

The Educational Institute of Scotland

Support Staff: Impact of the Reduction in Support Staff

Introduction

1.1 The 2010 Annual General Meeting approved the following resolution:

"This AGM instructs Council to investigate the impact of the reduction of support staff on teachers' working conditions especially in relation to Annex E of the Agreement "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century."

1.2 The 2001 Agreement provides resources for the appointment of an additional 3500 staff to be appointed, principally to undertake a list of tasks which should not routinely be carried out by teachers (Annex E, A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century).

1.3 The position of such support staff was investigated by the University of Glasgow, SCRE Centre, on behalf of the SNCT with a report provided to the SNCT in April 2005 (revised in October 2005).

1.4 The introduction of support staff was funded by £50m made available annually provided annually through Grant Aided Expenditure.

1.5 Advice was sought from local association secretaries in relation to the motion. There were few responses. Where answers were provided local secretaries had difficulty in tracking the loss of classroom assistant posts since the Concordat agreement between Scottish Government and Scottish local authorities.

A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century

2.1 The 2001 Agreement reached following the McCrone Committee of Inquiry required the appointment of an additional 3500 support staff to alleviate the workload on teachers connected with a range of administrative tasks which teachers should not be routinely required to undertake.

2.2 The introduction of classroom assistants did not arise from the 2001 Agreement. Prior to that date a significant number of Councils had introduced classroom assistants and other types of support staff. In the period following the 2001 Agreement there was consolidation of such posts and the introduction of further posts.

2.3 The University of Glasgow SCRE research set out the range of job titles in Scottish Councils which could be linked to the administrative work of Scottish teachers. These are, Business Managers (including Bursars), Finance Assistants, Admin Staff, Classroom Assistants, ICT and other Technical Support Staff and others including learning assistants, guidance support, libraries, learning resource assistants,

dining supervisors, pupil care (welfare officers) and music support. The support staff were appointed at school, cluster or, in some cases, at local authority level.

University of Glasgow, SCRE Centre Research

- 3.1 SCRE research reported that 2,554 FTE (3,358 head count) had been appointed as a consequence of the 2001 Agreement. The spend by 30 Councils was £28m.
- 3.2 However, only 15 Councils identified capital expenditure in connection with Annexe E of the SNCT Handbook. This amounted to just over £2m, which, according to SCRE, approximates to £4.4m across all 32 Councils.

The Concordat

- 4.1 The election of the SNP minority government in 2007 led to the agreement of the "historic Concordat" between Scottish Government and local authorities. This Concordat reached agreement that, in return for a freeze on Council Tax, Scottish Councils would agree a number of outcomes on service delivery.
- 4.2 The Concordat significantly removed ring fenced funding for education. In particular, the funding to deliver the 2001 Agreement, was mainlined but was not subject to separate budget provision and consequently not monitored. In reality, increased budget flexibility at Council level led to disproportionate budget cuts being placed on education services.
- 4.3 The pressure on education budgets manifested itself in a number of ways, including increased class sizes and reduction in nursery provision. As part of reduced spending in education since 2007 a number of Councils reduced support staff by reducing the complement of such staff or reducing hours of such staff.

Impact on Schools

- 5.1 Where there has been a reduction in classroom support staff the allocation of staff to individual teachers is reduced or removed. Priority for allocation of non teaching staff is usually associated with ASN provision. The ASN Act may require dedicated staffing to be provided and in addition support staff can be directed to complete the paperwork required by the Act. This has resulted in many teachers feeling pressurised to assume again the routine tasks the 2001 Agreement sought to remove from them. In many cases these tasks are low level but time consuming.
- 5.2 At a time of curricular change and workload connected with such change the loss of support staff increases pressure on teachers.
- 5.3 This pressure is also experienced by Headteachers and senior promoted staff. In those Council areas where Headteachers were

provided with school managers such as bursars or business managers there was no significant reduction in workload since the creation of additional posts was often accompanied by an increased devolution of administrative tasks from Council level to school level. Where such posts are deleted, shared across schools or reduced, the work will return to school managers who are already significantly overworked.

The 2011 Scottish Budget

- 6.1 As part of its budget proposal for 2011-2012 the Scottish Government required agreement with Councils on a council tax freeze and a package of savings of £81m from teachers notional conditions of service. All Councils have agreed to such proposals and in doing so have limited budget cuts to an average of 2.6% (instead of a proposed 6.4% cut if Councils declined to meet the cost).
- 6.2 The full impact of such cuts is still being collated by the EIS but it is clear that the number of support staff will be significantly reduced across Scottish Councils in the period ahead.

Conclusion

- 7.1 The McCormac Review of Teacher Employment in Scotland has been charged by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to review the 2001 Agreement.
- 7.2 As part of the evidence to be submitted to that review LNCT should be asked to provide evidence on the numbers of support staff to deliver Annex E of the 2001 Agreement and reductions in the provision of such staff.