

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

25 APRIL 2000

EXEMPTION FROM PAYMENT OF INSTRUMENTAL TUITION FEES - APPLICATION OF
WORKING FAMILIES TAX CREDIT

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report describes current criteria for exemption from payment of Instrumental Tuition fees, and recommends minimal amendments to these criteria to take account of the government's replacement of Family Credit by Working Families Tax Credit.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee approves the continuation of exemption of parental fees for children receiving instrumental tuition who are:

- studying for an SQA qualification in Music (at Standard Grade, Higher or CSYS); or
- entitled to receive a School Clothing Grant

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The government's decision to replace Family Credit by Working Families Tax Credit means that the Council must review its criteria for awarding School Clothing Grants and for identifying pupils whose parents should be exempt from paying instrumental tuition fees.
- 2.2 Reference is made to the meeting of the Education Committee on 7 March 2000 when amended criteria were agreed for a family's eligibility to receive a School Clothing Grant (Article 5 of the minute of the meeting refers). At that meeting, the Committee considered Report No 257/00 which outlined the impact of the disappearance of Family Credit on eligibility of pupils to receive School Clothing Grants.
- 2.3 In the current session there are 1664 pupils in Angus schools in receipt of instrumental tuition.
- 2.4 Any pupil studying a course leading to an SQA award in Music has been exempt from the payment of tuition fees (in 1999/2000 there were 183 such pupils in Angus).
- 2.5 Other pupils exempt from instrumental fees are those whose families are in receipt of certain welfare benefits - precisely the same criteria having been used to determine eligibility to Clothing Grants as have been used to determine exemption from instrumental tuition fees (in 1999/2000, 228 pupils received this exemption).
- 2.6 The parents of pupils in receipt of instrumental tuition pay an annual fee of £72 (rising to £78 in 2000/2001) if no exemption is applied (1253 pupils in 1999/2000).

3 PROPOSALS

- 3.1 It is proposed that pupils studying for an SQA qualification in Music should continue to be exempt from instrumental tuition fees.
- 3.2 In order to maintain current levels of entitlement, it is proposed that identical amendments to those applied to criteria for eligibility for clothing grants should be applied also to exemption from tuition fees.
- 3.3 It is therefore proposed that any pupil undertaking instrumental instruction should be exempt from fees if also eligible for a clothing grant, ie if the pupil's family produces documentary evidence that they are in receipt of:
- Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based), or
 - Income Support, or
 - Working Families Tax Credit (either maximum entitlement or that maximum reduced by no more than £70 per week)

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 If the recommendations contained within this report are approved, it is anticipated that the current overall financial situation will not be affected - neither for the Council nor for individual parents.
- 4.2 It would, however, be prudent to monitor the impact of the proposed arrangements, in tandem with the monitoring of the impact on recent changes approved to eligibility for School Clothing Grants.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Administration.

Jim Anderson
Director of Education

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

JAA/CJ