain tuition at the present level, but there would then be much more demand and it would have to be developed. There would be consequences of doing that.

Liz Smith: Professor Sharkey, you mentioned Finland in your opening statement and I have heard you on the record before talking about some US states that have looked at different options. What lessons can we learn from international

situations where this is perhaps done a little bit better?

Professor Sharkey: In Finland they have a partnership that works and their prescription is this: money is provided centrally, but it has to be used for the arts. There is a statutory element to it and the money cannot be used for something else. They explore new methodologies such as advanced level group teaching; we are going to explore that with our juniors, and I know that it is going on in good practice around the country.

Maybe we can tighten it up. We can learn from Sistema's best practice around the world and lead that into one-to-one teaching. We need to have one-to-one teaching alongside ensemble work, because musicians do not exist in a vacuum and have to be able to play with one another. We need to be able to celebrate all musics. We have an amazing traditional music culture, we have an amazing classical culture, we have an amazing rock'n'roll culture and we have an amazing jazz culture. All of that needs to be celebrated and nurtured and we need to have access to all of it.

We need to recognise that this is not a zero-sum game. When I am pushing these arguments forward, too many people say, "What are you going to cut? What should local authorities cut?" This is an investment in our future that other countries have shown gives more than you put in. It gives an amazing return in growing the economy and in reducing mental health challenges and growing empathy among young people. They have seen it work in places such as Finland and Seattle in the USA. I am convinced that, if we follow this prescription and work together, we can, as John Wallace said, not only sustain what we have now but go further and make it world class once again.

Liz Smith: Do you think that the local authorities that are providing free tuition understand that perspective better than those that charge? Do we have more to do here to make local authorities understand the full implications of what you are saying?

Professor Sharkey: I think that understanding is part of it. The resource challenges will no doubt be different depending on where the local authority is. That is why I would love it if there were some kind of partnership between the national conservatoire, the national Government and local authorities.

10:45

Liz Smith: Would having such a partnership not put very considerable demands on national Government spending? It would obviously cost some money.

Professor Sharkey: I guess that I would define the word "considerable". I think that it would be a thoughtful spend that would have, as other countries have shown, an amazing return on the investment.

Liz Smith: I am just trying to tease out the reality of the situation, because clearly there are local authorities that are facing very considerable financial pressures, for understandable reasons. It is difficult for us to tell them what to do—in fact, it is not our responsibility to do so, given that there is local devolution—when they are making choices about how they spend their budgets. Therefore it seems to me, from the evidence from which we have gleaned the facts, that it will need a national intervention in a partnership deal.

Professor Sharkey: I agree with that. I believe in devolution, but I also believe that, if money is provided in a ring-fenced way to keep music flourishing, that is what it should be used for.

Liz Smith: My final question is whether there is any gold-standard model abroad that you would like us to spend a little bit more time investigating.

Professor Sharkey: I think that Finland is a country of similar size, with similar cold winters and with a similar love of arts and culture that we could learn from. We will be partnering with it conservatoire to conservatoire, so we will get a lot of information from that.

Kenny Christie: I genuinely think that we have a gold-standard model here. We are not talking about building something that does not exist. We live in a country where all 32 local authorities have instrumental music services and professional music educators. The local authorities spend £28 million employing those people who are already there in the system. The £4 million that John Wallace refers to—the £3.9 million—is what the charging local authorities currently bring in in fees. The amount that is brought in is not the same across the country, and it ranges from what Perth brings in to what Glasgow brings in—well, Glasgow does not bring anything in. That £4 million needs to be looked at in detail to see what it is made up of. Also, no local authority at the moment operates a policy of full cost return for its instrumental music service.

Therefore, when you start to explore the figures, you see that the workforce is in place and the £4 million is just what the charging local authorities are currently bringing in. The decline in participation means that that figure will start to reduce, but the outgoing £28 million will stay the same.

Liz Smith: Your argument is that there is nothing particularly wrong with the system per se, but it is obviously not sufficiently well resourced and financed.

Kenny Christie: Even in terms of finance and resourcing, I would say that the system is there. From a national perspective though, the discrepancies are too great in how the system operates. There should be a degree of local autonomy in how the system is delivered at a local level; we were talking earlier about knowing your schools, knowing your communities and designing the best, most effective music service to meet all the needs of children and families in the area. The system is there and working. However, I do not think that the ever-changing policy aspect of the system is working, given the charging policies and the barriers to participation against a background of a Government seeking equity for everyone. In some places on the border between local authority areas, some people are paying £354 but people 2 miles away are not paying anything. It is not a great system to have.

