

## **PE1694/Q**

Music Unions submission of 30 October 2018

The Musicians Union (MU) represents over 30,000 musicians across the UK working in all genres of music performing live, recording, composing and teaching. A significant proportion of these live and work in Scotland and most of these rely on teaching as a source of income at some point in their careers.

The nature of Education in Scotland is currently in a state of flux and as such, it is imperative that instrumental music acquires a greater level of protection than the current situation affords. The status quo is a picture of inequality and inequity, and for many (if not most), wholly inadequate both in terms of the level of provision and the levels of attainment. This is precisely the opposite of the Scottish Government's objectives for delivering excellence and equity for every child in Scotland. Moreover, there is much research which clearly demonstrates that studying a musical instrument has a positive impact on other areas of academic learning. If we are to have a serious discussion about closing the poverty related attainment gap, then this research and its findings should be taken into consideration.

The MU are incredibly concerned at what appears to be the continued decimation of instrumental music provision in schools in local authorities across Scotland. Music services have been struggling to survive amidst various existential threats which have led to devastating year on year cuts to local authority budgets and subsequently, cuts to education budgets. This has had a direct impact on an ever-reducing number of Instrumental Music Teachers which according to EIS figures, has decreased from 1,110 to 640 over the past ten years. This is a reflection on the precarious nature of the work of an instrumental music teacher, yet another strong argument for instrumental music tuition to be protected as statutory. Further to this, there has been a huge increase in local authority charges for music tuition.

The result is nothing short of a postcode lottery for music services between local authorities. Charges vary wildly for lessons and instrument hire - and yet in some local authorities there is still no charge at all. The current situation is potentially devastating to the future of music in Scotland. If students are not provided with the opportunity to learn a musical instrument in school and are unable to access music instruction outside of school because of financial constraints, then we can only anticipate potentially catastrophic effects on the number of professional musicians produced in Scotland who are of a standard to maintain a career in the profession. The damage which this could impact upon our orchestras, the wider music industry and the number of music teachers available to teach future generations of musicians cannot be understated and we need to ensure that they are not only protected but nurtured. Further to this, the opportunity to play in regional and national ensembles is a vital component of the musical experience and provides an important 'shop window' for Scotland.

The development of the night time economy presents another element to this. The night time economy is the fifth largest economy in the UK and where many musicians generate important sources of income - it is increasingly recognised as an area of economic growth. The importance of this sector is being recognised internationally and there are numerous countries and cities who are making real and progressive attempts to cultivate this. Similarly, the impact of cultural tourism in

Scotland should not be discounted as our strong sense of culture is a key draw for many cultural tourists. A depletion of our indigenous pool of musicians, combined with further cuts to the arts generally and a lack of support for grassroots live music venues both in terms of legislation and funding, presents a very real danger of inducing a perfect storm.

It seems we are in the midst of a crisis and yet we consistently see more cuts from struggling local authorities and more charges impacting the poorest students the greatest and also the livelihoods of our music teachers. The Musicians' Union is hugely concerned about the current provisions across all 32 local authorities and would recommend a focus on a number of core principles which echo much of what is called for in the petition.

Firstly, it is the MU's position that every child in Scotland who wishes to learn a musical instrument should have free access to high quality instrumental tuition. This high quality instrumental music provision must be available from a young age, ensuring that there is a closing of the gap between secondary and tertiary education in terms of attainment. The current picture, is one where, because of a lack of affordable and accessible provision, students studying musical instruments in Scotland are not attaining the required standard to continue studying music at tertiary level.

Furthermore, it is our position that instrumental teachers should be paid a professional salary and treated as an integral part of a child's educational journey. The statistics from the EIS which demonstrate a decrease in the number of instrumental teachers from 1,110 to 640 over a decade, demonstrate that this is an increasingly precarious line of work for many music teachers which is both stifling and off-putting.

In a future where Scotland is generating fewer musicians, the impact this could potentially have on the provision of community music is another key area which must not be underestimated. Community music is increasingly valued for its perceived health benefits and for promoting social cohesion. It is well recognised that community music can play a key role in designing and delivering public services, easing pressure on other areas of the national budget.

The MU agrees that every child should have the opportunity to learn an instrument for free in state education, and that every child should have equal access to that, no matter what local authority they happen to reside in or what economic background they come from. Ensuring music as a statutory subject would go some way to provide the kind of protection required to ensure there are enough musicians in Scotland of a standard to maintain not only instrumental music service provisions (to teach future generations) but crucially to perform with our national orchestras and participate in the wider music industry. Without this kind of protection, we are in danger of inducing a talent 'drain' to other areas of the UK (or beyond) where there are more opportunities and infrastructure.

Music has an intrinsic value in and of itself, however we also know that music and musicians carry a cultural and economic value, as well as easing resources in other areas of the national budget such as health and public services. Providing high quality instrumental provision free of charge and for all pupils who wish to take part is the first key step in ensuring that Scotland continues to punch above its weight in

terms of our musical output and how positively that output is perceived, not only at national level but on an international stage for generations to come.