

PE1694/Y

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 2 November 2018

The Scottish Government recognises the value of the expressive arts, including music. They provide children and young people with opportunities to be creative and imaginative and to experience inspiration and enjoyment, contributing greatly to children and young people's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. Expressive arts is one of the 8 curriculum areas under the Curriculum for Excellence.

We want to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up, ensuring that our children and young people have the best possible start in life. To help achieve this, we work closely with all key partners across the education system, including local authorities. As you are 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.

The specific level of spending on schools is determined by local authorities. Councils have a legal responsibility for providing an adequate and efficient education, suitable to the needs of every child, in accordance with the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child. Within this settlement, sufficient resource should be made available to schools for supplies and equipment, with specific levels of funding for schools determined by individual councils. Despite the UK Government's cuts to the Scottish Budget, funding to local authorities has been very fair. The Scottish Government is supporting local authorities by delivering a real-terms increase in revenue and capital funding in 2018/19.

While instrumental music tuition is the responsibility of local authorities, the Scottish Government is supporting music education in a number of ways. Since 2012, we have provided almost £3 million to Sistema Scotland and their 'Big Noise' orchestras, which reaches 2,500 children weekly. We have invested £109 million since 2007 in the Youth Music Initiative. This is helping young people in all 32 local authority areas access music making opportunities and develop their skills for learning. In 2018/19 we are investing a further £9 million, helping ensure every pupil is offered a year of free music tuition by the time they leave primary school. While this is not intended to replace local provision of instrumental music tuition, the Youth Music Initiative Impact findings published on 8 March show it engaged with over 244,000 young people over the last year.

While respecting the autonomy of local councils, I am concerned by decisions by a number of them to reduce access to instrumental music tuition. Earlier this year I met with John Wallace, Chair of the Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG), alongside the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP. At that meeting, I committed to working collaboratively with other stakeholders to find solutions. I accepted an invitation for my officials to join a working group, established by MEPG, and alongside CoSLA officials, to seek to identify ways of ensuring instrumental music remains accessible to all. CoSLA's

Children and Young People Board agreed to their officers joining this working group on 7 September and the working group met for the first time on 4 October. The second meeting is scheduled for 25 October.

You will be aware that I have been invited to give evidence, at the start of December, to the Education and Skills Committee as part of their inquiry into instrumental music tuition in schools.