

Agenda Item	21.
Report No	CLH 43/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing Committee

Date: 29 May 2019

Report Title: **Schools Music Tuition**

Report By: Chief Executive of High Life Highland

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on school music tuition which transferred to High Life Highland (HLH) on 1 April 2018 and information on new national guidance which was published in February 2019.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note:
- i. the successful completion of the transfer of music tuition to HLH;
 - ii. early indications of improvement in service delivery since the transfer;
 - iii. the joint guidance published in February 2019 by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Scottish Government and the Music Education Partnership Group; and
 - iv. that historically, the service has complied well with the new national guidance and that this approach is being continued by HLH.

3. Background

- 3.1 The school music tuition service (referred to nationally as IMS) transferred to High Life Highland on 1 April 2018 following the consideration of the Council's Redesign Board at its meeting held on 19 December 2017 and the subsequent approval of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee at its meeting held on 25 January 2018.
- 3.2 Immediately following the transfer of the 54 posts associated with the service and following consultation with the tutors involved, HLH established five new instructor posts funded variously from customer charges and external funding. The new posts started in August 2018. The decision to invest in the service was based on evidence from the Redesign review prior to the transfer and follow up discussions with staff that there was unmet demand.
- 3.3 At the time of the transfer there were examples where similar services in other areas in Scotland were being considered for cuts or closure and in other areas there were campaigns as well as the national campaigns to maintain services. This led to the development of joint guidance being published by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Scottish Government and the Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG). The Guidance can be seen on the COSLA web site: <http://www.cosla.gov.uk/music-instrumental-music-tuition-guidance-2019pdf>.

4. Service Improvements

- 4.1 Since the Council transferred its music tuition service to HLH on 1 April 2018 the number of individual pupils receiving lessons increased from 2,958 to 3,585 (an increase of 21%). This has been achieved through a considerable effort and focus on improving the service by:
 - adding five new posts - three funded through customer income, one through external (grant) funding and one through the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) where the five primary schools in the Inverness High School ASG combined some of their PEF funding to create a post
 - realignment of provision and small increases to existing part-time staff contracts where demand has been identified
 - existing Music Instructors taking on additional pupils
 - developing an on-line management and bookings system which makes it easier for parents to access the service, has streamlined administration, and provided staff and managers with more comprehensive statistical information on which to base future service developments
 - advertising the service in schools, on-line, through social media and on local radio
 - freezing charges at the level set by the Council in the year before the service transferred.
- 4.2 In the three years prior to transfer there had been a sharp decline in pupil numbers. In 2015/16 pupil numbers were 3,450 and this reduced to 3,100 in 2016/17 and 2,900 in 2017/18. It is considered that the greatest contributing factor to the decline was the application of 10% price increases two years in a row, but there is evidence from the review that there were other factors such as the uncertainty of the future of the service leading to poor morale (the national uncertainty described above will have contributed to this) reliance on inefficient paper based systems and processes and a lack of focus on and investment in the development and promotion of the service.

4.3 The associated school groups which have benefited from the additional posts and/or increased contract time are as follows: Grantown; Kingussie; Culloden; Nairn; Inverness Royal Academy; Portree; Plockton; Dingwall; Ullapool.

4.4 As part of HLH's business planning for the growth and development of services, the following options for further developing the music tuition service are being explored:

- Evening music lessons for adults and children - this is a new service which has been successfully run in Culloden Library and options/locations for expanding it are being explored
- Including music activities in the School's Out summer programme
- Widening access to training opportunities (eg. Songs & Games for Little Ones)
- Options for demand led expansion to schools provision are being explored
- Public events which will allow musicians of all ages to come together whilst promoting the schools music service
- Development of an e-newsletter for music tuition parents which will also promote local 'area' groups and ensembles as a pathway to Highland Young Musicians groups membership
- An additional (third) pipe band drumming (and drumkit) post, underwritten by Scottish Schools Pipe Band Trust.

4.5 Highland Young Musicians (the regional orchestras and ensembles) continues to be an important part of the service with c.250 of our young people attending the annual Aviemore Concerts Festival in March 2019. For the first time the event was advertised to the wider public and it attracted higher audience numbers for both of the day's concerts. Macdonald Aviemore Resort has already committed to continue its generous sponsorship of this event for 2020.

4.6 Young people from Highland have had continued success at a national level. In 2018/19 three young people gained places in the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland (NYOS) Senior Orchestra following competitive auditions with one also having been accepted for a course with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain in Liverpool. Several others began their NYOS experiences in the lower level ensembles (again, after competitive audition). A steady number of pupils from Highland continue to gain places on degree and higher education courses throughout Scotland and England.