Andrew Dickie: I might come back on something that Professor Sharkey touched on when he talked about systems. The Sistema system, which you will be familiar with, is happening around Scotland. A study in America found that, for every dollar that was spent on the Sistema project, \$1.52 was saved in the social, health and other tangible benefits that an encompassing and comprehensive music education gives. Remember that that system was set up not as a music system but as a social construct to take guns and ammunition away from young people and get them into a positive destination. I know that the Scottish Government supports positive destinations, and that is really what we are talking about here as well.

The last thing I want to say on that is about the culture of young people having nothing to do in the evenings. This is what we are talking about. Kenny Christie talked about our bands and orchestras. This is lifelong learning. People are coming together in towns across Scotland this week performing music. What we are doing is denying them that opportunity because, as Kenny Christie said, we have not seen the first Scottish keyboard ensemble. We need a range of instruments and opportunities, and that is what we are hoping to achieve today.

John Wallace: In our visits to local authorities we have not found one yet that does not value the richness of the musical groups, bands and orchestras and the general buzz and the feel-good factor that they bring to the schools environment. We have been working very closely with COSLA and the Scottish Government. You may feel that there is sometimes a no man's land between the two, but we have found a willingness to work together on the rather precarious business of trying to get agreement between 32 local authorities, as was achieved when all 32 signed up to the youth music initiative that came out of

the "What's going on?" report, although some lost out on it. We would like COSLA to enable the creation of guidance on instrumental music tuition for local authorities and we are presently working towards that aim. We seem to be working in a passacaglia—a ground bass, where there are variations on a theme and the thing inches forward. We are working with it at the moment and that is what we would like to see in the first instance.

If we get that, we can have the sort of consensus that seems to exist in Finland. In fact, it is not the case that the whole thing is provided by the state in Finland; there are parental contributions to the thing in an overall way, not for parents' own kids. There is a general consensus that it is a good thing, so it is contributed to. In Finland, they have a super-deluxe system, which we do not have at the moment, but that would be an aim. We should go for the high ground, just as Australia is considering doing. If we think of the socioeconomic effects of joining up with the economic and social philosophy of a country that has grown economically for the past 27 years in succession, that is where we want to be as a nation.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con): That has pre-empted my line of questioning. After the discussion this morning and your comments now, I wonder what the witnesses would expect to see from a national agreement or national guidance. What are the core things that we should be looking for? I know that backwards and forwards discussion is on-going with COSLA but, given that it is not here, could you say what sort of things you would expect to see as the core of that agreement?

Kirk Richardson: I would like to see instrumental music aligned along with music education in the classroom. We are imperative to the learning of the children and I do not see why we are separated every year and are, as I say, easy to cut away. The numbers are falling. We have lost 51 per cent in 11 years and it is a fast road and it is declining all the time. I think that we should be realigned. The service has grown and I agree with Kenny Christie that it is a fantastic service. It needs to be tweaked and looked at, but I think that we have a great product. However, local authorities have a budget and instrumental teaching is an element of the budget that can be cut every year. Once we go, there will be no coming back, so I would like to see our position cemented within the curriculum.

The Convener: I will dig a wee bit further down into that. The instrumental teachers have contracts that are different from those of other teachers. Are they part of collective bargaining and things like that?

Kirk Richardson: We have a different contract from a classroom teacher. We recently became affiliated to the General Teaching Council of Scotland and we are on the same terms and conditions as teachers. As I am in the fabric of the school, I still have to report to parents and I am still under the headteacher's jurisdiction when it comes to my behaviour and everything that I do. I fill in reports and I work with my line manager, so I am embedded in the fabric of the school, but it just seems that no Government in the past 30 years has ever thought, "Wait a minute, look at the fantastic job this service offers. Why is it out on a limb?" Everybody celebrates what the service produces, goes to concerts and shows and says, "Oh, isn't this fantastic?" but nobody has stopped along the road and thought, "Maybe we should realign where these people sit so that they are not considered against other factors outwith education when it comes to budgetary cuts."

Professor Sharkey: I came across an acronym in Scotland, GIRFEC—getting it right for every child—and I think that that is an amazing and noble goal. In answer to your question, Mr Mundell, I say that I would like us to come together so that there is guidance that local authorities would want to partake of and ring-fenced resources to not only nurture and protect but grow this amazing service. I have a potential army of young people graduating from the conservatoire and we are committed to performing excellence and teaching excellence as being part of a circle—it is not teachers over here and performers over there. All the folks who teach for us at the conservatoire are in the main performers and teachers at the same time. They are ready to help go into this amazing system that we have, but we want to make sure that it is nurtured, protected and growing.

