



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Meeting of the Parliament

**Tuesday 30 April 2019**

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# Scottish Parliament

*Tuesday 30 April 2019*

*[The Presiding Officer opened the meeting at 14:00]*

## Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader is Rabbi Eli Grunewald, Jewish student chaplain in Scotland.

**Rabbi Eli Grunewald (Jewish Student Chaplain Scotland):** It is a great honour to have been invited here to lead the time for reflection this afternoon. When I was considering a topic for today, the phrase “time for reflection” really caught my attention. I noticed that it can be switched around to read “reflection for time”.

Time is the most precious commodity that we have, yet we sometimes treat it as though it is unlimited. As a chaplain, it is not strange for me to hear a student express feelings such as a desire to wish away today, this week, even this month, when things are not going so well. While sympathising with the stress and complications that often go hand in hand with student life, I always encourage students to resist that desire. Every day is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, one that we will never have again. Robert Burns summed that up wonderfully, in 1790, in his poem “Tam o’ Shanter”. As Burns put it,

“Nae man can tether time or tide.”

Although I believe that the poem refers to the story of a farmer and his wayward friends, that line encapsulates the certainty that time will run out eventually and will not wait for anyone or anything.

Last week, we celebrated Passover, the great festival of liberation. In the middle of the celebrations, we pause to do something very simple: count the days. From then, each day until the early-summer festival of Pentecost, we mention how many days have passed. Today is day 10. Our counting helps us realise the importance of every day, every week, every month. It helps us focus on the here and now, and reminds us to use our time well. It is so easy to forget that the moments in which we live become days, months, years.

An ancient Jewish source—the Book of Psalms—mentions that idea of counting days. The psalmist dwells on the reality that our lives are brief and filled with challenging times, and pass us by so very quickly. He then asks God to help us to count our days wisely.

Rabbi Dr Harvey Belovski explains that the psalmist means that, when we remember that the clock is ticking for all of us, we will be more likely to use our days to the full. And I believe that, when we reflect on how limited time is—when we remember how limited our own time is—that will help us use our time wisely and, indeed, give us more time for reflection.

Thank you.

## Topical Question Time

14:04

### Police Scotland (Estate)

**1. Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the Scottish Police Federation describing some of the buildings in the police estate as being “unfit for human habitation”. (S5T-01619)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Humza Yousaf):** Although the allocation of police resources, including for the police estate, is for the Scottish Police Authority and the chief constable to determine, we are protecting the police resource budget in real terms in every year of the current parliamentary session, delivering a boost of £100 million by 2021. Total Scottish Government funding for the SPA in 2019-20 is increasing by £42.3 million, bringing the annual policing budget to more than £1.2 billion. That also includes a 52 per cent increase to the capital budget. In its on-going investment in its estate, Police Scotland will continue to ensure that, in all cases, the focus will remain on a health and safety-first approach for all officers, staff and the public.

I will consider the SPF’s report in detail and will raise it in my discussions with the chief constable and the chair of the SPA tomorrow.

**Liam McArthur:** The Scottish Police Federation has uncovered conditions that nobody should have to work in—mushrooms growing in damp shower rooms, rat infestations, locked fire escapes without keys, furniture salvaged from skips and victims having to give officers lifts. Police officers are saying that the conditions are the worst that they have seen. Is the police estate being poorly managed, or has it not had the funding that it needs to get the job done?

**Humza Yousaf:** It is a legacy issue that predates Police Scotland. Of course, Police Scotland and the SPA have the responsibility to ensure that police officers’ places of work are compliant with health and safety legislation and, more than that, are good environments to work in, and they have said that they will do so. There is no doubting that the SPF’s deep dives into the police estate are a welcome examination and scrutiny of the estate across Scotland.

I will reflect on what Deputy Chief Constable Fiona Taylor has said in response to the report that Liam McArthur mentioned. She said:

“Work was undertaken immediately to remedy a number of concerns raised by the Scottish Police Federation last week, as the safety and wellbeing of our staff is a priority for Police Scotland. A small number of officers affected by property issues raised in Dunoon have already been moved

to temporary accommodation while improvement works are carried out. A range of options for Oban Police Station are being examined following HMICS recommendations last year.

The policing estate has been built up over the last century and we acknowledge some buildings fail to match current or future needs. We are prioritising the capital budget we have been allocated across a multitude of competing demands to achieve as much as we can, as quickly as we can.”

That shows the commitment that Police Scotland has to the estate right across Scotland. We understand that it is a Herculean task and we will continue to provide Police Scotland with budgetary support to help it with that task.

**Liam McArthur:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that response, although it begs the question as to why it took so long for those matters to come to the attention of those who have now taken decisions. The SPF warned that the appalling conditions present

“significant legal and reputational risk for individual officers, the SPA”

and Police Scotland. It believes that the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 have been breached and recommended that

“the SPA refer itself to the Crown Office”

for investigation. Does the cabinet secretary believe that that would be the right thing to do? Was Police Scotland illegally operating houses in multiple occupancy?

**Humza Yousaf:** I have dealt with the SPF on many occasions and we have a good working relationship. I will leave the SPF to have a conversation with the SPA and colleagues at Police Scotland on the best way forward.

I will not only raise the matter with the chief constable and the chair of the SPA tomorrow but have a conversation with the independent inspector of constabulary, Gill Imery, about the estate to see whether there is also a role for the independent inspector.

It is important to restate some of the context around what we are dealing with. We know that 75 per cent of the police estate is in sound condition and operates safely, with only minor deterioration having taken place. That leaves 25 per cent of the estate that needs repair and refurbishment. It is worth noting that 66 per cent of the Police Scotland estate predates 1980, and that 33 per cent predates 1950. It is a legacy issue. We are investing, and I have mentioned the capital uplift that we are providing. We are investing in local and national infrastructure as well as in refurbishment and repair.

That is not to dismiss the issue. The exchange with Liam McArthur has been a positive one. The issue must be raised. I will continue to listen to Police Scotland, which has mentioned the capital allocation on a number of occasions. We responded with an uplift and will continue to listen to what Police Scotland has to say in relation to the issue for future spending reviews.

**Donald Cameron (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Yesterday, I visited Oban police station, which is one of the police stations that the SPF report said should be closed immediately, and spoke to local officers. Will the cabinet secretary join me in recognising that, despite working in such horrific conditions, they remain committed to providing the highest levels of service? What message does he have for those officers, given that things have got so bad under his Government?

**Humza Yousaf:** In response to Mr Cameron's first question, I recognise the outstanding contribution of our police officers. Those are not mere words; we demonstrate that by action. Police officers in Scotland have received a 6.5 per cent pay increase. I say gently to Mr Cameron that, in England and Wales, where his party is in charge, police officers have received a derisory increase of 2 per cent. When it comes to recognising the good work that police officers do, actions are much more important than mere words.

We will continue to invest. As well as providing an uplift in the capital budget, we will protect the resource budget. Of course, it would be helpful if we got back the £125 million that we have had to pay the United Kingdom Government in VAT, which no force in England and Wales has had to pay. The Scottish Government has sent 15 letters to the UK Government on the matter, without it being resolved. If Mr Cameron can exert any influence on the UK Government in that respect—I suspect that any influence that he has with the Westminster Conservative Party will be minor—I ask him to stress that it is deeds rather than words that are needed.

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** I had intended to ask the cabinet secretary whether any progress had been made in getting back the £125 million, but I gather from his previous answer that that is not the case. Will he continue to pursue the matter?

**Humza Yousaf:** I will. It is a hugely important issue. The UK Government conceded that, in principle, the situation was unfair, but—*[Interruption.]* Liam Kerr is shaking his head, but the UK Government conceded that, in principle, the situation was unfair and gave back some of the VAT for one year, which we made sure was kept with Police Scotland. However, the UK Government has not paid back the £125 million

that it took off Police Scotland or the money that it took off the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Despite that, we will continue to invest in Police Scotland. As I said, we have increased the capital budget and protected the resource budget, but challenges are still faced. That is not to take away from the SPF's report or the deep dives that it is doing. There are issues that we must examine and explore. I will continue to meet the chief constable of Police Scotland and the chair of the Scottish Police Authority on a regular basis, as well as the SPF, and those issues will undoubtedly come out during the spending review discussions.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** On a number of occasions, the cabinet secretary has referred to the capital uplift in this year's budget, but it remains true that the capital funding for Police Scotland is the fifth lowest per employee of any police force in the UK. Indeed, the capital budget is just 3.5 per cent of Police Scotland's overall budget, whereas the capital budget of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service makes up around 10 per cent of that organisation's overall budget. Do the conditions that have been raised not reflect that poor level of capital funding? If the cabinet secretary rejects the benchmarks that I have cited, what benchmarks does he use when he reflects on the capital funding for the police force in Scotland?

**Humza Yousaf:** When I appeared in front of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing a number of months ago—I think that Daniel Johnson was there—I was asked about the capital allocation. I said that, along with my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work, I would listen to the arguments that Police Scotland put forward in relation to the capital spend. The argument that Police Scotland made in advance of the most recent spending review that its capital allocation did not reflect the size of the organisation was persuasive, so I spoke to the finance secretary, who recognised that that was the case, and we proposed an uplift in the capital allocation of 52 per cent. That is not an insignificant uplift.

When it comes to the next spending review, I will continue to have constructive discussions with not just the Opposition but, importantly, the chief constable of Police Scotland, the chair of the SPA and the SPF. I say gently to Daniel Johnson that, if we had gone with Labour's only proposal, there would have been a 3 per cent cut rather than an uplift in the police budget.

**John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the SPF's report shows the value of the workplace inspections that are undertaken by staff associations and trade unions and suggests that

there has been a singular failure of police management?

The cabinet secretary said that the problem predated the Government's term in office. He may or may not be aware that Lochboisdale police station was closed down as a result of an SPF inspection, and the chief constable of Strathclyde Police found himself at Airdrie sheriff court as a result of a series of failures to enforce a safe working environment. I hope that Mr Yousaf will take the opportunity to say to the chief constable of Police Scotland and the chair of the SPA that, if we do not resolve the deficiencies in the police estate very soon, it is inevitable that someone—probably the chief constable—will end up appearing in a sheriff court.

**Humza Yousaf:** Before we rush to take that particular step, I know that the chief constable enjoys a positive and constructive relationship with the SPF and therefore I have no doubt about his commitment to try to resolve this issue as best he can. I certainly have confidence in the chief constable and the chair of the SPA to work with staff associations to resolve the issue. They will also come to the Government to talk about the capital allocation and we will discuss that at future spending review discussions.

I agree with John Finnie about the importance of staff associations. The SPF regularly challenges the Government. It has every right to do that; its job is to represent its members and to pursue issues in the interests of its members. I have no issue with that whatsoever. I enjoy the relationship that I have with Calum Steele and with Andrea MacDonald, the chair of the SPF, and I will sit down with them to discuss their latest report. They know that my door is always open.

### **New Currency (Impact on Businesses)**

**2. James Kelly (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has carried out on the potential impact on businesses across Scotland of no longer using the pound. (S5T-01624)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work (Derek Mackay):** First, our proposals are to keep the pound in the immediate term. A Scottish National Party Government will take the steps that are necessary to enable the Scottish Parliament to authorise the preparation of a Scottish currency as soon as is practicable after independence.

The sustainable growth commission, which was established by the First Minister in her capacity as SNP leader, produced a detailed report on the financial, economic and regulatory requirements necessary for the transition to an independent currency. It engaged extensively with businesses

in developing its recommendations. It recommended the introduction of six tests to guide that transition, one of which is the financial requirements of Scottish residents and businesses. Those tests were backed by the SNP conference on Saturday.

Our position is clear—until a new currency can be safely and securely established in the interests of the economy as a whole, the currency of an independent Scotland should continue to be the pound sterling.

**James Kelly:** The principal objective of the SNP Government and the Scottish National Party is to achieve an independent Scotland where the pound would be immediately replaced by a new Scottish currency. People's mortgages, savings and pensions would need to be converted from sterling into a new currency, at a cost of up to 30 per cent. That would have a catastrophic impact on businesses and the economy, so why does the cabinet secretary think that it is credible to adopt a policy of dropping the pound, which would make Scottish families and businesses significantly worse off?

**Derek Mackay:** As Scotland's finance secretary, I was on the growth commission and I was in attendance at the party conference that endorsed the policy at the weekend. I was a co-author of the resolution, so I am delighted that it passed. What was passed is an economic strategy that shows the benefits of independence and how we can grow our economy and live in a fairer society.

I am delighted that even James Kelly is scenario planning for Scottish independence; I am delighted by that conversion. It is no wonder, given that all the most recent polls suggest that Scottish independence is more popular now, of course, and is gaining momentum. Incidentally, I think that it is quite healthy for parties to have such party democracy—perhaps the Labour Party would benefit from it as well.

We have set out our position on the currency, which is that we will continue with the pound, and we have set out the tests that will guide our decisions. It will be for an independent Scottish Parliament to decide when the time is right for such a change, based on the right economic position for Scotland.

The six tests are: fiscal sustainability; central bank credibility; the financial requirements of Scottish residents and businesses; sufficiency of foreign exchange and financial reserves; a fit to trade and investment patterns; and correlation with the economic and trade cycle. They are sensible tests to guide such a decision. I will take no lectures or lessons from the Labour Party on fiscal



credibility; it cannot even put together an Opposition budget, never mind run a country.

**James Kelly:** In addition to the disastrous proposals on currency, we know that the effect of the proposals of the SNP cuts commission would be a decade of austerity, piling cuts on to local communities. People and businesses want a Government that will start to deal with issues that matter rather than waste time on promoting another independence referendum. Will the cabinet secretary discard the proposals and focus on delivering a national health service that serves patients instead of leaving them on waiting lists, an education system that gives pupils proper subject choice and a rail system that puts passengers first and gets the trains running on time?

**Derek Mackay:** The Government is investing more in the NHS, in education and in rail than the Labour Party would have been. When we look at the small advanced economies around the world, what do we see that they have that makes them so successful and that we do not have? The answer is independence. It is with independence that we can grow our economy and have a fairer society.

However, let us talk about the day job and the current economic indicators. There is record low unemployment in Scotland right now, at 3.3 per cent, so we are outperforming the rest of the United Kingdom. On gross domestic product growth and increases in exports, Scotland is outperforming the rest of the United Kingdom. There is more investment in enterprise research and development, as well as productivity improvements. We are getting on with the day job and doing as much as possible with the devolved powers to build a stronger economy, but we could do even more with the powers and levers of independence. That is why we seek those powers for the Parliament—to get the best for our country, rather than be left in the hands of the Tories, who are the biggest threat to Scotland's economy right now.

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** Very simply, and for the benefit of those watching at home and those in the chamber, particularly James Kelly, who obviously needs to catch up, will the cabinet secretary confirm that the currency that the people of Scotland would use the day before an independence vote would be the same currency that they would use the day after it, the day after that and the day after that—namely, the pound? *[Interruption.]*

**Derek Mackay:** Much to the concern of the unionist Opposition, Bruce Crawford is correct. The currency will remain the pound upon independence, and that will change only when an independent Scottish Parliament endorses such a

change. Our policy is that we will support a change as soon as it can be done safely and securely and in the economic interests of the country. That would be determined by an independent Parliament when the time was right. However, we need the powers of independence to be able to match the best-performing economies around the world. They are independent, and that is what we seek for Scotland.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** It has been only three days since the vote at the SNP conference and already the cabinet secretary is in full retreat from the position that was set out at it. We know that for Scottish business the largest export market for goods and services is the rest of the United Kingdom. What estimate has been made of the extra transaction costs that will apply to Scottish businesses if they have a different currency operating here than operates in their major export market?

**Derek Mackay:** Murdo Fraser's weekend viewing was clearly not the SNP conference, which I was at and at which we went through in great detail our position, which I have outlined. It is that, on independence, we will be keeping the pound. Of course we can build our options as an independent country. We have set out the tests that we would apply to any potential change of currency and our preferred position. Importantly, we have also shown how our economic policies would be enhanced if we had the powers of independence. That would grow our economy, deliver greater fairness and empower us to make the right decisions for the people of Scotland. With independence, we would also build financial institutions that would advise the Parliament and the Government of the day, rather than being left to the vagaries of UK economic policy, which is disastrous for the people of Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** I apologise to Patrick Harvie and Willie Rennie—we do not have quite enough time for them to ask questions, because we have to move on to the next item of business.

## Music Tuition in Schools

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is an Education and Skills Committee debate on motion S5M-17059, in the name of Clare Adamson, on the committee's report "A note of concern: The future of instrumental music tuition in schools".

14:24

**Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP):** It is my pleasure to open the debate on behalf of the Parliament's Education and Skills Committee. Before I lay out the findings of our inquiry, I thank our clerks and everyone who took the time to give evidence to the committee, whether in writing, via social media, as part of our formal meetings or at one of our focus groups. I see that some of those people have joined us in the public gallery today.

The passion for learning an instrument was articulated by many of the young people we met, including those from the Scottish Youth Parliament. I highlight the contributions of Alice Ferguson and Catherine Mackie, who gave powerful evidence in the formal committee proceedings. I also thank the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. What a treat it was for committee members to hear its students perform for us. That occasion encapsulated perfectly why the committee was so keen to find a way forward to preserve for all pupils the opportunities that are created by a musical education.

I also pay tribute to all the people who are involved in delivering music education and instrumental music tuition throughout Scotland. The dedication that is shown by those to whom committee members spoke was inspiring, and it added to our determination to investigate and highlight their concerns.

In October, the committee opened its inquiry into instrumental music tuition in schools. We wanted to find out the extent to which charging for instrumental music tuition as part of the school curriculum acts as a barrier to pupils' participation. Our inquiry was launched in response to correspondence from the music education partnership group, which was brought together by the Scottish Government and is a successor to the instrumental music group and the instrumental implementation group. It brings together not only local authorities and others who have a stake in instrumental music tuition but also national musical, cultural and performing organisations. There was also a parliamentary petition on the matter, which my colleague Johann Lamont will cover in her closing speech.