5. New National Guidance

5.1 While the approach in Highland has been to protect services through growing and developing them, in other parts of Scotland there has been consideration of cuts/reductions in service and significantly increased charges sometimes without consideration being given to alternative approaches. This has led to negative publicity and created a difficult environment for music tuition services across Scotland because of the uncertainty faced by staff and customers. Having been able to break out of this cycle in Highland has meant that staff morale has improved which, in turn, seems to have led to an increased customer confidence in the service.

5.2 The new guidance was developed in response to the national situation described above and can be seen on the COSLA web site: <http://www.cosla.gov.uk/music-instrumental-music-tuition-guidance-2019pdf>. The guidance clarifies that Instrumental Music Tuition is additional to music education in schools and asks local authorities to consider:

- providing fees exemptions for school pupils in receipt of free school meals
- providing fees exemptions for school pupils undertaking an SQA course in music
- the balance between the need to apply charges and the impact on those who are charged
- co-producing charging policies with the people likely to be affected by a charging regime, including instrumental music teachers, parents and pupils
- making efforts to ensure that the parents and carers of those who use services for which there is a charge understand the reasons for charging and its contribution to provision.

5.3 The music tuition service in Highland complies with the guidance in that:

- HLH has continued with the Council's charges which includes exemption from fees for children of families in receipt of benefits and those undertaking SQA courses
- the music tuition review which was undertaken by the Council in 2018 surveyed current and past customers and held workshops with staff, both of which included questions and discussion on charges
- the peer review included consultation with "Friends of Highland Young Musicians" which is an independent charity which supports the Highland Young Musicians Groups. The discussion included charges and exemptions
- HLH froze charges when the service transferred to it in 2018 and has done so again in financial year 2019/20 so that income can be increased by engaging more people with the service rather than by increasing charges
- The information on music tuition, its benefits and the charges and exemptions which are in place which was previously available in handbook format has been updated and is now much more readily available on-line to customers and prospective customers on the HLH web site

5.4 There are no immediate actions required to ensure compliance with the national guidance and HLH will continue to develop and improve the service in line with the guidance in so far as funding and resources allow.

5.5 In November last year, HLH delivered a presentation at a meeting of the (national) Music Education Providers' Group (MEPG) at the Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow. MEPG includes representatives from local authorities, Creative Scotland, the Scottish Government, university academics, trade unions, national third sector organisations, the Scottish Qualifications Authority etc. and was one of the authors of the new guidance. The purpose of HLH presenting at the meeting was to demonstrate that there are alternatives to cutting services and the approach being taken in Highland was applauded by MEPG.

6. Charging

6.1 The national guidance and campaigns which have led to its development have primarily focused on cuts to services and charging. In Highland, charging has always been key to being able to afford the service and when it was transferred to HLH, 53% of the cost of delivering the service was funded from customer income and external funding. In 2019/20 it is estimated that this will be 55%.

6.2 In addition to freezing charges HLH has continued the Council's policies of providing music tuition free of charge to pupils of families in receipt of benefits and where pupils

are undertaking an SQA exam in music. Both of these exemptions are in step with the national guidance.

- 6.3 The percentages of pupils in Highland eligible for free school meals are 12.8% at primary and 11.4% at secondary school level. 10% of the pupils who are customers of the Music Tuition service are exempt from paying fees because they are eligible for free school meals. This, being a very high proportion of those eligible for the benefit, is indicative of the success of the service in reaching financially disadvantaged children and young people. The service is also successful in Scottish terms at reaching financially disadvantaged people where, of the areas which charge for the service, Highland is seventh in Scotland.
- 6.4 Using the Scottish Government Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) analysis tool which allows analysis by SIMD area, the percentage of music tuition pupils is as follows (note that the SIMD is based on geographic area data zones and people who are eligible for income related benefits could live in any data zone).

SIMD Quintile 1 (most deprived)	6%
SIMD Quintile 2	18%
SIMD Quintile 3	33%
SIMD Quintile 4	35%
SIMD Quintile 5 (least deprived)	8%
	100%

- 6.5 This indicates that whilst there is more to be done to attract pupils from the most deprived data zones, there is a strong foundation of the service engaging with pupils living in data zones which are in SIMD quintiles one and two.

7. Implications

- 7.1 There are no Resource; Legal; Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural); Climate Change/Carbon Clever; Risk; or Gaelic implications for the Council associated with the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

Designation: Chief Executive, High Life Highland

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Background Papers: None