John Wallace: First, we must maintain and sustain and develop what we have left of our formerly world-class system. Secondly, for beneficial sustainable change, there then has to be a change in policy towards music tuition so that it is perceived as curricular, and there has to be structural change in how it is financed and delivered to make it sustainable in the longer-term interests of Scottish children and the Scottish economy and culture. Thirdly, we just have to get on and do it.

Andrew Dickie: We possibly need a review of how tuition is being provided in each local authority in Scotland. Really good things are happening across all authorities. However, I used to have an overarching role across Scotland in music, and I know that provision is patchy—Kenny Christie talked about that in relation to geography, access to teachers and so on.

We need a bigger discussion about how we move forward. In the pre-meeting, we talked about a new narrative—I think that Professor Sharkey mentioned that. There is a willingness, in that there are people out there who want to engage. They want to highlight Scotland's cultural heritage, which—not to be hysterical again—has been undermined by the very fact that charging exists for young people. We need to have a really serious discussion—it may need to happen at another time and in another place but, to follow on from John Wallace's comments, it needs to happen now. We are really at the precipice now, because once the funding goes, it is impossible to come back from that.

I worked in the English system for seven years, and it disappeared overnight. It was appalling—basically, the musical culture in England was destroyed. We have talked about the National Youth Orchestras of Scotland being one of the pinnacles of classical music, but a number of different organisations are involved. If you look at the number of people who come from fee-paying schools, you can see that those organisations are almost exclusive. That is exactly the same for the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. I worked with the National Children's Orchestra in London for a number of years, and it was exactly the same there, too: the young people all came from the same stable of independent or private schools. Where in our statute do we say that that is fair or acceptable?

We need to have a really serious conversation—in fact, we needed to have it yesterday, because we really are at that stage.

11:00

Kirk Richardson: The cultural loss to Scotland has been mentioned. Scotland accounts for 11 per cent of the UK's live music revenue, and music tourism brings in around £280 million a year to Scotland and secures more than 2,000 full-time jobs. I have a wee note here that says that, in 2015 alone, 720,000 foreign and domestic visitors came to the country for festivals and major music concerts. If music tuition is allowed to die, there will be a huge commercial loss to the country. We need to wake up to that.

Oliver Mundell: I am grateful for all that information. Let me push a little bit further. Do you expect any guidance that comes from COSLA to focus on the development of standardised practices across all the local authorities? Should the guidance set out minimum expectations of instrumental music services, or is that a step too far?

John Wallace: I think that COSLA will do that through best practice case studies and perhaps

case studies that show practice that has had deleterious effects and has not worked.

Guidance is a great thing to have, but let us look back to the work that Dr Allan did on the 17 recommendations in 2013. Guidance has a velocity and works for so long but then it needs to be reinforced. I know that education bills are difficult to get through but we need the minimum standards to be reinforced in statute. Local authorities on their own should not be expected to come up with minimum standards; that is for central Government to do.

People need to be willing to work together, and I think that people are more willing to do so at the beginning of a parliamentary session than towards its end. That is why I am *festina lente* on this. It has taken a long time to get to where we are and it will take a long time to get out of it. There are no quick fixes, but we can do very positive things just now. The guidance will be much better, but, just like the previous guidance, it will last for two or three years. We thought that that was job done, but it was not. Things unravel, especially in times of austerity, and a lot of this is due to austerity.

Kenny Christie: Guidance on national policy could be one way forward, but another way of reframing this could be to challenge instrumental music services in the country to achieve GIRFEC, which Jeff Sharkey mentioned. Different programmes that receive a central funding contribution, such as the youth music initiative or even the active schools programme, which is funded through sportsotland, have to abide by an agreement or a local five-year plan—the YMI has a one-year plan—with an agreed series of outcomes over a period. You could look at taking that approach.

There may still be 32 instrumental music services operating at a local level, but they could be challenged in terms of agreed outcomes and any additional funding contribution. What are they doing on local delivery for looked-after children? What are they doing to meet additional support needs? How are they ensuring that children from SIMD 1 and 2 areas can access opportunities that the services are making freely available? What are they doing to share practice and champion excellence across the country? What are they doing for their high-flyers in terms of developing the young workforce and identifying next steps? I would like us to perhaps consider agreeing a series of ambitious goals.

Dr Allan: I have a supplementary question following a comment that was made a wee while back. Professor Sharkey, I was interested in what you said about the wealth of traditional music that exists in schools. I am also conscious of the fact that much of what happens in schools or in communities is the result of the dedication of a

small number of people—that is certainly the case in my own local authority area—many of whom are instrumental music tutors.

What effect have the pressures that you have described today had on the ability to introduce people to the corpus of Scotland's traditional music and, in particular, on the choice of available musical instruments?