The committee held focus groups with young people, practitioners and students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Gordon MacDonald and I attended a North Lanarkshire schools music group evening practice session at Coatbridge high school, where all pupils who are engaged with North Lanarkshire's bands and orchestras come together each week. We saw a wonderful variety of musical talent, including the now world-famous North Lanarkshire pipe band, whose performances in New York as part of tartan week went viral. I thank Mr Park, his staff and especially the pupils who gave their time to highlight the benefits of instrumental music tuition and participation that had been brought to them.

We should be clear about the distinction between instrumental music tuition and music education. As the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities noted in its response to our report, all pupils in Scotland, from primary 1 to secondary 3, are taught music by General Teaching Council for Scotland registered teachers as part of a broad general education. Instrumental music tuition is an additional service that is provided in all 32 local authority areas in Scotland, and it is delivered by instructors.

The committee's report focuses on instrumental music tuition, but it would be wrong to ignore its strong connection with and influence on music education in the senior phase of curriculum for excellence. The report made several recommendations to COSLA and the Scottish Government. Since our inquiry and the publication of our report, COSLA has issued local authorities with fresh guidance on instrumental music tuition, but the central question of a future funding solution for that service remains. I will therefore focus my remarks on the charging structure for instrumental music tuition, which my fellow committee members will attest was one of the most challenging issues to be raised in the evidence before us.

Although all 32 local authorities have agreed not to charge young people who are taking Scottish Qualifications Authority exams in music, the picture for pupils who have not yet chosen music as an exam subject is much more varied. Some local authorities do not charge at all, whereas others charge for instrument hire, for the tuition itself or for both. In one local authority area, pupils are charged £524 per annum for tuition, with no discount for their siblings, which is a prohibitive sum for many families.

We heard that, nationally, local authorities spend about £28 million a year on instrumental music tuition and collect roughly £4 million in fees from parents and carers, and those local authorities that do charge apply a plethora of different exemptions and discounts. Some provide a sibling discount for families, whereas others offer

exemptions or discounted fees only to those who are eligible for free school meals. I recommend that members read the annual survey that is collated by the Improvement Service, as well as the insightful evidence that was provided by Kenny Christie of heads of instrumental teaching Scotland, for more examples of the approaches that are taken in different local authorities.

The committee supports COSLA's guidance, which states that there should be no charges for those who are eligible for free school meals, but we recommend that there should be exploration of how other exemptions or concessions could be applied more consistently in order to mitigate the impact on hard-pressed families. We also recommend that local authorities give parents and carers the opportunity to pay in weekly or monthly instalments.

COSLA's guidance contains a section on engaging parents and carers, and it mentions as an example of good practice a comprehensive parents' information booklet that sets out the fees and exemption criteria in clear, accessible language. In its report, the committee recommends that local authorities communicate more clearly with parents and carers about the full range of costs and the exemptions and concessions that may be applicable. We hope that that commonsense approach will be adopted across Scotland.

Nevertheless, those recommendations seek only to mitigate the impact of charging. The committee's key recommendation is that instrumental music tuition should be, in principle, free of charge. We noted with interest that the Scottish Government's response to our report states:

"instrumental music tuition which is necessary to provide adequate preparation for SQA examinations should be provided free of charge."

I ask the cabinet secretary to say whether he agrees with those who gave evidence that

"adequate preparation for SQA examinations"

starts not in S4 but at a much earlier stage in a young person's musical career.

Throughout its evidence gathering, the committee encountered an inherent tension to do with the status of instrumental music tuition and whether, as COSLA argued, it should remain a discretionary, additional service or whether, as others argued, it is an intrinsic part of the curriculum and should therefore not be subject to charging. We state in our report:

"the explicit inclusion of instrumental music tuition in the core curriculum would have practical implications, which would need to be carefully considered. However, the benefits in protecting and enhancing the provision of music tuition in schools could far outweigh these considerations."

COSLA's response to that suggestion focuses on the practical and financial implications that it may have rather than on the potential benefits for pupils and for instrumental music tuition instructors, who could be provided with improved job security. COSLA's Stephen McCabe recognised the pressure on instructors when he gave evidence to the committee, stating:

"Councils are under pressure not just to charge for tuition but to reduce the number of music instructors. That is the simple reality. Some councils have reduced, or have savings options to reduce, the number of music instructors—that might involve instructors in instruments that are not particularly popular and where numbers are limited."—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 5 December 2018; c 16.]

The problem for instrumental music tuition is that, as tutor numbers continue to be cut, the quality of teaching could decline, through no fault of the tutors. Many witnesses, including John Wallace from the music education partnership group, said that this is a tipping point for instrumental music tuition in Scottish schools.

At the heart of the issue is the fact that, for as long as instrumental music tuition is considered to be outwith the core curriculum and is liable to other local authority budgetary pressures, there will be a risk of tutor numbers declining further. As they reduce, more and more large-group lessons will take place rather than one-to-one tuition being standard, while fees will continue to increase and drive away potential musicians and music teachers of the future. It is vital that we get this right, to ensure that our instrumental music teachers of the future have an opportunity to achieve their ambitions in the Scottish education system.

A potential solution that was proposed during the evidence sessions is the creation of a ring-fenced national scheme, similar to the youth music initiative, or YMI, to fund instrumental music tuition. The YMI's purpose is to deliver on a Scottish Government commitment that every school pupil in Scotland should be offered a year of free music tuition by the time they leave primary school, and it was universally praised in our deliberations. Although the committee is not persuaded that a national service could perform better than the local services and believes that instrumental music services should continue to be managed at a local authority level, we recognise that the youth music initiative is an example of good practice whereby a national objective has been achieved through partnership working with local authorities.

Stephen McCabe of COSLA said:

"Local authorities will always take pragmatic decisions in the best interests of their communities. If the offer of money were on the table, they would look at it and consider what was in the best interests of their communities."—[*Official*

*Report, Education and Skills Committee, 5 December 2018; c 6.]*

Other committee members will, no doubt, wish to reflect on the responses that our report received from COSLA and the Scottish Government.

In the final recommendation of our report, we say:

“there have been a number of inquiries, reports and strategies produced regarding instrumental music tuition over the last 20 years. While reaching broadly similar conclusions, responses to each have failed to address the ‘tipping point’ concerns regarding the future of IMT in schools.”

I recommend the report to members in the chamber, and I look forward to hearing the views of other members on how the recommendations can be followed through. I thank again the young people who have taken part and who are studying instrumental music in our schools. The decision to do so should not be based on whether a pupil's family can afford it.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the conclusions in the Education and Skills Committee's 1st Report, 2019 (Session 5), *A note of concern: The future of instrumental music tuition in schools* (SP Paper 450).

14:37

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (John Swinney):** I welcome the report from the Education and Skills Committee on instrumental music tuition in schools and the opportunity that the debate provides to air various questions that have been raised on the report's subject matter. I echo the thanks of the committee's convener to the various interested parties that gave evidence and contributed to the substantial report that we are now considering.

From the Government's perspective, the expressive arts are of great importance to Scotland's culture and economy. Participation in music and the arts can have a hugely positive effect on our children, young people and their families. Being involved in music and the arts provides children and young people with opportunities to be creative, develop their imaginations and experience inspiration and enjoyment. That can have a hugely significant positive effect on their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. Instrumental music tuition in schools is an important element of that participation in the arts and the Government fully supports the instrumental music tuition service.

An instrumental music service operates in every local authority area, and music education in Scotland has been highly regarded across the United Kingdom and internationally. That was

highlighted in the instrumental music group's 2013 report, “Instrumental music tuition in Scotland”, and members across the chamber will have witnessed the strength of the provision of instrumental music tuition around the country, through their engagement with schools in their areas and further afield.

I recently had the privilege of experiencing for myself a number of examples of the strength of that instrumental music provision. A few weeks ago, I attended the North Lanarkshire schools music groups' spring concert, which showcased the impressive talent and dedication of young people in North Lanarkshire, their teachers and music instructors. The outstanding evening at the Glasgow royal concert hall concluded with a performance by the North Lanarkshire schools pipe band, shortly before its seminal performance in Grand Central station in New York, in which the young people of North Lanarkshire and their outstanding instructors demonstrated the strength of instrumental music provision in Scotland.

I also recently attended the annual performance of the City of Edinburgh music school, which draws together young people studying at Flora Stevenson primary school and Broughton high school and is one of the funded music school arrangements around the country. I saw at first hand the depth of expertise and experience that the City of Edinburgh music school represents.

I also visited the music school of Douglas academy in Milngavie in Dunbartonshire, which attracts young people from around the country to contribute to the development of specialist music education. The school is a tremendous example of the strength and the formidable base of music education in Scotland.

I can fully understand, and I share, the concerns of young people, their parents and families, and those working in the sector, about any reduction in the quality or reach of such services in any part of Scotland.

As colleagues in the chamber will be aware, the Scottish education system is set up in such a way that decision making is devolved to the most appropriate level, enabling local education authorities to make choices that meet their local circumstances and needs. Local authorities decide how to provide instrumental music tuition depending on local circumstances, priorities and traditions. Local authorities are entrusted by statute with taking those decisions.

Despite the financial pressures that we have faced as a Government, we have treated local government fairly in the financial settlements that we have put in place. Within the context of the different positions adopted around the country, a number of local authorities—Dundee, Edinburgh,

Glasgow, Orkney, Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and the Western Isles—continue to provide instrumental music tuition free of charge to young people in their localities. Choices are made at a local level by individual local authorities. It is up to each local authority to decide how it deploys the resources that are available to it. I encourage local authorities to provide instrumental music tuition to pupils in their locality at no cost to the pupils involved.

While maintaining respect for the autonomy of our local authorities, the Scottish Government is committed to working collaboratively with partners to maintain instrumental music tuition in Scotland. Following a meeting with Professor John Wallace, the chair of the music education partnership group, in May last year I agreed to Scottish Government officials taking part in a working group, led by the music education partnership group, with representation from the Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, to seek solutions to ensure that instrumental music tuition remained accessible.

The working group secured a commitment from COSLA's children and young people board to a minimum standard of eligibility criteria for access to free instrumental music tuition for those in receipt of free school meals, and a restatement of the existing commitment to access to free instrumental music tuition for pupils undertaking SQA qualifications. Guidance for local authorities to consider when taking decisions on funding for instrumental music tuition was developed by the working group and published by COSLA on 25 February this year. The guidance encourages transparency and the involvement of pupils and parents in the decision-making process. It supports good practice in communicating decisions and offers good-practice examples and factors for consideration in the application of charges and concessions.

The heads of instrumental teaching Scotland and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland were consulted as the guidance was developed, and John Wallace has expressed confidence in the guidance on behalf of the music education partnership group.

I want to address a specific issue that was raised by the Education and Skills Committee, which is the statutory position regarding instrumental music tuition and a concern that there was a lack of clarity on the issue. The expressive arts, including music, are an essential part of the broad general education under curriculum for excellence. That can involve the learning of musical instruments on a whole-class basis. In addition, some children and young people will receive instrumental music tuition. Decisions relating to the provision of instrumental music

tuition are for education authorities, which have discretion in determining how to provide tuition, depending on local circumstances, priorities and traditions.

It is my firm view that, in making those decisions, local authorities should consider fully the range of benefits that learning a musical instrument can have for our children and young people, and the positive impact that it can have on wellbeing and attainment. It is the responsibility of local authorities to ensure that pupils are not prevented from learning a musical instrument because of their background, location, disability or financial circumstances.

Local authorities should take full account of the child-centred focus of curriculum for excellence. In doing so, they should recognise that, for some young people, learning a specific instrument will be an important part of their personalised learner experience—one that should provide them with the opportunities to maximise their individual potential.

With specific reference to preparation for an SQA qualification, the committee found that

“there is a lack of clarity regarding whether instrumental music tuition necessary to provide adequate preparation for SQA examinations ... can legitimately be subject to charging.”

Although there is no express statutory link between education authorities' charging powers and the qualifications framework, the acquisition by pupils of formal educational qualifications is clearly a fundamental principle of school education, as provided by education authorities. It is therefore my view that instrumental music tuition that is necessary to provide adequate preparation for SQA examinations must be provided free of charge.

Furthermore, I do not think that there is any dubiety in the guidance that is available. Indeed, at its meeting in November 2018, COSLA's children and young people board agreed that no young person or their family would be charged for instrumental music tuition when they are preparing for an SQA qualification. I welcome that commitment.

Although the provision of music education in schools is a matter for local authority decision making, the Scottish Government supports access to learning opportunities in music for children and young people through a range of measures. The national centres of excellence, four of which focus on music, and a number of which I have mentioned today, are funded through the local government settlement. The Scottish Government supports St Mary's Music School through the aided places scheme. Entry to the school is by audition and assessment, which are based on

musical ability and potential. Through the culture budget, we have provided almost £3 million since 2012 to Sistema Scotland and its big noise orchestras, which reach 2,500 children a week in Stirling, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee.

I am pleased that the committee has welcomed the Scottish Government's support for the youth music initiative as an example of good practice. Since 2007, we have invested £118 million in the youth music initiative, which has helped to ensure that every pupil is offered a year of free music tuition by the time that they leave primary school. Our investment in the YMI has made a significant impact, in helping young people in all 32 local authority areas to access music-making opportunities. Although the initiative is not—and never has been—intended to replace the local provision of instrumental music tuition, the youth music initiative impact findings, which were published on 8 March 2018, show that the YMI had engaged with more than 244,000 young people over the past year. The quality of evidence that supports the link between skills for learning, attainment and the YMI has also greatly improved.

In the light of the positive impact of the YMI, Scottish Government officials continue to work with Creative Scotland to ensure that the youth music initiative builds on its many successes and provides children with pathways into future progression routes, including through local authority instrumental music services.

It is clear that there is agreement across the political spectrum in Parliament about the importance of music education in general and of instrumental music tuition in particular. In its report, the Education and Skills Committee concluded:

“The Committee respects the democratic right of local authorities to take decisions about local expenditure and acknowledge the financial choices they face. However, the Committee believes in principle that music tuition should be provided free of charge in every local authority.”

I agree with that conclusion and urge local authorities to reflect on it. I express the Scottish Government's commitment to continue to work with partners to enhance and preserve instrumental music tuition throughout Scotland.

14:49

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I reiterate the tributes that the convener paid to all those who supported the committee in its work, and to all those who provided evidence, including the petitioners, people with specialist knowledge of music teaching in our schools, and the representatives of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, whose recent teaching experiences meant that they were particularly well informed about several of the key issues that the committee

was investigating. I also associate myself with the cabinet secretary's remarks in acknowledging the tremendous talent of our youngsters in Scotland.

Music, in whatever form, should be at the very heart of any curriculum—not just because of its educational and social benefits, but because it has the potential to transform lives. Members, the convener of the committee and the cabinet secretary have already mentioned the very special qualities of the youth music initiative and Sistema Scotland. All the evidence to the committee and all the evidence that has been available in numerous reports over the years confirms that point. Music has the power to bring together families, schools and whole communities.

Additionally, music encourages self-discipline and, very often, the pupil's ambition to do well in other subjects, too. At a time when raising attainment is a central priority for Parliament, nothing could be more important than finding educational channels that motivate our young people to the highest degree.

Music is, therefore, definitely not to be treated as an optional extra. That would, as Nicola Benedetti has suggested, be a situation that would do untold damage to the cultural fabric of Scotland. I could hardly believe the recent comments about instrumental music tuition that were made by a headteacher in England, who said:

“Music is a hobby, it is not a career. It will not be supported by the school. I will not allow children to leave school to take graded exams. We are only supporting children's learning.”

I have seldom read such a depressing statement from someone in education—in particular, a headteacher who is clearly very ignorant when it comes to the real meaning of education. I was glad to see that that headteacher was in serious trouble on social media.

It is in the spirit of the real meaning of education that we should be debating this afternoon: that tone has been set by the convener and the cabinet secretary. We know that, in principle, music is firmly embedded in curriculum for excellence, but we also know that provision—especially instrumental tuition—is extremely patchy across Scotland. That is often related to the costs of provision, hence the committee's concerns, which were largely a reflection of the wide variation among local authorities about when additional tuition is and is not to be provided free. I was very pleased to hear the cabinet secretary say that that is a matter on which all local authorities should reflect.

One of the biggest worries for the committee is the fact that some councils see music tuition as a relatively easy target for budget cuts and as a

means of generating additional income, perhaps to subsidise other school services. I think that we all feel distinctly uncomfortable about that. That led us into the realm of debate about what should be discretionary and what should be compulsory in a curriculum, which is a debate that we will not move far from. I am interested in the current legal challenge to the interpretation of what “free education provision” means in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The legal terms might not always be exactly the same as what we politicians and teachers see as being genuine commitment to the curriculum.

The committee was strongly concerned about the extent of cuts that have disproportionately affected disadvantaged communities, and about the fact that there is wide variation in the proportions of schools’ pupils taking instrumental music tuition. The variation is between 4 per cent and 26 per cent, which no one could argue is insignificant, and implies the degree to which different local authorities have different priorities. Personally, I was very much taken by the commitments that have been made by local authorities including Glasgow City Council, which have managed to avoid costs being covered by fees being paid by parents.

The disparities between better-off and the less-well-off communities worried the committee greatly—not least because young people in our most disadvantaged communities already have it tough in other aspects of their education experience, whether in literacy and numeracy rates, the attainment gap, subject choice or extra-curricular opportunity. The issue received a great deal of attention during the committee’s meeting with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, given the reports that we had heard from trainee music teachers about the difficulties that they had observed in schools in more disadvantaged communities.

We have been told that it might not be possible to avoid additional charges altogether, and I think that we must accept that, up to a point, given the nature of some of the tuition. If that is the case, and if we accept the evidence that was provided to the committee that local authorities and music teachers do not want to rely on additional support from private means, however philanthropic it might be, we have to consider, if additional money can be accessed, other options that might allow councils to provide greater bursary support. As far as I can see, partnership agreements that would involve the music industry and music professionals have not yet been tested. I compliment the work that has been done through the music education partnership group funding, but I think that I am right in saying that that funding will finish in September 2019. I would be interested to hear the cabinet secretary’s views on what his commitment

might be beyond that. Partnership commitments have been very helpful to the whole debate.

