



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01694**

### Name of petitioner

Ralph Riddiough

### Petition title

Free Instrumental Music Services

### Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to change the law to ensure that musical instrument tuition is available as of right to all children attending state schools in Scotland who wish it, free of charge.

### Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

I have discussed matters with my local authority and understand that Instrumental Music Services are provided by local authorities at their discretion. In these times of reducing funding to local authorities, discretionary services are easy to cut, or charge for and so I must broach the topic with the Scottish Parliament. I have also had discussions with my MSP and MP.

### Petition background information

Plato said: "I would teach children music, physics and philosophy; but most importantly music, for the patterns in music, and all the arts, are the keys to learning."

In 2016, the Scottish Government published a document which explained the benefits of musical instrument tuition. That document is available at

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/instrumental-teaching-in-scotland-guidance-2016/>

Other studies have also been conducted by Science Daily and Music Education Works.

There are a number of reasons why I am calling for all children attending state schools to have the right to free musical instrument tuition.

1. There has been a groundswell of support for investment in free musical instrument tuition in Scotland following the most recent round of cuts to Instrumental Music Services within local authorities.
2. The Scottish Government's financial commitment to various initiatives to promote the benefits of specialist musical instrument tuition is fantastic, but the outcomes from these initiatives are not capitalised upon because local authorities are at the same time cutting, or restricting access to, their fantastic Instrumental Music Services. In order to



secure the best return on investment, and in pursuit of a vision for Scotland in which the very best educational opportunities are available to all children in state schools free of any barriers and free of financial barriers in particular, the Scottish Government should take matters in hand and invest in Instrumental Music Services directly, so that specialist tuition through IMSs is protected, and available to all children for free. There is currently a postcode lottery across Scotland in relation to the provision of Instrumental Music Services, which is not just regrettable, and a missed opportunity - it is wrong. The position in England should serve as a warning. Scotland's competitive advantage in musical instrument tuition is sufficiently important to merit protection and development by the Scottish Government.

3. It is a widely recognised fact that there are enormous educational benefits to learning to play a musical instrument and so the investment will pay rich dividends in terms of closing the attainment gap and stretching our most gifted students - in short, providing a powerful tool to ensure we are "getting it right for every child" (GIRFEC). These benefits should not be vulnerable to cuts and charges. They are too important, and should be available to, and accessible by, all children in Scotland, not only some. Fees are divisive. State schools should be inclusive.

4. Business leaders are calling for changes in the way we teach children. They are calling for children to learn to think independently, and to solve problems in groups. They are calling for a move away from "knowledge" based education, because people cannot compete with machines, and for more education in the skills of sport, music, and the arts, as these are the disciplines that give children the skills they will need to survive in the workplace of the future.

5. Scotland has an outstanding worldwide reputation for the quality of its Instrumental Music Services and this merits the committed support of our Scottish Government and Parliament.

6. Music plays a central role in Scotland's rich cultural heritage.

7. Music makes a vital contribution to our communities, making them stronger, more resilient, more inclusive, and healthier. Accordingly, teaching children to play musical instruments realises huge savings in other areas of public expenditure, particularly in relation to education, health, and social issues.

8. The essence of good education is the drawing out of a child's full potential. This is recognised in the rights that children enjoy under Articles 29 and 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which must be promoted by Scottish Ministers and local authorities in terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

9. Music makes a huge contribution to Scotland's economy, and provides careers for many.

10. Musical instrument tuition should be recognised, and developed, as one of our best educational programmes, and as a thing we need to invest in from core education budgets, to ensure the success and prosperity of our whole nation. It should be available to all children, free of charge. It should not be allowed to suffer a death by a thousand cuts. We are at a tipping point and it is appropriate for the Scottish Parliament to take the lead on this matter of national importance.

There are many things that hard-pressed working parents wish they could afford for their children. Private musical instrument lessons, that are so beneficial, are generally out of reach. Music education in state schools should be free.

It is right that the best educational opportunities should be available to all children in Scotland, and with no barriers such as fees create, and so a change in the law is overdue. This "discretionary" service must become protected.

**Unique web address**

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01694>

**Related information for petition**

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

YES

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

0

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

19 / 06 / 2018

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**

Local petitions in South Ayrshire and West Lothian quickly reached 3,000 signatures. In West Lothian, the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland intervened and urged the Council to delay the cuts until children had been consulted, as is their right in terms of Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In Clackmannanshire the fees have been doubled for group, mixed instrument, lessons - making them the most expensive in Scotland at £524 per child, and the same price as one to one private lessons.

What is the story in your area? You may have had charges for many years, or the service may have diminished due to cuts.

Please sign and share this petition to save our Instrumental Music Services