Professor Sharkey: I think that traditional music will probably face the same dangers as classical music. It depends on whether people have too far to go, and whether a range of instruments is on offer. Maybe only bagpipe is available, and not clarsach or fiddle. We want to make sure that all our authorities can teach, celebrate and nurture the amazing music traditions that exist in Scotland. I do not know of specific areas where there is less provision, but I would be worried if we did not sustain our local authority music education.

John Wallace: The music education partnership group covers the whole non-formal area, if you like, such as *Fèisean nan Gàidheal*. There is a tremendous richness in Scotland outside schools. A lot of dedicated people contribute to that. However, if you diminish the core of what is going on in school, you diminish the number of people available who have the aptitude to go out and teach. You will find inspired individuals in schools as well as in the community who are doing all sorts of things. For example, I drive 300 miles a week to do a brass band on the other side of the country.

Traditional music is not just something that you do for fun anymore. It is part of a rich heritage, it attracts many people to the country and it is a route into employment. When we started up the traditional music course—the degree programme—in 1995, that was a choice over rock, pop and jazz. That provided a professional pathway, and Scottish traditional music is now up there with Irish traditional music. People now go all over—they go to the 38 highland games, or however many there are now, throughout the world. I have played in Moscow, Bonn and all of the rest of it, doing Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's works, and, lo and behold, a piper from a local pipe band in Russia or in Bonn comes in to play the Orkney wedding. I went to Malta recently, where they have 26 pipe bands.

Traditional music is an enormous part of our identity on the world stage. We have lots and lots of people treading the boards internationally who have degrees in Scottish traditional music. It is a credible modern subject.

Professor Sharkey: We have increasing numbers of people studying both classical and

trad, not only from Scotland but from around the world. We need both those traditions to be strong.

Andrew Dickie: If we cast our minds back, we could say that the late Martyn Bennett was really the founder of all this. He was a classical violin graduate from the RSAMD but he then bridged across to traditional. He shaped what we have today, which is the most vibrant traditional music scene I have ever experienced. The very kernel of this—the very beginning of it—was at the RSC, which was the RSAMD at the time, when Martyn, who was sadly taken from us at a very young age, started something. I can only imagine that he would be horrified to find out that, today, tuition is being denied to young people.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): The phrase “ring fencing” has been used a couple of times. Ring fencing does not exist in local authorities, of course. If additional funds were made available—whether that was £4 million to offset the fees that are collected or £32 million for the cost of the service—how could it be ensured that the money that went to local authorities went into music tuition?

John Wallace: I have purposefully never used the phrase “ring fence” or the word “statutory” because I know that. Behind the scenes, we have been working on other delivery methods. There are delivery methods in music, such as the youth music initiative, which is delivered to music services on a formula basis. That initiative has worked superbly since its introduction in 2003. One of the findings of the research was that 50,000 kids had weekly instrumental tuition, but 150,000 wanted to have it. Last year, YMI reached 240,000 kids. Therefore, it has been a great success, and there is something that already exists.

We do not want any more new initiatives, because the education constituency is initiated out. There are subtle things. The approach has to be subtle in Scotland, because we are a developed nation with a very sophisticated model of government. That model is envied throughout the world, and we have a sophisticated model of local government. However, there are ways and means of working together without ring fencing or those ways and means being statutory that already exist, and we should develop them.

Professor Sharkey: I am perhaps too new to the system to know whether the phrases “ring fenced” or “statutory” can work, but I echo Mr Richardson’s comment. If we strongly support SQA classroom teaching and highers, but we do not have equivalent support for instrumental teaching, there is a disconnect. I fear that fewer people will eventually want to take highers if they have not been exposed to an instrument from a young age.

I do not know what the right words to use are. As Mr Wallace said, maybe it is about negotiation and a sophisticated sense of agreement, but we must do it.

Gordon MacDonald: You mentioned YMI being very successful, and more than 240,000 kids carrying out activity on the YMI programme in 2016-17 was mentioned. Twenty-three of the 32 local authorities currently charge. If that charge were completely removed, what impact would that have on demand? How would they cope with that demand? Would there be a requirement for a selection process or an aptitude test in order to manage that demand?

John Wallace: That is a great question.

Andrew Dickie: I totally disagree with the premise of testing. I have been in authorities, and people throughout the country will smile when they hear me saying this again. When a person went into their English class, were they tested to see whether they could take English as a subject? Absolutely not. More important, why do we test young people on something that they have never been prepared for? I am sure that you studied for your exams at school.