I want to flag up an issue relating to provision of piping instruction, which is another issue that needs a resolution. Qualified piping instructors made an offer to provide free tuition to four local schools in one geographical area, but because they were not employed by the relevant local authority and were, therefore, not registered with that local authority, they were not permitted access to the schools. That has meant that several interested young people lost out—as their parents did—on the opportunity to take advantage of free tuition. That is surely not acceptable practice. Will the cabinet secretary consider that point, maybe with something in mind that would permit local authorities to make use of registered qualified instructors who have protection of vulnerable groups scheme qualification and recognised tuition credentials?

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** At the weekend, I talked to a piper who made me aware of that issue and how the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association curriculum has moved further in recent years to help with that particular situation so that it does not happen again.

**Liz Smith:** That is a very encouraging point to make—although I am slightly concerned that there are still local authorities that have people with that expertise on their doorstep, but in which a mechanism for allowing them to teach is not available.

Another issue that the committee faced, of course, was the uneasy balance between recognising the democratic rights of local authorities to make decisions and ensuring that national education policy ambitions are delivered. We think that that balance has been made more difficult by the heavy constraints on local authority finances. The COSLA briefing makes that clear. Local authorities are quite right to point out that they are democratically accountable to their communities, and are legally required to set balanced budgets. Therefore, the topic is not easy for us to deal with, but it is nonetheless important. We have to embrace free tuition.

I will draw my remarks to a close.

Many important aspects of the debate are perhaps not easy to define. The clear value of instrumental music tuition is a crucial part of the education experience of all our young people, no matter who they are. That is plain from the evidence. The statistics tell a story about the decline in numbers of pupils taking instrumental music tuition. That is why the committee’s report is so important. We can harness all the concerns of

the cross-party group on music and of all interested parties to do something about that.

14:58

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** I suspect that there will be little dispute this afternoon about the benefits of instrumental tuition and the desirability of making it widely available for young people. After all, in the evidence that the committee received, the point was unanimously made, as we have heard, that instrumental tuition is an enriching element of any young person's education, and is certainly not just about the facility to play the instrument.

The music education partnership group summed things up in evidence. It mentioned

"enhanced mental and physical health ... transferable skills such as team working, resilience, discipline ... problem solving, evaluating, abstract thinking, physical and fine motor coordination."

That group and other witnesses quoted neurological research in their support for tuition.

To be honest, my belief in the power of instrumental tuition to enrich springs from the rather more straightforward source of my experience with three daughters, all of whom learned an instrument at school and participated in wind bands and youth orchestras. I spent a lot of hours, as it seems the cabinet secretary does these days, listening to popular classical pieces being played with—I have to be honest—widely varying skill, but I never doubted for a moment the benefits of participation for my daughters. Above all, it was clear to me how much fun they were having taking part in music, although with hindsight, I can say that I probably knew only the half of the fun, and am all the better for that ignorance.

If there was any doubt of the benefits of tuition, it was eloquently argued—as the convener has told us—both in the focus groups that the committee held with young people, and in the powerful evidence that was given to the committee by Alice Ferguson and Catherine Mackie, who are members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.

When my daughters were studying music, it was before I had the benefit of an MSP's salary. I was in a reasonably well-paid job, but I know that, with three children, I would not have been able to afford tuition for all of them in the charging schemes that now exist in many local authorities.

Only one of my three daughters studied music to higher and on to university level, but I am in no doubt that their tuition was, and that they would see it as, a core part of school for all of them.

The truth is that we spend too much time focusing our schools debate solely on attainment

in exams, whether we do so to criticise schools performance or to defend it, and not enough time recognising that schools and education are about much more than that—I admit that I am as guilty of that as the next MSP—and that sport and music opportunities outwith the core exam curriculum should both be part of that.

That was a core point of debate in the committee, and it remains unresolved. There is clearly an argument that instrumental tuition outside study for SQA exams should fall under the heading

"adequate provision of free education",

which is a statutory responsibility for local authorities, but authorities and the Scottish Government contend that that is met by music lessons in the curriculum, and that instrumental tuition is discretionary and therefore extra.

I am not sure that the cabinet secretary's statement this afternoon added much clarity on that, but I understand that the interpretation is to be tested in court. That will be an interesting judgement.

I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary accept the report's recommendation that instrumental tuition should, in principle, be free. However, I also agree with the report, and with COSLA, that we cannot ignore the financial circumstances in which councils find themselves. As the COSLA briefing for the debate tells us, core council budgets have decreased in real terms by £1.64 billion since 2011-12.

Councillor McCabe of COSLA was very clear in his evidence to committee. He said:

"The fundamental issue is not ring fencing funding or protecting services; it is the chronic underfunding of local government over the past 10 years, which the Parliament has presided over."—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 5 December 2018; c 5.]

If I can be forgiven for a partisan moment in a committee debate, I remind my friend and colleague Councillor McCabe that Labour MSPs have sought repeatedly to address that underfunding of councils in every budget over 10 years, but the Government has failed to listen. Even the representatives of councils—including Glasgow City Council—that have, as the cabinet secretary said, sustained free tuition, were clear about the financial difficulties that they face in doing so.

**John Swinney:** In the interests of a decent tenor of debate, I will pass by Mr Gray's remarks about the Labour alternative budgets that we have experienced. I have considerable experience of looking at Labour alternative budget positions, and on many occasions they have involved no increase in resources for local government.



However, can Mr Gray address the fact that seven local authorities are providing free instrumental music tuition, which rather undermines his central argument that it is all about money.

**Iain Gray:** If Mr Swinney would have listened, he would have heard me say that the Glasgow representative, Councillor Cunningham—who is from the cabinet secretary's party—made the point that, in order to sustain free tuition, Glasgow City Council had to take extremely difficult financial decisions. The councillor recognised that the cuts to councils' core funding had made the position difficult for other local authorities.

**John Swinney:** Will the member give way?

**Iain Gray:** No.

My council—East Lothian Council—is proud of the breadth, depth and quality of its schools' musical traditions. However, when this year it faced squeezed budgets across areas including social care, and had to raise charges, for example in council house rents, it felt that it had no option but to introduce charging, albeit that it did so with a generous scheme of discounts and bursaries. My colleagues on the council know how disappointed I was by that decision, but I also understand the agonies that they went through in balancing a budget that is inadequate for the county's needs. Happily, early reports indicate that East Lothian has not had the significant fall in take-up that the committee heard has happened elsewhere.

I would be happy for instrumental tuition to be made free across Scotland through central Government funding being made available to allow councils to achieve that, but that was not the committee's recommendation or COSLA's desire, which means that the only possible way to fix the postcode lottery in affordable access to instrumental tuition is to provide again proper and adequate core funding for our councils.

This is not about creating a nation of virtuosos; it is about enriching the education experience of our young people and creating a nation of rounded, confident and fulfilled Scots, wherever they go to school and whatever their background. I argue—the committee report also makes this clear—that whatever the fiscal constraints or the desirability of local decision making, we must find a way to protect that aim.

15:06

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** I found the inquiry incredibly interesting. As one of only two people at my primary school who did not take up even the recorder in primary 3, I have learned quite a lot in the past few months.

It is worth starting by saying that we have made progress towards reducing inequality in our education system. As the First Minister highlighted last week, the attainment gap between those from the wealthiest areas and those from the poorest areas has narrowed a little by some measures. However, there is still some way to go.

In Scotland today, the chances are that people who are from a more deprived background will have fewer opportunities than those from more privileged backgrounds. The welcome fact that more pupils are attaining highers or going to university does not change the fact that deprivation continues to shape young people's lives. People's hobbies, interests, career choices and self-development are all impacted by their socioeconomic background and that of their community.

One of the most striking—but unsurprising—findings of our committee inquiry was that having instrumental music tuition is one of the opportunities that pupils from less privileged backgrounds are increasingly missing out on. That is an area where inequality is growing. The huge growth in fees for music tuition—in some cases to more than £500 per instrument per child—means that many young people are priced out of learning an instrument.

As has been mentioned, some of the most powerful evidence that we received was from West Lothian—from the council and from a local MSYP and musician. After a significant increase in fees, West Lothian saw a predictably significant drop in the number of pupils who take up an instrument, and we found that that drop was overwhelmingly among pupils from less privileged backgrounds. That was an immediate and significant widening of inequality, rather than a narrowing.

We heard estimates that some 100,000 young people want to learn an instrument but feel—or are—priced out of doing that. As fees go up across the country, that number is likely to grow and is growing. Even during our inquiry, the number grew.

As wages continue to stagnate—they are still lower than they were before the financial crisis of a decade ago—and with the continuation of austerity, it is no surprise that many families cannot afford hundreds of pounds in fees per child for learning an instrument. Alice Ferguson, the Linlithgow MSYP who gave evidence to the committee, described the trend as a return to Victorian-era inequality levels. In her school, she saw that pupils from more privileged backgrounds could continue to be part of the school orchestra, whereas those from more deprived backgrounds had to drop out.

The issue is not just about instrumental tuition. Learning about music as a subject is intertwined with learning an instrument. As the committee report highlights, learning to play an instrument is key to a better understanding of music education in the classroom. The distinctions that we heard councils draw around fee exemptions in relation to those who take up music as a subject were, in many cases, simply unconvincing, particularly given the years of practice that young people have with their instrument. That practice typically starts in primary school and convinces many young people to take up music as an assessed subject once they reach the senior phase.

Each local council has its own levels of fees and set of concessions. As has been mentioned, some provide instrumental music tuition entirely free of charge, whereas others charge fees of up to or more than £500. Although some use fee income to subsidise the cost of providing free places, concession schemes and so on do not ensure that all who cannot afford to access the service can do so. The debate that we have on means testing and universalism is a perennial one, and we are all familiar with the issues, which apply just as much here as they do in other areas.

As a supporter of local democracy and the equal legitimacy of any locally elected body to that of the Parliament, I am not convinced that a centralising move around fee setting or, indeed, funding would be helpful. Given that, the onus is on the Greens and me to propose our alternative solution, which I will come to in a minute.

First, I will raise a point that many witnesses made and which is important in the context of concessions and fee exemptions. As the committee heard, it is often those families who are just above the income threshold for support who are being squeezed out. Those are not wealthy families—their incomes just are not quite at the point at which support would kick in. They very much deserve support, but a threshold has to be set somewhere when such structures are set up.

I do not put the blame for the situation solely at the feet of local councils—I do not think that any member here does. Although I question the decisions that some councils have made, particularly in relation to the value—or lack thereof—that many place on music tutors in comparison with other staff, I recognise that councils have faced significant cuts since 2010. The Greens have worked to put additional funding back into local services, but a lot of work still has to be done if we are even to get back to where we were a decade ago.

Councils have faced cuts while having little power to raise their own revenue. Even after the end to the council tax freeze, the Scottish Government sets a cap on how much councils can

vary it, and that is subject to annual budget negotiations in this Parliament. The Greens have been clear that councils need not only more money from central Government to undo the austerity of the previous decade, but the powers and ability to raise their own revenue. Only then can they ensure that local services such as music tuition are properly funded and open to all.

I do not think that any of us believes that councils are innately hostile to the provision of instrumental music tuition. What came out of the evidence was a question of priorities. Some councils simply said to us that they have to either cut the instrumental music service or increase fees in it, or cut something else, whether that be in adult social care or additional support needs, for example. Those are the incredibly unpopular decisions that councils have to make under the current financial situation.

I hope that we can move forward. I hope that we can all recognise the indisputable benefits of instrumental music tuition and that tackling the growing inequality should be a priority here in Parliament and in councils across Scotland.

15:13

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** No matter how many and how long certain long-suffering Shetland teachers tried, I was no star pupil when it came to music—frankly, the recorder was beyond me—so I am in awe of those who have genuine musical talent. I am talking about young people such as 13-year-old Ashley Hay, who won the Shetland young fiddler of the year award at the Mareel venue in Lerwick on Saturday; 10-year-old Evie Williamson, from Whalsay, who won the young fiddler junior and traditional junior trophies; and Gracie Gowans-Little, who was named the intermediate young fiddler trophy winner.

Young people have taken part in Shetland's young fiddler of the year awards since 1982. The list of those who have won over that period is a "Who's Who" not just of Shetland traditional music, but of Scottish traditional music.

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Tavish Scott:** I will make some progress first, if the member will forgive me.

A few weeks ago, Alasdair Allan, Liam McArthur and I hosted a reception on the islands. That evening, we had Chris Stout, Andrew Gifford and Ross Cooper playing for the assembled company. They all went through the Shetland educational system, they all received individual musical tuition

lessons in Shetland and they are all extremely talented.

The point about this debate, which others have reflected on already, is that the best will always succeed, but those who are not quite so gifted or able will not. Those who have that talent—Ashley Hay certainly has it, and, if she wants, she will have a glittering musical career in which she will play to audiences not only in Shetland but much further afield—will succeed and will make it through the rough and tumble of the academic pursuit of their chosen profession, but that is not the case for others. The figures in the committee report reflect that.

Paying for that individual tuition, as is now happening, is augmented by something that no one has mentioned yet, which is private tuition. That raises some challenges, not least in relation to those who cannot afford to pay—mums and dads who have enough pressures already. The fact is that not only in my part of Scotland but in many other parts, private individual tuition, not only in traditional fiddle playing but across the spectrum of musical choice, is the reality for those who want to get on.

The wider picture is the fact that the basis of this country's musical heritage is people playing the fiddle, the pipes and the harp, of course, as well as singing. That heritage began long ago, when music arguably mattered more than it does today. That is why this debate is important. The fight to ensure that the traditional fiddle was taught in schools was led by a number of venerable Shetlanders who believed in the cultural significance of music and its importance to Shetland and, indeed, Scotland, and who believed that young people should be encouraged to play the fiddle. For example, the late Tom Anderson had to fight with the SQA to have fiddle recognised as a national qualification. That makes me puzzled about why the SQA grade 7 university entrance qualification that included a 25-minute performance has now been downgraded to a grade 5 university entrance qualification with a 15-minute performance. Does that say something about how we are progressing music in our education system today?

Since 2003, traditional fiddle has had formal musical grades, as part of the strings and harp syllabus. Today, charging for individual tuition is a reality, and Iain Gray is right to say that the only way forward in that regard is for a chunk of money to be allocated from somewhere. That analysis is reasonable. However, the consequence of charging, in Shetland and elsewhere, has been a decline in the number of people taking individual music tuition and a decline in the length of the lessons. In Shetland and elsewhere, 45 minutes used to be allocated for a lesson, but now only 25

minutes or some other variant of that is. Just ask teachers what that means in relation to the teaching of music. An advanced higher requires a 15-minute performance. If an average lesson is 25 minutes long, how can even the best music teacher ensure that his or her pupils are ready for that exam? That length of lesson means that passing the exam relies on doing the work out of class time. It means private tuition and so on.

There are questions not only about the charging regime but about what is happening in our schools. We must also consider the changes to school timetables. The lunch break is rather less than it was. Indeed, the lunch hour does not exist in most schools, whether because of the asymmetric timetable or other changes. All the teachers who used to give their time to put on the school concerts and performances that Iain Gray mentioned are finding it hard to fit that work in these days.

Music is Scotland. It is certainly Shetland. If that appreciation of why music matters is not nurtured and encouraged, that has logical consequences because, as young people become Scotland's future, there will be less concert going, less appreciation of live performances and less music buying. Scotland needs to remember its history. Music is part of that, and part of this debate is about that, too.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** We now move to the open debate. Speeches of six minutes, please.

15:19

**Jenny Gilruth (Mid Fife and Glenrothes) (SNP):** I thank the Education and Skills Committee clerks for all their help in bringing together the committee's report, and everyone who gave evidence to the committee.

Eight years ago, researchers at McGill University in Montreal established, for the very first time, that dopamine is released in response to music. They also established that dopamine transmission was higher when the participants were listening to music that they enjoyed. That perhaps accounts for why my partner and I were listening to "I Want to Break Free" by Queen on the way into work this morning. The point is that music makes us feel good.

Under curriculum for excellence, there are eight broad curriculum areas. As the cabinet secretary has mentioned, music is delivered through the expressive arts, which are grouped together with art and design, dance and drama. Instrumental music tuition, however, is separate from the teaching of music in class, so it is important to say that it is additional to the experiences and outcomes that children will already be taught. That

said, it is fair to say that it would be almost impossible to pass a qualification in music without tuition—either within or outwith school. That point has to be considered within the current educational debate, which is centred strongly on equity. I am glad that the cabinet secretary confirmed that no charges will apply to SQA pupils for that reason.

As Iain Gray mentioned, the committee heard powerful evidence from young people, including two members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Alice Ferguson and Catherine Mackie. Ms Ferguson advised the committee that, because of music tuition

“I have become more resilient, confident and open minded in everything that I do. From a mental health point of view, I have benefited from the creativity, and feeling that I am part of a community—for example, part of a band—is really good for my mental health.”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 7 November 2018; c 7.]

Indeed, as Councillor Chris Cunningham of Glasgow City Council told us, part of the reason why that council has kept music tuition free was that

“It is recognised that music has wider benefits in terms of literacy, cognitive development and language development. The additional benefits that arise from it are at the core of why we regard it as important in the curriculum and why it has been so regarded for years.”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 21 November 2018; c 3.]

As we know in Scotland, 32 different local authorities can have 32 different approaches to delivering services. The committee heard evidence of a lack of uniformity in the application of exemptions or concessions, with certain local authorities offering sibling discounts, for example. Kirk Richardson, the convener of the EIS’s instrumental music teacher network, told the committee:

“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.”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 14 November 2018; c 14.]

I pressed COSLA on that point, particularly in relation to free school meals entitlement. I was glad to hear that COSLA’s children and young people board has agreed that free school meals entitlement is the minimum exemption criterion in all local authorities. However, when pressed for a view on uniformity in relation to exemptions, Councillor Steven McCabe advised me:

“We simply represent the views of our members—it is not our job to tell our members what to do—and many councils expressed strong views on that issue.”—[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 5 December 2018; c 8.]

