

# Scotland should pursue volunteer tuition to close attainment gap

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The Scottish Government should back volunteer programmes which provide tuition for pupils from deprived backgrounds, the Scottish Conservatives have said today.

Elsewhere in the UK, government-funded schemes sign up volunteers from the local community to provide extra tuition for children from low-income families.

Tuition is accepted as one of the most effective ways to improve pupil attainment – but can cost anywhere between £20 to £40 an hour.

Charities such as Action Tutoring – backed by funding from the Cabinet Office – have recruited volunteers in London, Liverpool, Birmingham and Sheffield to provide tuition free of charge.

With the Scottish Government having set up its own attainment fund, there is an opportunity for support to be given to projects in Scotland to see if it can help boost performance.

One such scheme – the Volunteer Tutors Organisation in Glasgow – recently issued a call for more support.

The plan comes with the Scottish Conservatives using pupils' return to school this week to set out a series of ideas that may boost attainment in Scottish education.

**Scottish Conservative further education spokesman Oliver Mundell said:**

“Extra tuition is recognised as one of the best ways to give students an extra leg up.

“But for too many children from low income families, they are simply priced out of the market.

“Across the UK, charities which provide volunteer tuition for disadvantaged children are doing fantastic work levelling out the playing field.

“All parties in Scotland want to reduce the attainment gap, and we believe the Scottish Government could look to see what help it can provide to do

more.

“Rather than spend yet more public money on bureaucracy, the SNP government might consider giving support to charities which can ensure disadvantaged pupils get the tuition they need, but can’t currently afford.”

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There are projects up and running in England which have been part-funded by the Cabinet Office:

<http://actiontutoring.org.uk/>

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/centre-social-action-innovation-fund-young-people>

However, volunteer programmes in Scotland have recently warned they are struggling for funds.

<http://www.vto.btck.co.uk/>