Many authorities will say to children, “Sing this tune back. Tap this rhythm back. If you do not do it to the level we expect ...” I disagree with that completely. A lot of people will be sitting around this table saying, “My God, that was me.” Children have been denied an opportunity even to participate at the very beginning with a test that they were never prepared for. Testing is not the right way forward. I always think that the best test for a young person—there are some exceptions to this; we should consider aptitude, embouchure, the physical ability to play and the size of the instrument, of course—is their enthusiasm for the subject.

11:15

I do not know how we should manage that financially. My end goal would be that every child in Scotland would have the opportunity to play an instrument and would be playing one, and we would have a nation of instrumentalists. There is a huge amount of evidence that that would increase our health and wellbeing and improve academic attainment across the country.

The committee wants to raise the aspirations of young people across Scotland. That is a really easy way to do it. We are sitting here telling you how to do that. All Scottish children should be given access to music education, but how to fund that is a difficult question. Of course that will create more demand—and so it should. We would then maybe spend less on our social care and support for young people in mental health

services. Perhaps we would do that if we were bold enough to go ahead with it.

Kenny Christie: The youth music initiative was picked up on. Obviously, we need to bear in mind the distinction between instrumental music services and the youth music initiative as additionality, and that the youth music initiative operates on the premise of every child having a free year of music tuition prior to leaving primary school. What happens after that free year depends on where a person lives—that is the greater issue at the moment. People could have a wonderful experience, families could go along to the concerts, and those people could get really excited about the instrument that they have to learn, but they could then be confronted with a fee.

There is another thing about the youth music initiative. There is the distinction between regular instrumental music instruction and experience. Within the 240,000 involved, there can be up to just 11 hours of participation. Therefore, they are quite different things.

Would the floodgates be opened if fees were removed all over the place? What a wonderful problem to have. We need to bear in mind that not everyone would want to play, but let us start from the idea that everybody should be allowed the opportunity to start to play. We would certainly like that to be championed in the future. There are different models and methods but, without a rigid fee structure, people would be allowed the opportunity to be far more creative and flexible in how they allowed that opportunity to be taken forward.

John Wallace: It is not just about money alone; it is right that there has to be managed change. With new technologies, for example, there is now the opportunity to get the benefits of music education to many more children.

I am currently working with the Chinese Government, and I go over to the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing every few months to work with it. I am a brass specialist, and there were 500 kids in my first class. Working with 500 kids is a new sort of methodology, but I learned in a class of 40 in a junior brass band. That was my first experience. Out of that came John Miller, who has been second trumpet in the Philharmonia Orchestra and head of brass; Jim Gourlay of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, who now conducts River City Brass; and Bob Ross of the Munich Philharmonic. That big group is a very good way to start.

The Chinese Government is now looking at culture as an economic force in its education. It is looking at western culture and is getting people such as us at all levels of our education system to

go over and show them how it is done. Jeff Sharkey does that, as well.

We have to show ourselves how it is done and learn from what is going on in China, because the Chinese economy is very vibrant. It has the same problems that we have with the haves and the have-nots, and it needs to bridge that gap as we need to, but it would be fantastic to solve that problem. If we could solve it in this country, we could export that solution. We can probably even export it to Finland. When we get into those countries and see what they are doing, we see that they have problems that are similar to ours.

Kirk Richardson: I reiterate what John Wallace and Kenny Christie have said. I recently went into a school that had had an instrumental music teacher in once a week who spent two or three hours on a whole-class project. The whole class was given the opportunity to play together as a class, and the teacher was involved. She learned an instrument along with the class. The kids absolutely loved the fact that they could play better than the teacher. She had to go away and practise at the weekends to keep up with the kids—there was no bottle of wine at the weekend. That might not be for everyone after that year, but they did that and performed as a class group. The parents got involved, and that became a real community hub in the school. There was a lot of success. The kids were not tested; they were just told, “In you come. Pick an instrument, and we’ll go for it.” They had a great time, and that was a very valuable experience.

The Convener: At our committee visit on Friday night, we heard about pupil equity funding that is being used for whole-class tuition in North Lanarkshire. It was very interesting to hear about that.

Ross Greer has been very patient.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green): I want to pick up on a couple of threads that emerged earlier in the discussion.

I am interested in a difference rather than a discrepancy in the numbers. Up until last year, the overall number of young people receiving instrumental music tuition had not fallen. I think that Kenny Christie said that we have reached a tipping point. The numbers last year were not great and, anecdotally, it seems that the numbers for this year will be worse. Until that point, there were year-on-year substantial losses of tutors.