That is the inherent tension for the committee’s work, and it is a political point. Do we say that local authorities are democratically accountable for

taking decisions at a local level—the principle of localism—or do we believe in principle that music tuition should be provided free of charge in every local authority? The committee was of the view that the latter was of greater importance. On equity, it is difficult to argue against that view when some local authorities make music tuition free, while others charge up to £524 a year to deliver it.

Critics might argue that all children are entitled to music education through the expressive arts area of the curriculum, and I accept that argument. Nevertheless, if a child wants to progress to a qualification level, there is a strong argument they will be disadvantaged if they do not have access to music tuition outwith mainstream class hours. Ahead of today’s debate, I asked a member of my staff—who is significantly younger than I am—whether she studied music when she was at school. She told me no, and that she had been told that she was not good enough to study music at school.

That brings me neatly to a word that we do not like to talk about in education nowadays: aptitude, or ability. The committee heard evidence that councils still provide access to music tuition predicated on ability. Indeed, the latest Improvement Service survey records that 16 local authorities use some form of selection procedure or aptitude test for those wishing to undertake instrumental music tuition. As a result, the committee recommended that

“aptitude tests, which have a number of legitimate uses, should not be used as the sole basis for selecting pupils for instrumental music tuition and ... local authorities”

should

“avoid doing so in future”.

When asked to respond to that point, COSLA advised

“There is no indication what secondary basis the Committee is suggesting. It is possible that such an action would risk accusations of being inequitable if those with the most aptitude are overlooked.”

That response from COSLA is somewhat unhelpful. If pupils do not have the opportunity to try a musical instrument, how can they possibly develop an aptitude? Far from disadvantaging the most able, as argued by COSLA, the current system disadvantages those with least ability. In many instances, those children will have the least access to music outwith school—for example, if their parents cannot afford private tuition.

Music tuition in school is an experience that many young people across the country continue to enjoy in addition to their core studies in music through the expressive arts. Notwithstanding that, the varying levels of charges and exemptions that are often applied inconsistently can mean that some children miss out. I very much hope that

COSLA will consider its role seriously in addressing how that inequality can be rectified to benefit the musical talents of all Scotland's pupils.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind members who want to speak in the debate that it is a good idea, as a preliminary, to press their request-to-speak button. I will not say who it is who has not done that.

15:25

**Alison Harris (Central Scotland) (Con):** For the record, I had pressed my button, so it was not me.

I am pleased to speak in the debate, as it addresses an issue that is close to my heart. When I think of the joy that learning to sing and play music has brought to my family, I realise that I have witnessed at first hand the benefits that music tuition can bring to children. Therefore, I am deeply concerned by the growing trend of charging for the provision of instrumental music tuition.

George Kelly, the former head of instrumental music services at East Dunbartonshire Council, recently said:

"there is no other single activity which can have such a profound effect on as many areas of development as learning to play an instrument."

It is a skill that lasts a lifetime. Instrumental music tuition can also lead to diverse social development, as it allows children to make new friends thanks to the extensive list of extracurricular activities that goes with it.

We must also consider the advantages of music tuition for wider society and the economy. Kirk Richardson of the Educational Institute of Scotland highlighted that Scotland currently accounts for 11 per cent of the UK's live music revenue. He pointed out that music tourism tops up Scotland's economy by £280 million a year and supports more than 2,000 full-time jobs. That did not happen overnight. The generations of Scottish children who have grown up learning to play instruments have all contributed to our society. The benefits extend far beyond the realm of music in schools, as the committee has acknowledged in its report.

However, although music education is a part of the core curriculum, instrumental music tuition is not. That is why I am so concerned about charging. From 2016-17 to 2017-18, the number of children learning to play an instrument fell by almost 1,300. That coincided with increases in the level of fees for tuition.

As we have heard, councils such as Glasgow City Council and the City of Edinburgh Council provide instrumental music tuition to pupils for free. Less than 40 miles away from those cities,

Clackmannanshire Council now charges £524 for a year of music tuition, which is roughly equivalent to £14 per school week. That is double the level that the council charged last year. Equity is a defining principle of the curriculum for excellence, but it is clear that that is not being represented in instrumental music tuition.

Despite the fact that the cost is a problem for many parents, many councils charge for instrumental tuition, and we have heard that several local authorities are increasing their fees. I realise that such decisions are not taken lightly, but they have serious consequences. Those charges affect people from the most deprived backgrounds. I acknowledge that systems are in place to provide tuition for disadvantaged children, but as Kirk Richardson of the EIS pointed out, a stigma tends to be attached to such provision, with the result that children who are eligible are not coming forward, which is creating an instrumental musical attainment gap.

Elsewhere, Councillor Dodds of West Lothian Council said that there had been an 80 per cent fall in the number of primary school children taking up music tuition since the council began charging this year, while John Wallace, who is the chair of the Scottish Government's music education partnership group, said that the situation in Clackmannanshire would result in large slices of local culture, such as the Clackmannan district brass band, disappearing in the future.

Families have written to councils; the EIS has warned of dramatic falls in the number of music teachers; and there has been a 42 per cent fall in the number of dedicated primary school music teachers since 2011. The picture is bleak. I share the committee's concern that, if no action is taken on the issue, the flow of talent from Scotland's schools into bands and orchestras and back into education will suffer in the coming years and decades.

Subject choice is narrowing—I know that that is the topic of tomorrow's chamber debate, but with subject choice narrowing, the arts are often among the first to go. It is therefore important that we ask ourselves what kind of education system we are building.

Will we ignore our leading musicians, who have contributed greatly to Scotland's culture and have benefited vastly from instrumental music tuition? They are the ones who are warning us that the situation is worse than ever before. Will Scotland become a country where all children take the same four or five subjects at higher, where they do not play any instruments because tuition is too expensive and where our music and arts teachers are no longer needed or wanted?

That is not a Scotland that I want to see and it is not a Scotland that needs to become a reality, but if we let these charges and the variation across the country continue, I am afraid that it is the Scotland that we are going to get.

15:30

**Tom Arthur (Renfrewshire South) (SNP):** I remind members that I am a member of the Musicians Union and was formerly a freelance private instrument teacher. I am also the convener of the cross-party group on music.

It is a bittersweet experience for me to take part in the debate. It is sweet because it gives me an opportunity to talk about music, but it is unfortunate, in that this excellent Education and Skills Committee inquiry has been prompted by legitimate and serious concerns regarding the provision of instrumental music services across Scotland. I put on record my thanks to the committee for producing a considered, thoughtful and serious piece of work. I also recognise the contribution of all those who gave evidence to the committee, both orally and in writing—particularly the EIS and the music education partnership group, with which I have had the pleasure of engaging at the meetings of the cross-party group on music, where the question of music education and instrumental services has become a standing item on the agenda.

A number of themes are emerging in our deliberations. One is about local and national responsibility; another is about the instrumental and intrinsic value of music; and another is about music education and instrumental education. I will take each theme in turn.

On local and national responsibility, COSLA and local authorities have made legitimate and understandable points, and I understand that they face decisions that are difficult both in purely budgetary terms and politically, given the multifarious demands and competition for resources that they face. However, I echo a point made by the cabinet secretary. Local authorities in different parts of Scotland—including in Renfrewshire, in my own constituency—have demonstrated that they are capable of delivering instrumental music services without charge. What can be learned from that is that it is possible and I hope that other local authorities will engage with Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow City Council and other relevant local authorities to understand how they have been able to deliver those services without charge. I respect local democracy and I would not wish to see the imposition of a national music agency, which would undermine that, although I await with interest the outcome of the legal case with regard to the 1980 act.

From my subjective point of view, I see instrumental music tuition as part of music education and indeed as part of the core curriculum. I do not believe that instrumental education can be separated from music education any more than physical activity can be separated from physical education in a high school or primary school setting. I believe that if PE consisted only of watching or discussing sport, people would legitimately say that that was not physical education. Much the same argument applies to instrumental education and music education.

In music education, historiography, composition and listening skills are all important, but they are part of a broader holistic approach. The ultimate endeavour in all forms of musical education is to be able to perform and play. There are many disciplines—I say that as someone who has studied musicology and has a master's degree in composition.

Any common sense definition of music would be that it is the process of listening to aural phenomena or attending a concert or any sort of music-making event, but it is not sustainable to suggest that the art of performing can somehow be separate from that.

The final point that I want to discuss is one of the most contentious issues, and one that I struggle with—that of the instrumental and intrinsic value of music. Many policy makers, particularly those who are trying to persuade a sceptical audience, will often adduce the various additionalities that come through music education. Many of them have been articulated this afternoon, in the committee's report, in the "What's going on now?" report by the music education partnership group and in the EIS's "Change the Tune" instrumental music charter. Those are all valid arguments but, fundamentally, if the only argument for instrumental music services is that they can improve attainment in other areas, that leaves open the possibility that, in future, should some better means be identified, that would vitiate the argument. There would no longer be an argument for instrumental music services if those outcomes and results could be achieved by alternative means. That is why it is incredibly important that we continue to argue for the intrinsic value of music as something that enriches us.

One of the most powerful accounts of the value of music that I have found was when I read an account by a palliative care nurse of the reflections of people at the end of their lives on what their regrets were. Their regrets were not, "I wish I'd had a bigger car," or, "I wish I'd spent more hours at work." Instead, they were things such as, "I wish I'd spent more time with my family", "I wish I'd learned a language," and, "I wish I'd learned to

play a musical instrument.” If we give a young person the gift of the ability to play a musical instrument, they will keep that for the rest of their lives. There is no more beautiful or worthwhile gift that educators can give, which is why we should support instrumental music services and instrumental music tuition for all young people in Scotland.

15:37

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am pleased to take part in the debate, and I thank the committee for all its work in producing the report.

Parliament has considered the provision of instrumental music tuition a number of times, but recent reports show that the service is under greater pressure than ever. Budgetary pressures on local authorities mean that councils face difficult choices year after year. Every year, instrumental music tuition comes up in budget proposals in my region, and I am sure that the same happens across Scotland. In the past year, Clackmannanshire Council, which is in my region, has increased the fee to £524 a year, which is the highest in Scotland. That annual uncertainty is a huge pressure for those who are employed in the profession and is not fair on pupils and their families, who each year face uncertainty as to what instrumental tuition will cost.

**Stuart McMillan:** Does Claire Baker accept that budget pressures are not a new phenomenon and that they have been around for many years, even prior to the Scottish National Party Government?

**Claire Baker:** I do not accept that. In recent years, local authorities have faced greater and greater pressure. As I have described, there is a tipping point for the service this year.

The consequences of the pressures put at risk the viability of the service. The financial pressures on local authorities mean that they face difficult choices, and the status of instrumental music tuition leaves it vulnerable. The underlying problem will not be resolved until local authorities receive a fair share of Scottish Government funding.

The committee's report recommends that school music services should continue to be managed locally and raises questions over how to ensure equity of access across Scotland. Individual circumstances should not be a barrier to instrumental music tuition, and not all households will be able to afford the additional expense. Although concessions are welcome, they are not consistent across local authorities, and means testing is pretty blunt. A family on a low income will often be liable to pay fees, which in many areas have become unrealistic.

Looking at the view of music professionals, research by the Musicians Union has found that families with household incomes under £28,000 are half as likely to have a child learning an instrument as families with incomes of £48,000 or more, and 41 per cent of lower-income families say that lessons are outwith household budgets. The same study also looked at the benefits of learning a musical instrument and found positive impacts on confidence, concentration, self-discipline, patience and even overall happiness as a result of attending music lessons. Those wider benefits should be better promoted and understood so that decisions on music education are seen as being about much more than figures on a balance sheet.

Instrumental music teachers can be left in a position of underemployment if reduced pupil take-up is a consequence of fees being charged, and such job insecurity leads to their suffering low morale and stress each year. We must encourage our future musicians and music teachers, not have them question the viability of their career paths. Underemployment of instrumental music teachers could have an impact on participation in orchestras and other ensembles. It might also mean that pupils have to be taught in larger groups, which, in some instances, might mean that tuition can be offered at lower cost. We have seen many local authorities adopt such a position, but it can result in reduced quality for pupils.

In February this year, I had the opportunity to visit the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. In the same month, along with other partners, the RCS launched the “What’s going on now?” study, which examines music education. Its report explored the formal, informal and non-formal sectors of music education in Scotland. It found that music was among the most popular subjects on the Scottish curriculum and argued that more needs to be done to ensure understanding of its value to individuals and the economy.

In its submission to the committee's inquiry, the RCS stressed the time that it takes to learn a musical instrument to the level that is required for entry to the conservatoire. Instrumental tuition must begin at an early age—well before free tuition is available through studying an SQA course. The conservatoire's submission sets out that a child aged eight to 10 who cannot access tuition due to their parents' inability to pay fees will simply be unable to demonstrate the skill level that will be required for entry 10 years later. By not providing free instrumental tuition at an early stage, we are potentially preventing students from being able to reach the required level without either paying fees or employing private tutors.

The RCS also requires performance of a piano piece as part of the admission process for its

undergraduate teacher training programme, but not all local authorities provide instrumental tuition in piano, which further limits pupils' opportunities. I have previously asked questions about widening access to the conservatoire, and I welcome the work that it is undertaking to improve it. However, the role of affordable, accessible instrumental music tuition cannot be underestimated as a means of increasing access and opportunity.

The committee's report welcomes continuing support for the youth music initiative as a means of introducing the young people to music at an early age, and it recommends that extending it or introducing a new initiative be considered. That point is key. The YMI experience allows a high number of young pupils to experience music making, but it does not provide any means of continuing their participation. It offers a limited number of hours, without the option of further musical experience unless a pupil is selected for instrumental music tuition and can afford it. Instrumental tuition should be seen as a necessary continuation of the YMI experience, and much more should be done to build on it.

A briefing from the EIS argues that investment in projects such as the YMI cannot replace instrumental music teaching. Although the initiative is valuable and serves as a taster for music education, greater consideration must be given to how to build on it. I will be interested in hearing the cabinet secretary's comments on that in his closing remarks.

The EIS also says that the long-term impacts of music tuition on our economy and culture form an important aspect of the debate that should not be overlooked. The UK is recognised as a cultural leader, and our music industry is a significant part of that. It is part of our identity, and our performers are recognised across the world. Yet, music and the performing arts are at risk of becoming a profession for only those people who can afford to take up such opportunities. That would make our cultural life poorer, so we must work with local authority partners to ensure that instrumental music tuition remains a gateway to such opportunities for all young people.

15:43

**Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** Music is fundamental to people of all ages and backgrounds, and few of us can imagine a world without it. That is why the report on the Education and Skills Committee's inquiry into instrumental music tuition in schools, entitled "A note of concern: The future of instrumental music tuition in schools", is so important. It is of huge concern that fewer children will have the benefit of learning to play an instrument while they are at school, which, in my view, is an essential part of

their educational journey. Learning how to play an instrument is a fundamental part of their experience that boosts their creativity, confidence and holistic wellbeing. A 2016 study on music and attainment found that young people aged from 11 to 16 who played an instrument showed greater progress and better academic outcomes than those who did not, with the greatest impact being experienced by those who had played for the longest time.

Music is also excellent therapy for young people who have additional support needs. I first learned of Nordoff Robbins music therapy in the 1980s, and I have followed the fantastic work that it has done over the decades since then. Nordoff Robbins Scotland works with people who are aged from one to 100, and in 2017 it delivered more than 5,000 music therapy sessions across a range of settings throughout central Scotland, including in schools, in community settings and at its centres in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Fife, all of which has helped individuals with physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs. Many third sector and community groups, such as Kirkintilloch's Rookie Rockstars in my constituency, offer music as a therapy for ex-offenders, recovering addicts and young people who are experiencing mental health problems.

The benefit of music as a therapy and of playing a musical instrument is beyond doubt—all the evidence is there to support it—so what is the problem that we are facing in our schools today? As we heard from the convener, most, but not all, local authorities have introduced charges for instrumental music tuition, which has had a drastic effect on the take-up of learning to play an instrument. Despite sibling subsidies—which can be complex, as Jenny Gilruth pointed out—the cost is simply out of reach for many families, given their budgets. That must surely increase inequity in the classroom.

My local authority is East Dunbartonshire, which is run by a Tory and Lib Dem coalition, and it now charges £230 for tuition—the cost increased from £177 in the previous budget. Happily, the excellent Douglas academy music school in the neighbouring constituency of Milngavie is free to students on application, and it is flourishing.

The other factor to consider is the chicken-and-egg situation that the convener mentioned, whereby fewer children being afforded music tuition means that fewer teachers are needed, which creates an ever-decreasing circle of supply and demand.

The committee believes that parents and carers need to be fully informed about the costs of instrumental music tuition and the associated costs of participation in music opportunities such as school and local authority bands, which have



always played a big part in communities. Of course, no local authority introduces such charges lightly, but everything possible should be done to eliminate or mitigate charges, and there must be consistency across local authorities if we are to do away with postcode lottery advantages and disadvantages.

Because of all the benefits that I have mentioned, the committee believes that music tuition should be provided free of charge in every local authority. We have heard the statistics. Some local authorities do not charge, but the majority do, which demonstrates that it is entirely a political or a prioritised choice. The decision seems to depend on how much value individual local authorities place on instrumental music tuition. Should it be regarded as a luxury subject or viewed as part of the core curriculum? There are differing views on its status. To have instrumental music tuition in the core curriculum would have practical implications, but I believe—and the committee believes—that the benefits would far outweigh any negative consequences of such a decision.

Scotland has a rich heritage of musical excellence, as Tavish Scott mentioned, from folk and country music to traditional and rock music and our amazing roll call of talented, world-renowned singer songwriters, of whom there are too many to mention. Anyone who has been at the excellent Celtic Connections annual music festival or any of the wonderful festivals around the country—such as Belladrum or TRNSMT, to name just a couple—will know that music is an integral part of our society.

We are also home to the world-renowned Royal Conservatoire of Scotland centre of excellence. As we have heard, the committee heard compelling evidence from tutors there regarding their concern about the future of instrumental music tuition.

I am proud that, in my constituency, young singer songwriter Katee Kross and her band The Amberjax are quickly rising stars of the country music scene worldwide. Katee's father runs Bishopbriggs school of music, which is going from strength to strength, with hundreds of youngsters queuing up to learn and expand instrumental skills. The value of music to children simply cannot be overstated.

Music tuition must play a core role in young people's development. It is not a luxury or a bonus subject. It enhances the creativity and the rounded education of our next generation, and it should be nurtured, not neglected.

15:48

**Gordon Lindhurst (Lothian) (Con):** As a member of the cross-party group on music, and

with a lifelong interest in instrumental music, I am delighted to speak in the debate. I cannot remember a time when instrumental music did not play a part in the life of our family when I was a child. My father played the violin, my mother played the organ and they both played the piano—sometimes at the same time—so it was not surprising that I took piano lessons from a young age. Our piano teacher, Miss Stephenson, was a pianist of concert standard who could tell simply by the sound whether the wrong finger had been used on a piano key. She had been blind from birth, and that was just a small example of her incredible talent as a pianist. Music has had a positive and enjoyable influence on my own life, and I am keen to facilitate the introduction of the young people of today to music, as are other members who are in the chamber today.

I have had the privilege of inviting students from St Mary's Music School, in Edinburgh, to the Scottish Parliament, to play in the garden lobby. Having seen those groups of students play, I know that we have a lot to celebrate in Scotland when it comes to musical talent. Yet, the Education and Skills Committee report that we are debating paints a rather gloomy picture at times—one in which there is a real postcode lottery in music tuition, with greater opportunities being offered in some areas than in others; in which family income sometimes plays a key role in deciding who gets to play an instrument and who does not; and in which, where there is opportunity, staffing pressures dilute the education that is being delivered.

The introduction of hefty charges for music tuition gives cause for concern when we look at the number of pupils who are dropping out as a result. We see, in the report, the example of West Lothian—which is in my region—where, following the introduction of charges, the number of primary students in tuition fell from 1,128 in 2017 to 234 in 2018. In that case, charging was agreed at the local authority level in order to avoid the next-worst scenario of losing some instrumental tuition altogether. Indeed, more than half of the parents agreed with some form of charging in order to save string and percussion instrument tuition from planned cuts. The huge drop-off in the number of students who are taking tuition tells us that the £340 charge is out of sync with what many parents can actually afford, yet local authorities are having to make such difficult decisions in the face of drastic cuts that have been forced on them by the SNP Government—cuts of £1.64 billion in core funding in real terms since 2011-12.

**John Swinney:** I would like Mr Lindhurst to explain what the Conservatives' input to this year's budget process would have done to improve local authority finances.

**Gordon Lindhurst:** As Mr Swinney knows, it is a question of priorities—what one focuses on and what one puts the funding towards.

**John Swinney:** So, that was nothing.

**Gordon Lindhurst:** I will return to the report that is before Parliament.

COSLA stated in its response to the report:

“no local authority introduces charges ... lightly”

Of course, we heard examples of local authorities setting their own exemptions and concessions—which are welcome—such as an exemption from fees for children who are in receipt of free school meals across the board. However, as often happens—and as some witnesses highlighted—it is the families who are just above the thresholds for exemptions who sometimes suffer the most.

An anonymous teacher put it quite starkly by explaining that, for some families who do not qualify for an exemption, it can

“often come down to paying the fuel bill or instrumental lessons.”

That is a choice that parents should not have to make, especially considering the wider benefits that a curriculum involving music can deliver for a child, such as improved motor skills, mental agility, self-evaluation and listening skills, among other things.

We have heard that the number of dedicated music teachers who are working in Scotland's primary schools has fallen by some 42 per cent in the past seven years, which is putting a huge strain on those who are left and is causing shortened lessons, busier classes, a reduction in the one-to-one time with a teacher and the dilution of specialisms among music tutors. The profession can sometimes see itself as the so-called low-hanging fruit that is most at risk from the reality of council cuts, and the statistics and experiences of pupils appear to bear that out.

Instrumental music tuition needs to be recognised for the role that it can play in raising attainment rather than be seen simply as an add-on. As local authorities struggle to cope with an ever-reducing pot of funding, instrumental music tuition becomes ever more vulnerable. I hope that the Government will reflect on that in today's debate and come up with a clear course of action for the future, realising—as I think we, in the chamber, do—that the future of Scottish music as a cornerstone of our culture is at stake.

15:54

**Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):** Those who gave evidence to the Education and Skills Committee left it in no doubt about the transforming effect that music can have on young

people's lives, and the need to ensure that that experience remains accessible to all.

In my constituency, I recognise the vast amount of work that is undertaken, largely for free, by a small number of music teachers and tutors. Without them, it is difficult to see how the Western Isles could make the huge contribution that it does to the Mòd, the fèis movement, the musician of the year competition and school pipe bands—I could go on.

Across Scotland, music is a strong and essential player in our culture, whether it is Shetland's fiddling tradition, Speyside, pibroch, Scots song, the silver bands of our former mining communities or Glasgow's choral tradition. It is difficult to see how any of that can be sustained, however, if young people do not get the opportunity to be part of those musical experiences. Instrumental music tuition is therefore key to ensuring that those diverse traditions continue to prosper. The committee heard how all forms of musical education can benefit children and young people in many ways, including through impacting positively on wider attainment.

Decisions about instrumental music tuition are made by each local authority. The committee recognised that it is important to local democracy that councils have the freedom to make their own decisions on that. However, I hope that local authorities, when making such decisions, might reflect on the position of the committee and, more important, on the position of the local communities across Scotland that contacted the committee about this. I hope, for instance, that local authorities will recall the commitment that they gave in 2013 to avoid the excessive variation in fees across the country that we have seen of late. One central issue that the committee had to face was whether all of Scotland's local authorities are living up to that commitment in practice.

Music is being taught as a subject in schools across the country, but the fundamental question—other members have asked it, too—is whether all young people get access to the instrumental music tuition that they will realistically need at an early age to stand much chance of doing a course such as advanced higher music. They will probably need that tuition if they want to be actively musical for the rest of their lives, with all the benefits that we have heard that that brings.

However, the picture on the ground in many areas stands in contrast to the commitment that local authorities gave six years ago that there would be no charge for the instrumental music tuition that is necessary for SQA qualifications. The picture on that and other issues varies dramatically across the country. While local authorities generally make provision free for children who are in receipt of free school meals,

beyond that there is a large group of children whose parents find that the costs that are charged by some authorities can make instrumental music tuition unaffordable.

Midlothian Council announced recently in its budget that it intended to slash free tuition. The subsequent campaign included contributions from artists across Scotland, including Karine Polwart, and valiant work from local MSPs, which forced the local authority to reverse its plans. That decision was very welcome, and I hope that the work of the campaign for free music tuition serves as an example to other local authorities about the strength of feeling on this subject.

I understand the pressures under which local authorities work. Equally, there are pressures on the Scottish Government—rarely acknowledged by some parties—as a consequence of Tory austerity imposed by Westminster. However, I believe that some authorities have failed to recognise a central point. Some councils are rationing instrumental music tuition to the point at which the opportunities of having a career in music are being seriously restricted for many young people. The committee heard students at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland express the fear that, in some parts of the country, the prospects of a young person qualifying to become a music teacher are becoming seriously restricted on grounds of social background. If a career in teaching maths were ever to be socially restricted in that way, we would be asking some pretty searching questions.

Just this morning, I received an email from a music teacher in Scotland who strongly rejected the excuse that some local authorities make in the form of the discretionary argument: that music tuition is a discretionary area of education, not an area in which local authorities are compelled in any way to provide support. The music teacher pointed out that, if we were to apply that argument consistently, we would need to say that there was no legal obligation to teach anything in Scotland's schools other than religious studies. He made the point strongly that that argument was a red herring that Parliament should reject.

The Deputy First Minister has made clear the Scottish Government's aims to work collaboratively in order to find solutions to ensure that instrumental music tuition remains accessible to all. I very much welcome the efforts that have been made by the Government and local authorities on the issue to date. It is important for the Parliament to recognise the huge contribution that music tuition makes to the lives of children and young people in our country. I hope that the committee's report leaves that much beyond any doubt.

16:01

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):**

I, too, thank the committee for securing the debate, which addresses important topics relating to the breadth of education that we deliver and the meaning of education.

I begin with a personal insight. Since the summer, most evenings I have been picking up my guitar, which had been much neglected for about 10 years, and playing a little bit. I say that not as an example of what can be achieved through music tuition, because most people who have heard my guitar playing would probably conclude that there is a deficit of tuition in my case. Instead, I give that example because I have found that playing the guitar has improved my wellbeing. It has replaced activities such as watching television in the evening with something that has improved my stress levels and overall mental health.

Many members have spoken about the importance of learning music in relation to the cultural contributions that can be made or to wider benefits relating to confidence or the community. However, by considering the broader definition of education, we see that music can provide considerable benefits in terms of one's capacity and particularly in relation to mental health and wellbeing. The points that were raised by Tom Arthur, whom I notice is no longer in the chamber, and Liz Smith about the wider definitions of education are incredibly important. To the teacher who said that music is not essential, I say that it is an essential life skill. If we are serious about tackling the broader issues relating to our young people's wellbeing, music can play a critical part.

Music can play a much broader part than simply providing life skills and improving wellbeing. A considerable amount of science now lies behind the benefits of music. We all know that to be true, given that the use of a mnemonic or a little tune is a much more effective way of memorising a fact. Increasingly, however, neuroscience is showing that music has a much more profound impact on our neural pathways and grey matter. Music improves memory, IQ, co-ordination and concentration. A decade-long US study found that the most pronounced improvements in academic performance were achieved through music tuition. Likewise, executive function is improved through music. An article on psychological science shows that music improves task switching. The ability to decide what task to tackle at the right time is critical to executive function.

Neurodevelopmental disorders are one of my areas of interest, and practising a musical instrument improves co-ordination and executive function through repetitive and controlled behaviour, as is the case with practising

gymnastics, dance and a range of martial arts. That insight shows that playing a musical instrument has a much wider and more profound impact than simply the activity itself. That is why the evidence of cuts to, and withdrawal of, free music tuition is of profound concern.

A number of members have mentioned local authority areas that have continued free tuition, of which Edinburgh is one. I do not know about other members' local areas, but every year for the past few years, free music tuition in Edinburgh has been under threat as one of the cuts that the council has been forced to consider because of its very stretched resources.

Members have pointed to the importance of preparation for exams. It would be a mistake to provide music tuition only in the final year leading up to exams, because that would be insufficient. If someone's ability to gain true mastery of any skill involves around 10,000 hours, 20 hours in a single academic year is a drop in the ocean of what is needed.

At heart there is a more fundamental and profound equality issue, which Ross Greer outlined excellently. In terms of both geography and socioeconomic circumstances, the withdrawal of free music tuition has a profound impact that means a deeply unequal distribution of the ability for people to obtain music tuition; £500 a year is too much for too many people. However, many families will recognise the benefit of music tuition and will continue to make it available, so the withdrawals will create an iniquitous situation for children across Scotland, which will affect their opportunities and their performance and progress at school and deprive them of a vital and important life skill.

We cannot look at this topic without looking at the subject of local government finance. Since 2010, the reality is that spend per pupil in primary schools has reduced by £427 and in secondary schools by £265—reductions of almost 8 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively. Overall, there has been a reduction of 7 per cent in the proportion of Government funding that has been given to local government; if we consider that a third of local authority spend is on education, the only consequence will be cuts such as those to non-core spend, including music tuition. That is what we all have to consider this afternoon.

16:07

**Stuart McMillan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (SNP):** I thank members across the chamber for the hard work on the report and for their speeches this afternoon.

I have a brief point for Labour Party colleagues before I go on to discuss the report. It has been

stated that times are challenging in local government finance. Nobody can deny that, but it is not a new issue. Councillor Robert Jackson was the leader of Inverclyde Council in the early 2000s. In 2002, when Inverclyde Council was faced with a £4 million budget shortfall, he said:

"This is standard procedure and I am confident that officers will come up with recommendations to address this: we are dealing with it, as we do every year."

The challenge in local government finance is not new. Despite what some politicians in the chamber might say, it did not just happen from 2007 onwards; it has been an issue for many years.

I found the report helpful as I tried to understand many of the issues that have been raised. It highlights the importance of music tuition for our pupils, both individually and nationally, and I firmly agree that learning a musical instrument is of great benefit to all involved. That is not solely because of the other things that that will bring, but because of what music can do for an individual, as Tom Arthur said. Every member who has spoken understands the importance of music tuition.

The Scottish Government is committed to preserving instrumental music tuition, and it values the contribution of all music teachers and instrumental music instructors in our schools. Music teachers in schools never fail to impress me with their talent, their abundant energy and their enthusiasm for teaching pupils music, year in and year out. I see Mrs McCrorie, my music teacher at Port Glasgow high school, out and about in my constituency, and I thank her for everything that she attempted to do with me.

Mrs McCrorie did not teach me the pipes; I learned how to play them outside school. That aspect has not been touched on in the debate thus far. Not every person who learns how to play a musical instrument does so in school; many people learn how to play a musical instrument outside school. I learned how to play the bagpipes in the Boys Brigade. People can learn how to play a musical instrument in many other organisations, such as the scouts and the army cadets. Thankfully—I touched on this in my intervention on Liz Smith—over the years, there has been a change in tying in piping instruction with the SQA. That will certainly help. I accept that the committee's work was not about external tuition, but I want to ensure that everyone is aware that people do not learn how to play musical instruments solely in school. Many people who are following the debate will accept that point.

I want to touch on a few sections in the report.

Sections 9 and 20 suggest that music education benefits young people and raises their self-confidence, and sections 11 to 17 say that it can play a pivotal role in improving pupils' attainment,

mental health and social skills. That is absolutely true. However, it must be recognised, as sections 25 and 27 suggest, that there are differing views on whether the status of music tuition is discretionary or part of the core curriculum.

As section 38, on specialist tutors, suggests,

“a diverse range of instruments and a sufficient level of teaching time”

are needed

“in order to present for SQA examinations.”

I also recognise, as per section 75, that there has been a significant drop in participation levels in music tuition with the introduction of charging for lessons. Various local authorities have stopped charging, which is certainly beneficial and which I warmly welcome.

Aptitude tests are mentioned in section 106 of the report. For many people, music or sport is the route out of poverty to a better life and to having a better opportunity to put more into society. I think that having aptitude tests is fundamentally wrong, and I welcome the report’s recommendation in that regard. However, I would put it more strongly: I would simply remove aptitude tests altogether, because many young people in schools might not have the ability in theory, but they might be world leaders in practical ability and might have world-class talent. Why should the obstacle of aptitude tests be put in their way at that point in their journey in life?

My final point is about people learning instruments outside school. I am delighted that, in my constituency, we have a wide variety of bands that compete, perform and win annually. The riverside youth band is based in Port Glasgow, and Lower Clyde pipes and drums covers all of Inverclyde. Lower Clyde pipes and drums started off because there was nothing for many years.

Again, I thank my colleagues for their work, and I thank every person who teaches music, whether in or outside school.

16:13

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I thank the Education and Skills Committee for its detailed report, which drew evidence from a wide range of stakeholders.

The committee reported that

“without action, the journey of young talent from Scottish state schools into bands, orchestras, and to become the teachers of the future”

will be very difficult. We know that the number of music instructors who work in Scottish schools has fallen to an all-time low: there are now just 667 dedicated music tutors serving primary and secondary schools, compared with 1,043 in 2007.

Ultimately, the effects of that decline in participation in music tuition are being manifested in a form of Scottish cultural deficit—a ticking time bomb of unintended consequences that could last a generation and which means that we could lose a steady stream of talented young musicians, along with their skills and talents, which would drain the very lifeblood from Scotland’s creative sector.

As we know, Scotland accounts for 11 per cent of the UK’s live music revenue, and that music tourism brings in about £280 million a year to Scotland and secures 2,000 full-time jobs. In 2015 alone, 720,000 foreign and domestic visitors came to the country for festivals and major musical concerts.

Kirk Richardson, who is the convener of the instrumental music teachers network said:

“If music tuition is allowed to die, there will be a huge commercial loss to the country. We need to wake up to that.” —[*Official Report, Education and Skills Committee*, 14 November 2018; c 20.]

We cannot simply sit back and let that happen. We need to see the Nicola Benedettis, the James MacMillans and the Lewis Capaldis showcase Scotland’s musical talent to the world.

We know from research that learning to play an instrument can provide intellectual, physical and emotional stimulation, and can help in terms of concentration, focus and perseverance. It also offers social opportunities with like-minded children who might join a band, ensemble or orchestra. Just as for children who play sports, participating in an orchestra can help children to build friendships.

I recently had the pleasure of going to see the St Boswells brass band in my constituency. It is a young band that has just formed, and we could see the pleasure in the players’ eyes. It was a wonderful experience.

I want to quote the music education partnership group’s submission, which said that in addition to

“enhanced mental and physical health and wellbeing, the benefits to the child include the development of transferable skills such as team working, resilience, discipline, performing, problem solving, evaluating, abstract thinking, physical and fine motor coordination.”

Playing an instrument can also offer help to children and young people in coping with school, social media and exam pressures, by allowing them time out. My youngest daughter does exactly that; she takes a break from homework to play the piano and sing, and her singing has led her to perform this year in Perth in the National Youth Choir of Scotland, in an incredible performance that was led by the conductor Christopher Bell.

The report concludes that music tuition could be provided free of charge. However, the committee also acknowledged that financial decision making should rest with local authorities. Many of us, including COSLA, note that there has been no suggestion as to how free music tuition would or could be funded. Liz Smith referred to an approach that would be similar to a music endowment fund that could be set up through philanthropy and Government support. Perhaps such discussions could go further.

We know that the cabinet secretary said in evidence to the committee that it is the responsibility of local authorities

“to ensure that pupils in their area are not prevented from learning a musical instrument because of their background, location, disability or financial circumstances.”