Evidence that we have received indicates that, because that has happened in the context of charges going up, a shift in the profile of young people taking up music tuition has resulted. Demand still grew in communities and from families who could afford to pay but, for those who could not afford to pay, that was the obvious

result. I am interested in your thoughts on that and any experience that you have had in that context. Was the 60,000-ish number of young people that sustained itself through the years of tutors falling sustained nationally, but moved around quite a lot? Did the number grow in privileged communities and shrink in less-privileged communities?

Kenny Christie: As you have identified, that number does not tell us who is playing. In the past couple of years, as policies have regularly changed, there has been quite a transient population. The number also does not tell us who is sustaining participation; it is simply a cold number that shows who is playing at a time during the year. We need to do a little bit more work with local authorities on the demographic of who is playing in the system, how long they have been playing for, whether they are sustaining participation, and whether we are just in a countless round of people filling seats until the policy changes again, and people then give up.

We know that the number in the 2017-18 report is dropping, and we know anecdotally that, from the summer to now, the number has dropped yet again. It is certainly our plan to work with colleagues to do further data extraction, probably this side of next spring, to see where we are sitting, because it seems that the number has gone over the tipping point and we are now on a radical descent.

Professor Sharkey: I am looking forward to the outcome of the “What’s going on now?” report that our team is working on, and which was commissioned by MEPG. I think that it is going to make for some sobering reading, as it will demonstrate that there has been a continuing dangerous drop in the uptake, especially in more disadvantaged areas.

Our transitions programme is an amazing initiative that is supported by the Scottish funding council and which gives people a free place at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, with mentoring. However, it has proven hard to find musicians of the right standard—we were getting lots of actors. We have tried to tweak the approach so that it starts earlier, and goes into primary schools in order to get musicians starting earlier so that they can reach that standard. The issue applies across multiple art forms, but we can see that getting access to an instrument and lessons, getting instruments repaired, buying music and so on all puts pressure on a family that might not have that income available. I think that we have seen a change as a consequence of that.

Andrew Dickie: The transitions programme at the RCS is a wonderful initiative. I have students who are currently on that programme. However, I was asked once by a Scottish official—I will not

say who—whether I could get them more ballet dancers for the programme from my local area of Ferguslie Park in Paisley. It was this “Billy Elliot” moment. We do not teach people ballet in Ferguslie Park, so why should we expect to be able to send ballet dancers to the transitions programme? We would love it if we were able to, and I think that we are trying to reach out and ensure that there is provision in that regard, but there is no provision there at the moment, so where would those ballet dancers come from?

John Wallace: Fifty per cent of the intake in the first year of the modern ballet degree programme at the Royal Conservatoire came from the SIMD 20 and SIMD 40 groups, which is quite staggering. The problem with the postcode lottery is that we have all these numbers to crunch and there are a lot of postcodes. We need to tease out and analyse the figures, and that has been quite a hard thing to do. It is difficult to come up with the hard numbers that will impress the people who wear the striped suits and who crunch these numbers.

The other thing that we are trying to do is identify rural poverty. That exists pretty big time. People in the Highlands and Islands are on extremely low incomes. However, if you take the sea into consideration, the Highlands and Islands area is about the size of western Europe—it is pretty large. We have done case studies in Shetland and in semi-rural and urban areas of Perth and Kinross, we have done work in north Glasgow and we have a lot of valuable data coming in from the Western Isles as well. That means that we have a lot of different data to compare.

Kirk Richardson: Returning to the earlier point about moving postcodes, it is very difficult for a local authority to know why a person has left the service or does not want to continue. It is something that I have thought about long and hard. The issue is difficult, because you have to go to the parent and ask why their child has left the service. The parent might not tell that child because they do not want the pupil to go to school and say, “I’ve given up because my mum says we can’t afford it.”

When we are trying to gather evidence about why someone has left the service, I am not sure that we get the correct answers. It is difficult to gauge why someone has left. Again, it goes back to the issue of stigma.

Kenny Christie: I think that it is important to have that data, and we will have the evidence from the “What’s going on now?” report, which is a big piece of work, as well. I suppose the question is what we do with the data and what capacity we have as music services, partners and colleagues and in terms of local government and national

Government to deliver change within that? GIRFEC was mentioned earlier on, but what capacity do we have to really get it right for every child?

We need to be smarter about the local-level data that Kirk Richardson mentions. We have to ask the right questions so that we identify barriers to participation and can explore opportunities and strategies to remove them. It is not good enough simply to gather the information; we need to be serious about what we do with it.

The Convener: Do you have a publication date for the “What’s going on now?” report?

John Wallace: It is going to be somewhere between 15 and 28 January. We will take it to the Parliament’s cross-party group on music and then launch it here and take it to HITS, all within a matter of about two or three days. I think that it is going to be important because it is not just going to be a wealth of data.