Currently only 27 of the 32 local authorities charge a fee of some kind for instrumental music lessons. Four introduced fees in 2018-19 and eight raised fees—the highest being in Clackmannanshire. The total cost of instrumental music services is approximately £30 million, as we have heard today, and tuition charges across Scotland raise approximately £4 million per annum. There seems to be a funding challenge.

As a member of the cross-party group on music, along with Tom Arthur and Gordon Lindhurst, I am accurately aware of the challenges that young people and their families face when it comes to funding for lessons. We know that fees for instrumental music tuition have led to a significant reduction in uptake. Although we support local decision making, nobody can be content that pupils in one council area pay more than £500 for music lessons while others receive them free. That vicious postcode lottery cannot be allowed to continue. Local authorities part fund concessionary rates by charging pupils who do not qualify for exemption, and in some local authorities, pupils who are entitled to free school meals and families who are in receipt of housing benefit or income support will be exempt from the charges, but that is not consistent across Scotland, as we have heard today.

Also, just 10 local authorities currently offer a sibling discount. Perhaps other local authorities could take that approach on board. Local authorities, along with the Government, need to look at new ways of introducing a range of exemptions and concessions more consistently across the country.

To finish, I will mention that Ralph Riddiough said of the postcode lottery:

“It’s not fair, it’s not consistent and it should be a matter of grave concern to the Scottish Parliament”.

I know that the cabinet secretary is taking the matter on board.

In conclusion, I note that the decline in music tuition participation is a worrying trend that must be reversed. The committee report is excellent, but let us see action from now on.

16:19

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** I welcome the debate, which is the culmination of the Education and Skills Committee’s inquiry, and of a petition that came to the Public Petitions Committee at about the same time, calling on the Scottish Government to create a right for every child to receive instrumental music tuition in school free of charge. After we took valuable evidence on the issue, the PPC referred the petition to the Education and Skills Committee for consideration as part of its inquiry.

At that time, the importance of the arts in a child’s life was highlighted, as was the benefit of music and creativity for educational attainment. I am sure that we all agree about that. There is no one in the chamber who does not want children to learn music, but it is widely accepted that different approaches are taken across the country, and that no single approach is right or wrong. However, the question of how children can access instrumental music tuition equitably across the country is a more complex conundrum than it appears at first to be.

All 32 local authorities provide music tuition as part of the core curriculum from P1 to S3 but, as COSLA noted in its briefing, that differs from instrumental music tuition, which is a discretionary and additional service that is complementary to the curriculum, and which has a cost attached that must be paid. As we have heard, the picture of how local authorities cover the cost varies across the country: some charge pupils and some do not.

The question of access arises. How affordable is tuition for children from low-income families who are not eligible for exemptions? That question should be answered in the context of a child being interested in learning to play an instrument, and of consideration of whether instrumental music tuition would positively influence the child’s learning and help them to further their attainment.

In my constituency—Falkirk East—Falkirk Council unfortunately imposes a charge for its instrumental music service, with exemptions for pupils in P4 to S6 who are eligible for free school meals or for the school clothing allowance. The annual concerts that the service in Falkirk puts on have always been a highlight of the year; they give pupils from across the district the chance to showcase what they have learned through their music lessons.

As in the rest of Scotland, the youth music initiative plays a major part in the Falkirk area,

because pupils can access music opportunities through its programmes, too. I have been a strong supporter of the YMI going back to the days when I served on Falkirk Council and its education committee. The YMI has proved to be of huge benefit to pupils across the country and in Falkirk, where it funds considerably the Falkirk traditional music project. The project offers young people from P4 to S6 the opportunity to learn traditional Scottish instruments. It offers pupils tuition and the loan of instruments at no cost, with tuition being available in the mandolin, chanter, accordion, whistle, bagpipes, fiddle and bodhrán. Professional traditional musicians teach the lessons after school at Falkirk high school. The project is extremely successful.

I know one person in particular who benefited from the YMI, and from learning music in school, who is looking to go on to become a musician and tutor in the trad music scene. If such provision had not been available to her while she was at school, her career might have taken an altogether different direction, and we might never have been on the cusp of discovering the next big trad artist in Scotland.

When looking at the issue, we should always keep in mind what we want the future to be. Questions about the kind of country that we want to be include our asking how much exposure to creativity we would like our children to have to give them the opportunities to shape a creative career or life in the future. We know that Scotland benefits culturally and economically from the likes of Skipinnish, Skerryvore, Mànran and other trad-rock groups heading all over the world to showcase the best of Scottish talent. We have a long history of musical quality across the decades, and it is plain that Scotland's music has a wide-reaching and proud heritage.

However, do we really want the legacy of children now being unable to afford music lessons at school to become apparent in 20 or 30 years? That possibility is resulting in talk about a lost generation of talent.

A future in which Scotland is promoted on the world stage—as it is today, by musical talents that are too numerous to mention in this debate—could be lost if not all pupils can access IMT equitably. I join other members in urging local authorities and the Government to find a solution as soon as possible, in order to avoid the possibility of a lost generation of musicians.

16:25

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** When I was the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, I recall attending a getting it right for every child

event at 11:30 on 12 March 2010 on behalf of one of my fellow ministers, Adam Ingram, who could not go. It was at the Pittodrie stadium in Aberdeen and we arrived a little early. A psychologist gave a presentation that included a bit of film showing a one-hour-old child. The child was, not surprisingly, lying on its back. Music was being played to the baby and it was beating its arms in syncopation with the music. When the music was switched off, the baby stopped moving; when it was switched back on, the baby started moving again. I found that immensely moving. It was absolutely fascinating that the effect of music on somebody who was one hour out of the womb was so significant.

I happen to be surrounded by a number of female friends who are pregnant. They say that playing classical music diminishes the palpitations in the womb—their child, even in the womb, is responding to music.

There should be no doubt whatsoever about the beneficial effects of music on us all, on both our psychology and our physiology, but it was the GIRFEC event that led me to that understanding.

I am with Ross Greer and Tavish Scott: my musical competence could barely be described as limited. At primary school, there was an attempt to teach me the violin that utterly failed. My only competence in musical instruments is in using a spoon on my teeth. By flexing my cheeks, I can change the note that comes out. To describe that as music would be gross exaggeration.

I wanted to intervene on Tavish Scott when he was talking about Shetland fiddle achievements, to make an important point. I very much love fiddle music from Shetland and, although there has been talk of postcode provision of instrumental music tuition, we must ensure that variation is possible so that we can preserve, enhance and develop local variations in the instruments being used. In the case of Shetland, that would apply to how the bow is used on the fiddle, which is quite different from elsewhere.

I think that I have a love of music, and I suppose that it has been a significant part of my life. For my very first date with the person who this year will have been married to me for 50 years, I suggested that we go to the Dubliners concert at the music hall in Aberdeen in 1966. That may have been the first time that she heard “Seven Drunken Nights”, but it was not the first time that I had been exposed to the same as a student.

Today, I find myself greatly enamoured by three Québécois groups—Soldat Louis, Salomé Leclerc and Le Vent du Nord, which all play a range of instruments. Le Vent du Nord plays one instrument that I could just about deal with—the jaw harp. To play it, a person sticks it in their

mouth and pings the metal. That might be something that I could do. I think, too, if one examines with a powerful magnifying glass the photograph on the cover of one of the 12" LPs by the Corries that we have at home, one will see that, among the approximately 1,000 people who are pictured, there we are, in the front row. Music has been an important part of my life.

Incidentally, one of the reasons why the Dubliners came to fame involved a guy named Ronan O'Rahilly, who was the founder and owner of the immensely popular pirate station Radio Caroline, which played an enormous number of songs by the group.

I very much enjoyed reading the committee's report. I have two music teachers in my family. My late brother-in-law was a guitar teacher, and one of my nieces is a music teacher in Kent. She is finding it rather sterile territory at the moment, so, on Thursday, she is standing for the local council to try to do something about it. Obviously, she is not standing for the SNP, so I am uncertain whether I should wish her all the best, but I do.

I will close by saying that my favourite piece of classical music is Gustav Holst's "The Planets", which is absolutely apposite to the debate. When I think of the people who have spoken in the debate, perhaps Rachael Hamilton is "Mars, the Bringer of War" and Jenny Gilruth is "Venus, the Bringer of Peace." For my part, I am clearly "Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age". Of course, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills has to be "Uranus, the Magician".

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani):** Well—[*Laughter.*] We move to closing speeches.

16:31

**Iain Gray:** I am not sure what I did to deserve having to follow Mr Stevenson, but, to reach back slightly beyond his contribution, I note that Mr MacDonald used a word that rather sums up the sense of this afternoon's debate. That word is "conundrum". I think that the chamber has this afternoon been wrestling with a conundrum that involves facing the realities of finance, acknowledging local democracy and recognising our desire to provide more musical opportunity. How can we bring those things together in a way that works for us?

It is not a conundrum that is new to us. In 2012, I led a members' business debate that was based on the let the children play campaign that was being run largely by the *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper and addressed similar issues to the one that we have been talking about today. The minister who spoke in that debate was the then

minister with responsibility for schools, Alasdair Allan, who gave a good response. Following that debate, he launched an initiative called the instrumental music group, which worked under the chairmanship of David Green. It did a lot of work covering similar ground to that which has been covered by the Education and Skills Committee and produced recommendations that the Government accepted. However, of course, as the debate has reminded us, many of those recommendations were for local rather than national Government.

The Government was willing to respond to the issues that were raised at that time, and I think that, today, the cabinet secretary has been willing to respond positively to the Education and Skills Committee's report, too. However, we have not really found a way out of the conundrum.

Ross Greer made an interesting point when he said that there is no innate hostility to instrumental tuition anywhere. That is absolutely true. One of the things about the evidence that the committee heard was that nobody argued in favour of charging for instrumental tuition—nobody made a positive case for that. That is quite telling. The Government, and in particular, the cabinet secretary, did not argue that there was a positive case for charging. Indeed, today, he accepted that there should not be charging. However, then and today, the cabinet secretary held to the position that decisions about the issue are for local authorities to make.

The representatives of local government who gave evidence did not argue the positive case for charging. First, they argued the case for having the discretion to charge and, secondly, they made many of the points that have been rehearsed today about the cuts. However, they did not really make the case that charging was in any way a good thing. In fact, Councillor McCabe, in his response to the Education and Skills Committee report, said something very interesting. He said:

"The in principle belief that there should be no charging is probably shared by many elected members across Scotland's local authorities. The Committee does not suggest how such a policy would be funded."

My point is that nobody is saying that we should charge, and therefore the principle of the committee report is established.

It is not as simple as saying that some local authorities manage to keep tuition free. Daniel Johnson made the point that, in Edinburgh, where that is the case, it remains an extremely difficult decision every budgetary year. I referred to the pain that my local authority went through this year in introducing charging. Local councils are in an extremely difficult position and those are difficult decisions to take.



That would change if it were established that instrumental tuition is a core part of school and music education. Mr Arthur made a passionate case that it should be. It will be interesting to see whether that issue is decided in court and, if so, what the court decides. The Labour Party view is that, were the court to decide that instrumental tuition is a core part of education, the Scottish Government would have to find additional resources for councils to make that work.

There were, quite rightly, references to the good stuff that is going on. A couple of those musical initiatives are worth mentioning. One is the youth music initiative, which is a great initiative. Claire Baker is right, however, that we have to be careful, because the youth music initiative is about ensuring that every young person has a taster of instrumental tuition. As the EIS report asks,

“Why spark interest if you don’t intend to keep the fire burning?”

That is rather more purple prose than the EIS usually indulges in. The youth music initiative is an argument for ensuring accessibility for those who want to build on the taster.

The cabinet secretary mentioned Sistema Scotland. I am a great supporter of Sistema and the Government deserves great credit for the funding that it has provided for it. It is, however, a different thing. Sistema takes a community and creates a critical mass by providing music education for pretty well everyone of the youngest age group in that area. It began in the Raploch and is now in other places as well. It is an immensely powerful tool for building confidence and reducing inequality, but it is not the same thing as what the committee has reported on and what we have debated this afternoon. In fact, Sistema argues for it being even more important that instrumental tuition is available across Scotland, and we need to find a way to make that happen.

16:38

**Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con):** I am pleased to close on behalf of the Conservative Party in what has been an important, informative and largely consensual debate. I echo other members in thanking those who contributed to the committee report and all who provided the rich and real-world evidence that has made both the inquiry and today’s debate so worth while.

The passion and persuasive arguments have resonated, and there is no doubt that the many campaigners who have pushed on the issue have been instrumental in bringing it to the fore. I can honestly say that there have been few parliamentary inquiries that have been mentioned to me so positively and persistently as I have gone

about my constituency business. I have certainly seen the strength of musical talent that the cabinet secretary mentioned, and I say gently to Tavish Scott that there are so many talented musicians in Dumfriesshire that I would struggle to name them in the five minutes that I have left.

I am not sure whether I was the intended audience at last year’s Annan academy Christmas concert, but I was both heartened and disheartened when the music teacher who had organised the event raised the subject of instrumental music tuition at the introduction to the evening’s festivities. I was heartened because it was inspiring and reassuring to hear someone with such a strong personal and professional interest spell out what the policy decisions in this area mean for not just the school or individual pupils but the wider community and society. He also asked the wider question of what the decision to price some young people out of such an important part of our culture says about not just our education system but our country, and that made me extremely sad.

I was taken by how many parents took the opportunity to mention to me the difficult choices that they faced, such as the choice between sending their children to band camp or buying them new instruments and taking the family on holiday—and those were the lucky ones, who still had choices. It is difficult to hear from parents who are struggling to justify the decision to let one of their children learn a musical instrument but not another. Those issues are similar to ones that we heard about in the committee’s evidence sessions, but there is nothing like meeting and talking to such talented young people to understand what the issue means in practice.

As we have heard in the debate—Tom Arthur captured this point really well—for lots of young people, music is not just a hobby or an extra part of their education; it is their life, and it is directly connected to their identity and their future aspirations. It is not acceptable to deny them those aspirations because of a lottery in local authority funding or school-level decisions. With regard to what Ross Greer said, it is particularly disappointing when that lottery is turbocharged by disadvantage and inequality. It is extremely hard to justify a system in which those young people who are most disadvantaged are most likely to lose out.

In my view, the idea that a complicated system of local government funding can be allowed to justify that level of inequality is unacceptable. The answer is not to look for rigid standardisation or to expect that every young person in every school will enjoy exactly the same opportunities. In theory, of course, that would be nice, but I know, as someone who represents a large and diverse

rural area, that in practice a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. The trick is finding a balance that works everywhere and ensures that the minimum acceptable standard of provision is freely and openly available to all, regardless of their financial circumstances.

I sincerely hope that the new guidance will deliver, but as someone who sat through the committee's many evidence sessions and listened to many experts in the area, I can completely understand why many of them are sceptical, given the treatment that instrumental music tuition has received in recent years.

For some people, instrumental music tuition might not be the be-all and end-all. I disagree with that, and it seems that many members across the chamber do, too. Regardless of the importance that people attach to music, the problem is that the issue is emblematic of the wider problems in Scottish education and a growing sense that things are getting worse rather than better for our young people, who are experiencing fewer choices than there were when I was in school. I do not want to get too political in a committee debate, but it is inescapable that all of that has happened under a Government that has so clearly taken its eye off the ball.

The committee's report identifies a number of important principles and points for action. The test for the Government and the Parliament will be whether we see change on the ground. It is not too late to turn back because, across the nation, we still have the building blocks of a world-leading instrumental education system. As our convener said, we are at a tipping point, but that does not mean that we need to tip over the edge. We do not need to accept that.

16:44

**John Swinney:** For anybody who wished to assess the prevailing view on the value of music education and musical experience and their significance for the lives of individuals in our society and young people, in particular, the explanation that Tom Arthur provided in his speech should give enormous comfort and reassurance on the depth of music's value to society.

That point was reinforced by Jenny Gilruth's quoting of Alice Ferguson, one of the young people who appeared before the Education and Skills Committee, who described what we do not often hear about in these debates: the impact and the outcome of her music tuition experience, which she explained made her more confident and resilient and boosted her mental health. Those are strong sentiments. That point about the rationale for and the benefit and impact of music tuition

stands in stark contrast to the comments of the headteacher in England whom Liz Smith spoke about. The headteacher's view was that music tuition did not have a place in the formative experience of young people in our society. Liz Smith's disapproval of those comments as being a completely and utterly inappropriate view of the world was widely endorsed across the chamber. I whole-heartedly associate myself with Liz Smith's disapproval of those remarks.

Iain Gray referred to Angus MacDonald's description of the debate as involving a "conundrum", which is a pretty fair assessment of the dilemmas that lie at its heart. There is one central dilemma, which is about the degree to which this should be a matter for local discretion or a matter for national determination. There is, of course, no perfect answer to that. There may be a halfway house: Mr Mundell speculated that a minimum standard of provision that does not reinforce disadvantage might be the absolute minimum for a halfway house between those options, which is exactly where the music education partnership group process and the working group has got us to. COSLA's children and young people board has agreed minimum standards of eligibility that will be observed across the country. That is an important point.

Parliament has to think through whether it is pursuing localism or national direction. I am afraid that I am going to have to say a few political things—members would not expect otherwise. The Conservatives regularly come to the chamber to demand localism and attack me for centralisation. Today, they have kind of argued that I should be applying more centralisation and that I should not be allowing the postcode lottery that Rachael Hamilton talked about. However, that is what comes of local discretion, unless Parliament affords me the powers to direct that I do not currently have and which, in many respects, the Conservatives reject on all occasions when that option is put to them.

**Oliver Mundell:** Does the cabinet secretary realise that there is a distinction between the choices that councils want to make and those that they have to make and that it is not true localism if councils face restrictions in relation to making the choices that they feel are best?