When we went to see the Deputy First Minister about the research that we were going to do, he asked us to provide recommendations as well. We realised then that the report would be extremely important and that it would be extremely difficult to hone recommendations that were feasible and doable. At the moment, it looks as though the recommendations will concern the areas of instrumental music services development; pupil equity; possible enhancements to SQA provision; and the issue of early learners, because work at that level has been proven to have the most beneficial effect on everything else—the instrumental effect of instrumental music. Those are the likely areas. It is not just going to be data, analysis, hot air and lots of lovely pictures; there are going to be hard recommendations as well.

11:30

Ross Greer: I have a question about staff conditions—Kirk Richardson might have a particular answer on this. Earlier, Kenny Christie made the point that the fall in pupil numbers might, perversely, make it easier for local authorities to justify more cuts to staff. Up until now, we have had a situation where the pupil numbers have not fallen and staff numbers have. Has there been any particular impact on the workload of remaining staff and their conditions, given that there are fewer of them but just as many young people as there were previously? Of course, I include the caveat that we do not know where the young people and the tutors are and what the distribution is.

Kirk Richardson: I think that there are two questions in there. If an authority has to cut the staff numbers, the situation sometimes becomes almost a campaign of spinning plates. It is trying to

maintain the service as is, without taking anything out of the service, to keep everyone happy—the politicians, the councillors, the parents—so it is spinning plates, to an extent. I suppose that it then has to spread the workload out between the people who are left in the service. That tends to affect the pupils, because if a teacher is in one school and is asked to go to another school in the afternoon to cover pupils who were previously taught by someone else, they are having less effect in the school that they were in, and the provision is lessened in that school. That scenario can only go on for so long. It is almost like a downward spiral, with the staff numbers getting thinner. What could happen in that case is that the lessons could get shorter and the groups could get bigger, which would mean that the quality of the lesson would be diminished. With the exorbitant charges—some of them are way above the cost of inflation—there will be a tipping point with regard to the quality of the lesson and how many pupils are in the lesson.

On your other question, if the pupils drop out in great numbers and you have a staff member sitting there with no pupils left to teach, the authority has a decision to make within possibly a year on whether it can redeploy the staff. Every local authority will have its own policy on what they do in that situation and whether they make such staff members redundant. Once it has made someone redundant, it is difficult to bring them back.

Kenny Christie: Whichever way you look at it, whether it is a reduction in teacher numbers or pupil numbers, we are ultimately talking about a reduction in opportunity.

It would be remiss of us today not to speak about the impact on the health and wellbeing of colleagues who are going through what is almost a continual funding cycle—it is run on an annual basis in some areas—and are waiting to see whether there are going to be cuts in their local area, and what impact that will have on staff and on the children they teach. Like all good teachers, they are passionate about the children and the families they serve. We have to be conscious of the health and wellbeing of our colleagues and be aware of the frustration that some of them feel because they do not have the opportunity to unlock their full capacity because they are working to a financial target in relation to the number of children that they have to teach in the week.

A number of years ago, the *Scotland on Sunday* ran a campaign entitled let the children play, and I know that HITS would love to see the opportunity to let the teachers teach in some places as well.

Gordon MacDonald: I am looking for a wee point of clarification. This morning, we have heard a lot about the number of pupils who are taking

part in music tuition having dropped, but has the number of pupils studying SQA examinations in music increased? In 2008, there were 4,451 pupils taking a music higher, and the figure is now 5,730. In 2008 there were 1,055 pupils taking an advanced higher, and in 2018 there are 1,712. Is it not a fact that the number of pupils who are studying for an SQA exam in music is increasing?

Kenny Christie: We need to be conscious of the fact that, as part of their higher or advanced higher, a pupil now does not have to play two instruments—they could combine their studies with studying music technology. The rise in the number of young people undertaking music technology as part of the courses perhaps explains the increase in the presentation figure.

Gordon MacDonald: I think that 10 per cent of pupils study music technology.

Andrew Dickie: I am sorry to correct you, but music technology is now a separate course.

Kenny Christie: I am referring to the figures in the submission.

Andrew Dickie: Sorry—I beg your pardon. I just wanted to point out that music technology is now a separate course and that music performance always involves two instruments. However, the performance unit of the advanced higher is going. A pupil can take composition as their main study only at advanced higher level.

Professor Sharkey: I am delighted if more kids want to study for a higher or an advanced higher in music. In some ways that does overlap with instrumental tuition, but we are talking about two different things. The advanced higher in music has nothing to do with getting into the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland or, indeed, advanced work at any university that requires a high level of proficiency in instrumental playing. We have to get that going from the youngest up.