**John Swinney:** That brings me on to the next conundrum in the debate: the central question of the financial context and the experience of individuals. I do not have a minute's patience with the Conservatives for moaning about the public finances. I asked Gordon Lindhurst what the Conservative Party's budget proposals would have done to enhance the money available to local authorities around the country on 1 April 2019. The answer is that the proposals would have done

nothing—absolutely nothing—apart from creating a £500 million reduction in the available public finances because of the tax cuts that the Conservatives wanted to put in place. I do not say that to be difficult. These are the choices that the Conservatives offer us and which they talk about in their press releases and their debates, and they still want us to spend more money.

On the other side of the argument, some local authorities clearly share the outlook and the perspective that Mr Arthur brought to the debate. Although it is tough—and I accept that it is tough for local authorities; I would not try to suggest otherwise—they are attaching to music tuition the priority that Mr Arthur wants to have attached to it through the choices that they are making. I would simply encourage more local authorities to think about some of those questions as they undertake their budget decisions.

**Oliver Mundell:** Will the cabinet secretary give way?

**John Swinney:** Forgive me, but I have two more points to make before I close.

Mr Greer raised a difficult issue to resolve, which is the question of when tuition relevant to the achievement of an SQA qualification begins. That is a difficult question. In general, when we debate subject choices, as we will do tomorrow, none of us can say at what moment a child is on the trajectory that is heading for an SQA qualification. The only way to give a proper answer to Mr Greer and to get round that question of when tuition should be free is to say that instrumental tuition should not have a charge. However, we have to confront some of the issues that come out of that.

Liz Smith asked about funding for the music education partnership group. I am under the impression that the financial arrangements are acceptable to the music education partnership group, although Liz Smith's question has prompted me to go back and look at that again, just to make sure. In my closing few seconds, I want to put on record how much I value the work of the partnership group, which is of the highest quality, is done with courtesy and energy and is designed to bring people together.

I hope that the debate has helped to bring the national Parliament and our local authorities closer together in relation to the choices that are made to try to overcome the challenges that Mr MacDonald set for us in resolving this conundrum. During the debate, we have had a healthy airing of some of those questions.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Johann Lamont to close the debate for the Education and Skills Committee.

16:51

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** There are a number of challenges in summing up the debate as the deputy convener of the Education and Skills Committee. One is that I am speaking on behalf of the committee, so I shall have to do my best to constrain my comments to that. Another challenge is that of responding to some of the more engaging speeches. I will not attempt to respond to Stewart Stevenson's peroration—I shall go back and look at it again to get a proper measure of its substance and breadth.

Before I speak on behalf of the committee, I will make one personal comment, which is that it was a delight to be part of the inquiry. It was a reminder, if one was needed, of just how important and powerful music can be in all our lives. Music is partly about our culture and our background, which explains why I was listening to Calum Kennedy when everybody else was listening to the Beatles. My son learned music in Glasgow, where he was afforded opportunities to understand the joy of music for itself. Tom Arthur's points about the intrinsic value of music were powerful. Much of the debate was about the other things that music gives, but Mr Arthur talked powerfully about the simple joy of understanding music and being moved by it.

I will comment on what members have said and highlight a few notable parts of the committee's inquiry and report. Angus MacDonald mentioned the petition that was lodged by Ralph Riddiough, which called on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to change the law to ensure that instrumental music tuition is free of charge. I am aware that Mr Riddiough is pursuing other avenues with his petition, and I will not comment on those, but the evidence that was gathered by the Public Petitions Committee, of which I am the convener, was useful as a foundation for the Education and Skills Committee's inquiry. We were struck by just how much people care about the issues and by the trouble that people went to and the time that they took to engage with the petition.

The Education and Skills Committee backs the principle that instrumental music tuition should not be charged for in any local authority, although we recognise the difficult choices that local authorities face when setting their budgets each year. As has been said, we heard from West Lothian Council, which, in 2018-19, introduced fees of £354 although it previously provided instrumental music tuition free. That resulted in a significant reduction in the number of students and a consequent cut to its IMT budget from nearly £1 million to £500,000.

It was clear to us that West Lothian Council's decision was not taken lightly. In oral evidence, Councillor David Dodds of West Lothian Council,

reflecting on the impact of the introduction of charges, said:

“The problem is that although the standard charge that we have introduced might be an equal charge, it is not an equitable charge. Families who have a reasonable amount of disposable income will be able to meet the charge, as well as the sibling charge. However, some families who face that charge are looking for money for it once they have paid for the basics such as heating, food and clothing.”—*[Official Report, Education and Skills Committee, 21 November 2018; c 9.]*

Ross Greer also reflected on that point.

The committee also picked up on the point that, if a young person's friends were dropping out of music tuition, they would often choose to do the same even though their family could afford to pay for it. Such an exodus would then inflict further damage to music tuition in an area.

Despite the disparities in local authorities' approaches to charging, it is important to state that, like COSLA and the Scottish Government, the committee does not favour a one-size-fits-all national service. The rich tapestry of Scotland's music scene—which consists of pipe bands, orchestras and classical performers as well as rock and pop groups—depends on a wide range of instrumental tuition being offered by individual instrumental music services rather than a narrower offering that teaches only lower-cost instruments. Members across the chamber will know that different parts of the country, from Shetland downwards, have different musical traditions and strengths—indeed, we have heard about them today—that are best supported by local services that can reflect them.

Members mentioned the concern that, when young people drop out, the ability to create and bring together orchestras or bands is reduced. The lack of such broader group opportunities also limits people's experience, as Alison Harris highlighted.

The committee heard evidence that charging some young people before they reach SQA examination level can preclude their becoming proficient enough to pass an exam or can deter them from taking up an instrument in the first place. In its written submission, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland stated:

“A child aged between 8 and 10 in 2018, who cannot access instrumental tuition due to the barrier posed by fees, and who is aged 18-20 in ten years' time at point of entry to HE will not be able to demonstrate a skill level sufficient to secure entry to Scotland's national conservatoire. In turn, this will impact upon the quality of Scotland's national orchestras and other ensembles, and its international reputation more broadly.”

In one of the committee's focus groups, members heard that, in order to be accepted into the conservatoire's bachelor of education degree programme, candidates must play an advanced

piano piece at interview. If piano were to be not widely offered by candidates' instrumental music services, that could present a barrier to those from less affluent families who wished to become music teachers but were unable to afford private tuition. If individual music services are stretched and charges are introduced or increased year on year, we risk reducing the diversity of those who take part and, therefore, are able to pursue a career in music—or, indeed, reducing their love of music.

Another risk that was mentioned earlier by the convener is that the on-going reduction in tutor numbers, which is resulting from the financial situation that instrumental music services face, could reduce the diversity of instruments that they offer. That would be a tragedy, and it would threaten the vibrant musical scene that we all know Scotland has.

We have heard about the benefits of being involved with music, and the committee heard evidence from young people who spoke about its importance for their confidence and mental health. They identified social skills, self-confidence, learning to focus and being creative in problem solving as benefits of learning a musical instrument. To my mind, that sounds like the epitome of what curriculum for excellence aims to deliver: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. If we are to retain a broad education for Scotland's young people, opportunities such as instrumental music tuition must be preserved.

My final point relates to the core issue in both the report and the debate: the extent to which local authorities' decisions on music tuition are being driven by a lack of resources. The evidence that has been given to the committee over a long period of time, on a broader range of issues, has consistently flagged up the problem of pressure on school resources, support staff and so on, so there is a broader context to the problem in education. The report tries to say that, when we make such choices when funding is limited, we must not think that music tuition is an easy cut or something that is somehow not core to the business of education. I hope that the report is seen in that context and that people will think that music should be supported, not because some people have made a fuss about it but because there is a genuine understanding that it is a core part of our education and our aspiration for our young people. I look forward to continuing to work alongside the Scottish Government and COSLA to achieve that aspiration.

## Business Motion

16:59

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S5M-17113, in the name of Graeme Dey, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees to the following revisions to the programme of business for Thursday 2 May 2019—

delete

2.00 pm Ministerial Statement: The Scottish Government's Response to the Sturrock Review

insert

2.00 pm Portfolio Question Time:  
Communities and Local Government

and delete

5.00 pm Decision Time

insert

5.30 pm Decision Time.—[*Graeme Dey*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** Before we turn to decision time, members may like to join me in welcoming to our gallery the Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir. [*Applause.*]

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Ken Macintosh):** We have only one question at decision time today. The question is, that motion S5M-17059, in the name of Clare Adamson, on the Education and Skills Committee's report "A note of concern: The future of instrumental music tuition in schools", be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the conclusions in the Education and Skills Committee's 1st Report, 2019 (Session 5), *A note of concern: The future of instrumental music tuition in schools* (SP Paper 450).

## Parkinson's in Scotland

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame):** The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S5M-15746, in the name of Miles Briggs, on Parkinson's in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament understands that Parkinson's is the second most common neurodegenerative condition after Alzheimer's; recognises that it has a profound impact on people with the condition, and their close friends and family; welcomes what it sees as a comprehensive new report from Parkinson's UK, *People. Parkinson's. Scotland. What do we know about services and support for people with Parkinson's in Scotland?*; notes with concern that it suggests that there are about 12,400 people in the country with the condition and that this is expected to increase by 40% within 20 years; acknowledges the view that the Scottish Government, NHS boards and health and social care partnerships must plan now to meet the care needs of the growing number of people with Parkinson's; accepts that it is a very complex condition with over 40 recognised symptoms, which can affect every aspect of daily living and can require ongoing support from a multidisciplinary team of health professionals; understands with concern that 10% of neurologist and medicine for older people consultant posts in Scotland is currently vacant and that waiting times are growing; believes that Scotland has fewer Parkinson's nurses than it needs and that, in NHS Lothian, NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Highland and NHS Forth Valley, there are reportedly about half the number of required nurses; understands that around one in every five people with the condition has extremely high levels of care need; believes that it can be challenging for people with Parkinson's to access the information, care and support that they need to maintain their independence and prevent emergency hospital and care home admissions; celebrates what it sees as the excellent work that is carried out by NHS and social care professionals across the country to provide better support for people with Parkinson's and their carers, including as members of the UK Parkinson's Excellence Network, and applauds the efforts of Parkinson's UK's small team of staff and over 300 volunteers to support everyone in Scotland who is living with the condition.

17:02

**Miles Briggs (Lothian) (Con):** I thank colleagues from across the chamber for supporting my motion, which has allowed me to bring the debate to the chamber this evening. I pay tribute to the excellent work of Parkinson's UK in Scotland, and commend for their efforts all those who work, volunteer and fundraise for the charity, including many people in my Lothian region.

We will all have a family member, friend or colleague or will know someone in our community who has Parkinson's. It is a condition that can be utterly devastating for many individuals and their loved ones. Many of us remember with great fondness our colleague Margo MacDonald. Those of us who were lucky enough to know her saw at

first hand how she did not allow her Parkinson's to define her. I know that Margo is still very much missed by her close friends—including you, Presiding Officer.

Parkinson's is the second most common degenerative disease after Alzheimer's, and about 30 people in Scotland are diagnosed with it every week. Although it is most associated with old age, one person in seven with Parkinson's is under 65. That is another reason why I campaigned for and welcome the extension of free personal care to under-65s.

More and more of us can expect to have direct or close experience of Parkinson's as the number of people who have it is expected to increase by 40 per cent within the next two decades, so we all want to ensure that the best possible health and support services are available for people with Parkinson's, and those who help to care for and look after them. Anyone who reads Parkinson's UK's detailed and comprehensive report "People. Parkinson's. Scotland. What do we know about services and support for people with Parkinson's in Scotland?" will share my concerns that Scotland is not providing the level and quality of services and support that every person with Parkinson's deserves. I note that 20 per cent of people with Parkinson's have extremely high levels of care need.

### Parkinson's UK has talked about

"a Scotland-wide under-provision of services for people with Parkinson's."

It is therefore alarming that about one in every 10 consultant posts in neurology and medicine for older people is unfilled, with particular pressures in some areas meaning that the numbers of vacancies in some national health service boards are even worse.

On waiting times for new out-patient appointments ahead of diagnosis, the vast majority of boards are regularly unable to meet the 12-week target. In July last year, it took more than 42 weeks for 95 per cent of people who had been referred to see a neurologist in NHS Grampian, and the wait was almost 33 weeks in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Most people who are living with Parkinson's will say that the most important person who helps them to live with their condition is their Parkinson's nurse, but although Scotland should have at least 40 full-time Parkinson's nurses, we have fewer than 30. Only one health board—NHS Western Isles—has adequate specialist Parkinson's nurse provision, and in four mainland health boards, including NHS Lothian in my region, there are about half the number of nurses that they should have. That means that local Parkinson's nurses are often dealing with many more patients than the

recommended maximum case load. NHS Lothian has three nurses who are responsible for helping almost 1,800 patients, when Parkinson's UK recommends

"a maximum case load of 300"

for each full-time nurse in an urban area. In Orkney and Shetland, there are currently no Parkinson's nurses at all. The situation is letting down people with Parkinson's and our NHS staff, and often adds to the pressures on general practices.

Ensuring that we have an adequate number of neurologists and Parkinson's nurses in all parts of Scotland must be a priority for the Government. I continue to call for a review of all specialist nurse provision in order to ensure that we can plan for future need and put in place the number of nurse specialists that we require today. I hope that Scottish National Party ministers will look at that call again.

The report makes key recommendations across a range of areas, including good practice in multidisciplinary teams and mental health teams, self-management, enabling technological innovation, and anticipatory care planning.

I will talk briefly about access to advanced treatments for Parkinson's. Sadly, for a few people, the standard Parkinson's medication does not work effectively, and they can have very severe symptoms, including painful cramps and being unable to move or having uncontrollable movement. Those patients need access to advanced treatments, which can include deep-brain stimulation surgery or advanced medications that are delivered by injections or pumps. People who are in that position are concerned that the new national deep-brain stimulation centre in Glasgow has incredibly long waiting times—currently more than a year for assessment and surgery. Therefore, it is clear that more theatre capacity and staff capacity are needed in order to further develop that vital treatment.

In addition, not all NHS boards are providing access to apomorphine injections or pumps, and there are huge variations in prescribing them. We also need more of the specialist support that is required to initiate and monitor people's use of apomorphine, where it is being provided.

Although Duodopa, which is a treatment that delivers an infusion of medication to the intestine, has been approved by the Scottish Medicines Consortium, only three people have been able to access the treatment in Scotland since 2016. We need to better understand why more patients who have a very low quality of life are not being offered the treatment. It can and does have a transformative effect on patients' lives, as one of my constituents in Edinburgh, David Taylor, who is

a Falklands veteran, has testified. I am interested to hear from the minister in his closing speech about what plans the Scottish Government has to advance such Parkinson's treatments.

I commend again Parkinson's UK and the 13 clear and positive recommendations that it has produced in its very useful and important report. People who are living with Parkinson's across Scotland are looking for ministers and Parliament to set out how they will take forward improvements, so that everyone who is diagnosed with Parkinson's can be confident that they will have access to the very best possible healthcare and support.

17:09

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I congratulate Miles Briggs on securing the debate, which provides an opportunity to discuss the valuable and comprehensive report into Parkinson's in Scotland, just a few weeks after world Parkinson's day on 11 April.

Parkinson's is the second most common neurodegenerative condition after Alzheimer's, and its complex and progressive nature can have profound effects, with its symptoms and impacts affecting every individual differently.

For many years, Parkinson's UK has given voice to sufferers and has supported them in all aspects of life. Through the weekly meetings of its Ayrshire branch and Isle of Arran group in my constituency, to its monthly massage sessions, to Zumba and pilates classes and to its working age Parkinson's group, many people with Parkinson's in Cunninghame North have benefited directly from its work over the past 50 years.

Parkinson's UK's collective experience of working directly with people in Scotland means that it is well placed to feed back to policy makers about how we can better support people who are affected. Its report, "People. Parkinson's. Scotland. What do we know about services and support for people with Parkinson's in Scotland?" was published in February, and has been backed by leading neurologists. A key report recommendation, which is highlighted in Miles Briggs's motion, is that we ensure that everyone with Parkinson's has regular and easy contact with a specialist Parkinson's nurse at every stage of their condition, wherever they live. People with Parkinson's frequently say that their nurse specialist is the person who makes the single biggest difference to them in managing life with the disease. The value of nurse specialists' work cannot be understated.

The report highlights that across Scotland there should be at least 40 Parkinson's nurses; instead, there are fewer than 30. Indeed, Ayrshire has the

equivalent of two nurses, whereas it should have 3.3 nurses to serve adequately the estimated 1,000 people living with Parkinson's in Ayrshire. I have engaged with NHS Ayrshire and Arran and the Scottish Government over several months, and I am pleased that the health board is redesigning its Parkinson's service into multidisciplinary teams. Those will provide assessment and support to people living with Parkinson's, thereby freeing up specialist nurses to see newly diagnosed patients who are at an advanced stage, and those with particularly complex needs.

However, I still support calls to increase specialist nurse provision. I was therefore pleased when the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, Joe FitzPatrick, confirmed that the Scottish Government is working with partners and stakeholders to develop nursing roles to meet Scotland's future needs, under the transforming roles programme. As part of that, a working group will consider the clinical nurse specialist role to ensure that it is nationally consistent, sustainable and progressive. I hope that that working group will, ultimately, help to bolster the number of specialist nurses in Ayrshire and across Scotland.

In Ayrshire, there is currently one consultant geriatrician with an interest in Parkinson's, and members of the Ayrshire working age Parkinson's group do not get consultant appointments as often as they feel is necessary. NHS Ayrshire and Arran has tried numerous times to recruit a second consultant, but with no success, which has given rise to concerns about how high-quality support for Parkinson's disease sufferers in Ayrshire can be sustained without increased specialist staffing, especially given that patient numbers are expected to increase by 40 per cent in the next 20 years.

Ayrshire's recruitment difficulties are not unique: one in 10 consultant posts in neurology and medicine for older people in Scotland is currently unfilled. One detrimental effect is that waiting times for first appointments are lengthening, which is leaving people with suspected Parkinson's facing longer periods without a treatment plan or a diagnosis to explain worrying symptoms. Scotland can and must do better for the thousands of people with Parkinson's by making necessary preparations now to ensure that health boards can recruit the neurological consultants that they need. The Scottish Government has already committed to supporting a review of consultant neurologists' and neurophysiologists' roles to make posts more attractive. That should bring more people into neurology and help to retain them.