John Wallace: It is something to celebrate that many more children are studying music. That is one of the success of curriculum for excellence and the SQA qualifications. Instrumental music teachers provide about 50 per cent of that teaching. It is quite intensive work, and it generally involves those kids who are looking at music as a possible vocation. The issue is the quality of what they get—they need a rich diversity of choice.

I always had a thirst to study composition. I played the piano, the cello, the viola—everything. The trumpet was only my second instrument when I went to the academy, but, in the end, it is what I earned my living by—this thing that I picked up and learned to play in a brass band. It is very important to keep the subject as rich as the other subjects in school.

Andrew Dickie: I will answer on the point about music teaching in schools, which is what I do. There is anecdotal evidence—I would have to get the figures for it, and those figures are very difficult to get—that, by and large, pupils who are being presented for qualifications are being taught by their classroom teachers, not by specialists. I can think of lots of kids in our classrooms who are being taught only by their teachers, who teach them keyboard and sometimes guitar or whatever. They are not getting specialist instrument tuition. I do not know the numbers for that specifically, and those numbers are not available even from the SQA. They are not numbers that we currently collect.

Kirk Richardson: My concern is that there may be an increase in the teaching of classroom instruments, as we call them, which is a narrow bandwidth. It would concern me if the wider family of instruments was being neglected, but I do not know the figures.

Andrew Dickie: I worked for the SQA for a number of years, and it may be able to collect some of the figures through its marking sheets, on which the instruments' names appear. However, the marking is normally done on paper, not electronically, so it might be difficult to collect that information. The marking sheets would certainly name the instruments, but a pupil could have had independent keyboard lessons outwith a school. They may be having private tuition, so it is an unknown quantity.

The Convener: I think that we have exhausted our questions for you this morning. Thank you all very much for your attendance, which has been extremely helpful to our inquiry. I very much appreciate your time this morning.

I suspend the meeting for a few seconds to let the panellists leave.

11:39

Meeting suspended.

11:39

On resuming—

Subordinate Legislation

Education (Student Loans) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2018 (SSI 2018/307)

The Convener: The second agenda item is subordinate legislation that is subject to negative procedure. Do members have any comments to make on the Education (Student Loans) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2018?

Johann Lamont: The recommendation to reduce the maximum student loan repayment period to 30 years makes sense. If that becomes policy, that is fine.

I have a question about the provision for education psychology students. The clerk's note says that that provision

"will run for an initial three years."

However, are we deciding, at the same time, that somebody who trains as an educational psychologist will not be able to access postgraduate loans? If the support is provided for three years, is there a danger that, at the end of the process, somebody who trains as an educational psychologist will not be guaranteed a student loan?

I am interested in the policy thinking around that. I presume that nobody wilfully takes on extra debt. The provision is described as financial support, but I am talking about access to a loan during a postgraduate course. We are told that the Government does not want duplication of funding, but one method of funding is a grant—which I think we would welcome—whereas the other is a loan that is not compulsory. I wonder whether the loan should have remained as a safety net.

I also wonder about the Scottish Government's other policy choices. I do not know why it has not taken the opportunity to increase the threshold to £25,000 until 2021 when everyone accepts that the current threshold is quite low. Can you let me know the mechanism for getting that information, convener? I think that we can object to the regulations in the chamber, but I do not feel strongly about the matter. There are some quite important provisions in the regulations, but I am interested in why the Government is not increasing the threshold to £25,000. I think that the policy intent is to say, "Not until 2021," but I do not know the logic of that and I would like to find that out.

I re-emphasise the point that I have made about support for educational psychology students. If

what looks like an interesting package of support is for an initial three years, what guarantees are there subsequent to that? I presume that the Government would have to draft another instrument, at a later stage, to allow educational psychologists to access student loans.

The Convener: I cannot answer any of those points. Are we content to write to the Government and delay our decision on the instrument until next week's meeting?

Johann Lamont: I think you are absolutely right to write to the Government, convener, but I would not want to delay the really positive provision reducing the maximum repayment period to 30 years.

Liz Smith: We can seek some clarification.

Johann Lamont: We can seek some clarification, but I would not want to stand in the road of that provision being agreed to. If the instrument is implemented, nothing will happen to affect the two issues that I have raised, but we could still write to the Government on those issues.

The Convener: You are suggesting that we write to the Government for clarification on those points but that we agree to the instrument as it stands.

Johann Lamont: I think that we have to agree not to say anything about it—is that not the procedure?

The Convener: Is everybody content to do that?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: Are there any other points that members want to raise with the minister?

Members: No.

The Convener: That will be the way forward, then. That concludes the public part of today's meeting and we move into private session.

11:43

Meeting continued in private until 12:05.

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