I am pleased that the Scottish Government is now considering responses to its consultation on the draft national action plan on neurological

conditions, and I look forward to its publication later this year. I am confident that the plan will respond positively to concerns and recommendations of Parkinson's UK and others who provided expertise and experience throughout the consultation process.

I echo Miles Briggs's sentiments towards the hardworking staff and dedicated team of volunteers who make Parkinson's UK's life-changing work a reality. The guidance and support that they provide is second to none and has immeasurably improved the lives of people with what is a complex and often devastating condition.

17:13

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** I, too, congratulate my colleague Miles Briggs on securing time in the chamber for the debate.

As we have heard, Parkinson's disease is a degenerative neurological condition that predominantly, although not exclusively, manifests itself in the older generation. Given that, as we are all aware, our population is growing older, it is reasonable to assume that the incidence of conditions such as Parkinson's will also grow.

If we look at the progress in treatment of conditions such as cancer in the past couple of decades, we can see that science is remarkably capable of finding solutions, yet when we compare treatments and medication over the same period for neurological conditions, we see a very different picture. It is obvious that such conditions have not had the same priority in drug and treatment development.

Most members will know that my personal interest in neurological conditions sits with motor neurone disease, which was first brought to my attention by Gordon Aikman, shortly followed by Doddie Weir—two remarkable men who raised awareness and fought for better treatments for those who will follow, all the while battling against this cruel and degenerative condition.

It is hard to hear Doddie say:

"it will come too late for me but I want to make sure others have a better chance than me."

We should stop to think about what he is saying: the disease will take him but, even knowing that, he is prepared to use his time effectively to campaign for those who will follow him. He has already confounded medical wisdom not just by being here, but by still being on his feet and speaking with such passion and humour, or so he seems to think.

Before I learned about these cases, I was pretty unaware of such conditions. Remarkable as Gordon and Doddie are, it should not be left to them and others like them to bring the conditions



into the public consciousness. Like Parkinson's, MND makes sufferers unsteady and it can affect their speech. I remember hearing Gordon speaking about the fact that many people just assumed that he had drunk too much alcohol, which was an assumption born out of ignorance.

We need to be more aware and, in being so, recognise the need to advance medical science in the understanding and treatment of neurological conditions. Organisations such as Parkinson's UK, MND Scotland and the My Name's Doddie Foundation have a huge role to play in that fight, and we thank them for the work that they continue to do.

Surely, though, it is time for Governments—I say Governments—to step up to the plate and take a swing along with those organisations. If we are to rid ourselves of—or, at the very least, help to contain—these hugely debilitating conditions in a short time, it will take a collective effort from all of us. If that challenge is not accepted, the issues will only grow, given the country's ageing demographic, as I mentioned at the start of my speech.

Will the minister, in his summing up, say whether the Scottish Government will commit to working with the third sector organisations that are leading the charge? I ask the Government to play a significant role and to detail what its commitment will look like.

17:16

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I, too, thank Miles Briggs for bringing this important debate to the chamber. I welcome the staff from Parkinson's UK, those who are living with Parkinson's and their friends and family who are here this evening, and I thank those who are listening to the debate on television. It is down to the constant support of Parkinson's UK and the dedicated activism of volunteers that, each and every day, we are closer to finding a cure for this debilitating disease.

As Miles Briggs's motion rightly points out, more than 12,000 people in Scotland are living with Parkinson's—that is about one in every 375 adults. Findings from Parkinson's UK show that, each week, about 30 people are diagnosed with the disease. That means that, every week, the lives of 30 people, as well as the lives of their families and friends and their communities, are changed forever. Each diagnosis affects the patient and their support network differently. Parkinson's UK and hundreds of local Parkinson's support groups provide invaluable support for sufferers.

However, given that the number of diagnoses is predicted to increase by about 40 per cent in the next 20 years, the Scottish Government and our

health boards need to step up to the plate. Currently, a number of Scottish health boards have half the number of Parkinson's specialist nurses that are needed. It is deeply concerning that about 10 per cent of neurologist and older people consultant posts in Scotland are vacant. In NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, which covers my constituency, there are the equivalent of seven full-time Parkinson's nurses for the more than 2,000 Parkinson's patients that the health board covers. The nurses are spectacular and do a tremendous job, but there are not enough of them.

I fully support the findings of the Parkinson's UK report, and I echo its calls for the Scottish Government not just to meet the organisation, but to discuss the implementation of the 13 recommendations. I recognise that there is great complexity to the disease. There are more than 40 known symptoms, but that is not an excuse for inaction; instead, it underlines why we need to take action now. It is down to each and every one of us in the chamber to provide the support to do so.

I will spend the rest of my time talking about the fantastic work that is carried out by the Helensburgh and Dunbartonshire Parkinson's support group. More than 150 people in my constituency are living with the disease, and the group provides a constant source of help and support to them. During Parkinson's awareness week, the group took to the streets and collected an incredible £1,100 for research.

The group understands exactly what those living with Parkinson's disease and their families need in order to make day-to-day life more manageable. It runs weekly tai chi lessons—which I am tempted to join in—because it understands that movement and balance exercises help with many of the most common Parkinson's side effects. Tai chi is also beneficial to mental health and wellbeing, which understandably are another aspect of an individual's health that can be affected by a Parkinson's diagnosis. The group also runs a number of trips and social events which allow people with Parkinson's to get together, socialise and share their experiences. I understand that strong drink might be taken, Presiding Officer.

When I spoke to the group to ask if there was anything in particular that they wanted me to raise in this debate, the message was clear. They said, "We need more research projects in Scotland. We need shorter waiting times for neurology appointments and more Parkinson's nurses and multidisciplinary teams for Parkinson's care." That is not me making a political point as a politician; the points are from a group of people who are united by a goal to find a cure for Parkinson's and to make living with it more bearable. I urge the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing

and the Scottish Government to listen to those who understand the impact of a Parkinson's diagnosis the most. The time to act is now.

17:21

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I warmly congratulate Miles Briggs on his motion and on securing the debate. I also thank Parkinson's UK in Scotland for an excellent briefing and for its work all year round to raise awareness of Parkinson's and highlight the steps that need to be taken to provide the services that we need now and in the future. I echo Jackie Baillie's encouragement to the minister to meet Parkinson's UK to discuss the report and the implementation of its key recommendations.

I took part in a similar debate last week to mark multiple sclerosis awareness week, and there are obvious similarities between the two neurological conditions. Both are complex and very specific to each individual, and both can be devastating across the board in their effects. Similar numbers of people are impacted by the conditions, but the projection for Parkinson's of a 20 per cent increase over the next decade and a 40 per cent increase over the next 20 years is a truly alarming prospect and underscores the importance of taking steps to make sure that we have services in place to meet the growing demand.

The services that we need are specialist, because we cannot simply rely on a generic model, important though that support will be. Workforce planning is essential, because we are already seeing lengthy waits for neurological appointments across the country and a lack of full-time Parkinson's nurses to meet current demand, as other members have observed.

Reading the briefing, I was struck by the scale of the mental health dimension. The figures are staggering: 50 per cent of people with Parkinson's experience anxiety, 40 per cent suffer depression and a third have dementia. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach Scotland-wide, because we need flexible models of care. Parkinson's UK in Scotland is right to say that

"services need to be matched to the needs of people locally and the local situation".

Although the way in which the service is delivered may differ across the country, the quality and accessibility of that service must remain consistent. At present, Orkney has no resident consultant and relies on NHS Grampian, which is already under serious pressure to meet demand in the Grampian region. That is perhaps no great surprise, but there is also no specialist Parkinson's nurse in Orkney, although a specialist MS nurse is available to patients. We rely on a Parkinson's nurse who is based in Aberdeen and who does

what she can to provide excellent support, but on-going support at such a distance presents challenges. An elderly constituent about whom I was made aware recently became extremely unwell because of his Parkinson's medication. His GP was unable to sort out the problem, given its specialist nature, and his situation got progressively worse over a number of weeks. It was not until the Parkinson's nurse was able to make the trip up from Aberdeen that a proper assessment could be made, a change in treatment recommended and a reduction in the severity of my constituent's symptoms achieved. That is simply not good enough.

I am therefore grateful to Parkinson's UK for the efforts that it has been engaged in through the local Parkinson's community in Orkney. A recent meeting in Kirkwall was extremely well attended, and there was a real appetite for establishing drop-in events as well as tailored exercise classes for people with Parkinson's, to match what we have heard exists in other parts of the country.

There is also a strong demand for a locally based Parkinson's nurse to work in collaboration with other health professionals and allied health professionals. I understand that that was the subject of discussions between Parkinson's UK and medical and nursing directors at NHS Orkney last week. I have been told that those discussions were positive and that a shared business plan is being developed with a view to working out how to proceed thereafter. I look forward to supporting those efforts.

In the meantime, I thank Miles Briggs again for bringing this debate to the Parliament, and I thank Parkinson's UK in Scotland for the support that it continues to provide to those who are affected by Parkinson's.

17:25

**Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab):** I refer members to my entry in the register of interests. When I was elected to Parliament in May 2016, I had the privilege of being employed by Parkinson's UK. Obviously, I relinquished that post following the election.

I, too, thank Miles Briggs for lodging the motion, which has provided members with the opportunity to highlight the health and care challenges that are faced by the more than 12,000 of our constituents who battle Parkinson's every day. As we have heard, that number is set to rise by a fifth within the next decade and by 40 per cent within two decades.

Many of the growing number of our constituents who live with Parkinson's will have some or all of its debilitating symptoms. Maybe they will have a tremor, muscle stiffness or slow movement. Many

may not have those symptoms, or they may have some or all of them to varying degrees or even at different times. How Parkinson's affects people differs from person to person, often from day to day, and even from hour to hour. That is why the care that is provided to a person with Parkinson's needs to be personal, specialist and tailored to the individual. However, we know from far too many of our constituents that, despite the often heroic efforts of our health and social care workers, the care that is received by many who live with Parkinson's does not always meet their individual needs.

The financial cuts that are faced by our health and social care partnerships, the shortage of doctors and specialist nurses, and the rising waiting times are all laid bare by Parkinson's UK in its "Parkinson's. People. Scotland." report. We can see examples of those things in our own constituencies.

For a number of years, a recruitment crisis in NHS Ayrshire and Arran has left the region with just one specialist consultant geriatrician with an interest in Parkinson's instead of three, who works with just two Parkinson's nurses. As a result, some patients with Parkinson's have reported waiting more than a year for an appointment with their consultant. That has deprived them of the vital specialist care that they need.

Good work is taking place in NHS Ayrshire and Arran to try to mitigate those problems and improve services for people with Parkinson's. In particular, the development of multidisciplinary teams is an important step towards delivering more integrated, person-centred care. However, even the most effective service redesign is not a substitute for adequate resources.

Parkinson's is a complex condition that requires specialist care. The expertise of consultants and Parkinson's nurses is essential, but, too often, that is just not available as quickly or as easily as it needs to be.

In large parts of the South Scotland region, there are also serious challenges relating to rurality and isolation. Around 12 per cent of people with Parkinson's live in remote or very remote communities. That can create an additional barrier to accessing the specialist care that is needed. I know about the fantastic work that the small team of two Parkinson's nurses does in Dumfries and Galloway to ensure as best as it can that care is available across the region to those who live in rural and remote areas, despite the challenges that that poses.

Support is not provided only by our health and social care services, of course. I mentioned earlier that I had the privilege of working for Parkinson's UK. I doubt that I will ever come across a more

caring, compassionate and professional group than the small team at Parkinson's UK in Scotland. It really does punch above its weight in supporting people with Parkinson's, often in truly innovative ways, such as in the recent campaign to raise awareness of Parkinson's. Buildings were lit up blue, including in the artists' town of Kirkcudbright, where the Parkinson's UK fundraiser Jan Mattison and the local community lit up the whole town with examples of Billy Connolly's artwork. That gave a new meaning to the big yin turning the air blue.

A small army of volunteers supports the work of the charity. It is a truly humbling experience to work with those volunteers, who often live with Parkinson's themselves or care for a loved one who lives with Parkinson's, and to realise that they have given up their time to help others through running a local support group, for example.

I am delighted to see that the number of support groups continues to grow, including through the launch next month of a young persons' Parkinson's cafe in Dumfries, to complement the excellent support group that is already in the town.

I want to say a heartfelt thank you to Parkinson's UK in Scotland and to the hundreds of volunteers for their dedication and support to all those who live with Parkinson's in my constituency and across Scotland. I urge the Government to show that same commitment, implement the recommendations of the "People. Parkinson's. Scotland." report and help to ensure—in the wise words of Parkinson's UK themselves—that we can bring forward

"the day when nobody fears living with Parkinson's".

17:30

**The Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing (Joe FitzPatrick):** I am pleased to be able to respond on behalf of the Government, and to add my congratulations to Miles Briggs on securing this debate.

The Scottish Government wants people with Parkinson's to be active citizens, to participate in and contribute to our society, and to maintain their dignity and human rights. I therefore join other members in paying tribute to the support that Parkinson's UK in Scotland and others offer to help people with Parkinson's to live as well as possible for as long as possible.

I thank members from across the chamber for their considered contributions, and I will talk about a couple of those now.

Liam McArthur spoke about matters in his constituency. I had the privilege of attending NHS Orkney's annual review and meeting one of the patients who used the specialist multiple sclerosis nurse. It was really interesting to hear how

important that service was, so I completely understand the desire for a specialist nurse to be available to people with Parkinson's in the northern isles. As is often the case, Mr McArthur illustrated many of the points that I wanted to make—in this instance, on the fantastic on-going work on how the issues in Orkney can be addressed. There is definitely some particularly good teamwork going on up there to try to ensure that people with Parkinson's and other neurological conditions get the best possible support.

I was particularly interested to hear the examples from Jackie Baillie's constituency. I will not rehearse them, because she gave them perfectly, but they provide me the opportunity to talk about another example of more holistic and non-clinical support. I am going to refer to a tweet from sportscotland, which I think was in response to last Thursday's debate on sport. It is a hangover from that, but it really shows how sport, physical activity and health can all come together. Sportscotland was tweeting about a boxing club in Glasgow, Rock Steady Boxing, which it says is

"fighting back against Parkinson's with a revolutionary exercise programme which is having dramatic results".

That is important, because it is not all about clinical intervention; wider support is required. That goes back to the points that members made about how Parkinson's UK in Scotland pulls together a partnership approach with so many organisations, for so many people.

As we heard from Jackie Baillie and others, Parkinson's is a complex and progressive condition that currently affects more than 12,000 people in Scotland. We also heard that, over the next 20 years, its prevalence is forecast to increase rapidly. We recognise that demand for support is growing faster than our traditional services were designed for, and change is therefore essential. The principles of the integration of health and social care support are central to that, and it involves a greater emphasis on joined-up services for people who need to access them and a focus on anticipatory and preventative care. The integration of health and social care support is therefore one of the most significant reforms of public services in Scotland. It is about ensuring that services are suitable and sustainable for the future, enabling those who use them to get the right support. A number of members made the point that that has to be personalised support, whatever the patient's needs are at any point in their care journey.

Brian Whittle asked us, as the Government, to take a swing against neurological conditions, and we have made it a priority within our programme for government to improve access to care and

support for people with neurological conditions, to enable them to live well on their own terms.

Over the past 18 months, we have worked hard in collaboration with the neurological community to develop Scotland's first national action plan on neurological conditions. As Kenneth Gibson said, we are reviewing the responses to our consultation on the action plan, which we intend to publish in its final form later this year. The draft plan sets out 17 commitments across integrated care and support services, which were informed by what people told us about their life experiences and priorities. The commitments very much echo the findings of the Parkinson's UK report, which reassures us that we are focusing on the right areas to make the difference that people want and which Scotland needs.

Our five-year plan aims to build a sustainable neurological workforce, to improve the co-ordination of services and support and to realise equitable and timely access, in order to ensure that people experience high standards of person-centred care, at the right time. I will touch on those points in turn.

A number of members raised workforce planning, and Kenneth Gibson has written to me numerous times about that important matter, which is a key focus of the action plan. We expect people with neurological conditions such as Parkinson's to have access to a range of care and support professionals to ensure appropriate management of their condition. That includes specialist nurses; Miles Briggs, Kenneth Gibson and just about everybody who spoke mentioned their fantastic work and how important they are. Since 2015, we have invested £2.4 million in enhancing specialist nursing services. We will explore delivery and workforce models to learn from what is working well.

Our aim is to innovate and enhance existing services, to ensure that people can access the specialist services that they need. We will build on the progress that we have achieved over the past decade—when, for example, the number of consultants with a neurology specialty has increased by more than 50 per cent—to ensure that we have the correct support. We have introduced the real living wage for adult social care support workers. Free personal care is also now available to everyone who is assessed as requiring it, no matter what their age is. Given the time, I will move forward in my notes.

As the motion rightly acknowledges, family and friends play an important role in supporting those with Parkinson's. Without the dedication of unpaid carers, the system would struggle to cope. That is one reason why we introduced the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, which came into effect last April. The act puts in place a system of carers'

rights that is designed to listen to carers, improve consistency of support and prevent problems. It will help to sustain caring relationships and protect carers' health and wellbeing. I apologise that I have not managed to cover all the commitments in the national action plan, but they should embed the 2016 act.

The aim is to reduce the waiting times that people are experiencing. Under the waiting times improvement plan, we recently announced additional investment of £70 million to target long waits, and neurology is one of the specialties that has benefited.

Presiding Officer, I see that I am well over time. The debate has been important, and a lot of good work is going on. I assure members across the chamber that we work regularly with Parkinson's UK in Scotland as one of our key partners for consultation when we make decisions about not just Parkinson's but neurological conditions in general. As Brian Whittle said, although such conditions are very different, they have a lot of similarities in their requirements and in the support that we need to give.

I thank Miles Briggs for bringing the debate to the chamber and I thank everyone for their contributions.

*Meeting closed at 17:38.*



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