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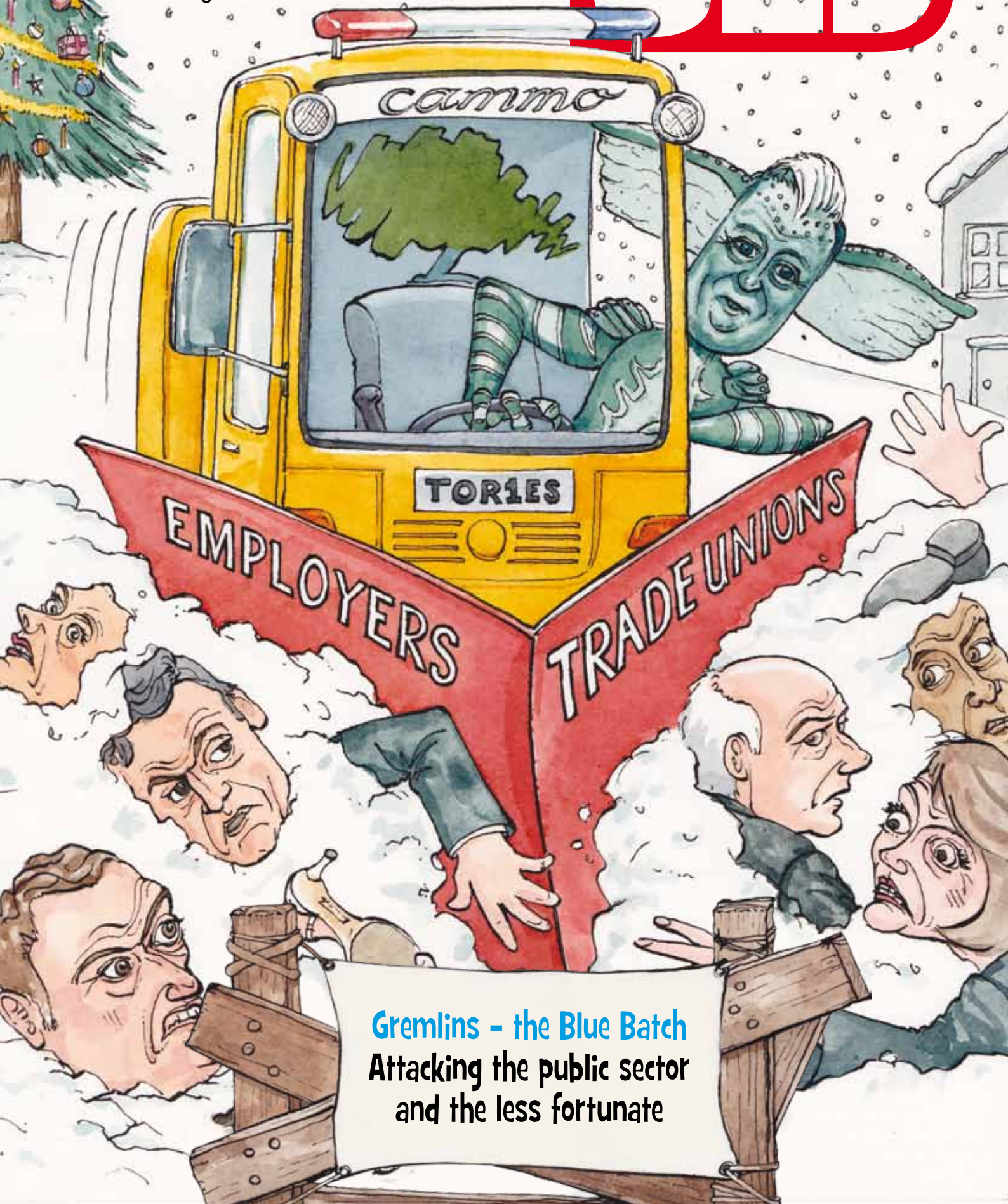
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SEJ



Gremlins - the Blue Batch
Attacking the public sector
and the less fortunate



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Ideological Attacks Damaging to Society

This month's SEJ cover takes a less serious look at a number of very serious issues. The continuing austerity agenda and political attacks on sections of society – including trade unions – are both deeply worrying and highly damaging.

The recent government assault on families on low incomes, in the form of their plans to cut tax credits, are a worrying indicator of future intent. The UK government's desire to keep cutting the services and support on which so many people, particularly those disadvantaged by poverty, rely is something that should concern us all.

While the government's plans to remove vital tax credits from families across the country were, thankfully, abandoned in the face of overwhelming opposition, the reality is that while the wrapping may have changed, the package inside remains identical. The same families that would have suffered through tax credit cuts are likely to have their pockets picked later, when Universal Credit is rolled out to replace current forms of support.

It is not just those on low incomes that the government has been attacking in recent months. Refugees and asylum seekers have, once again, become a target of right-wing politicians and media in the context of increasing migration into Europe. That innocent people fleeing from the terror of conflict are, increasingly, being subjected to intolerance and xenophobic attitudes in countries, including the UK, that should be doing all they can to welcome and support them, is shameful.

And, for the EIS and sister trade unions, the government's cynical attack of trade

unionism continues apace. As we highlighted in the previous edition of the SEJ, the Trade Union Reform Bill which is currently proceeding through the Westminster Parliament with undue haste is as vindictive as it is potentially damaging.

In Scotland, we are fortunate that the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament and local authorities have joined with trade unions in opposition to the Bill. However, we must continue to organise and stand up against this politically-motivated attack on the entire trade union movement.

EIS BALLOTS – USE YOUR VOTE

The EIS has recently opened a number of significant ballots in secondary and further education – including national consultative ballots on industrial action in relation to pay and conditions (FE) and on industrial action in relation to SQA workload (Secondary). It is anticipated that national statutory ballots will follow in these sectors. It is important that all members who are eligible to vote take part in these ballots. Your vote is important – please use it.

Season's Greetings from the SEJ

As we move towards the end of term and look ahead to the holiday period, the SEJ would like to offer compliments of the season to all our readers, wish you a good break and all the best for the New Year.

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All articles and letters in the SEJ represent the views of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the EIS view or EIS policy. To be considered for publication, all letters and unsolicited articles must be accompanied by a full name and address. The Editor's decision on publication is final, and the Editor reserves the right to edit all submissions.

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Cover illustration: Steve Carroll

EIS Opens Industrial Action Ballot On Qualifications Workload

Use Your Vote
Vote YES

The final meeting of Council for 2015 gave its approval to a significant industrial action ballot in relation to SQA-related workload demands. The introduction of a series of new qualifications, coupled with staff and resource cuts, have combined to place unsustainable levels of workload pressure on secondary teachers across the country.

A consultative ballot of members in the secondary sector is now well underway, and will close shortly after this SEJ is published. All members who are eligible to vote are encouraged to complete their ballot – online or by post – before the deadline of Wednesday 16 December.

Commenting on the launch of the ballot, EIS General Secretary Larry Flanagan said, “The decision to open an industrial action ballot is a result of the increasingly severe workload pressure, resulting from the new qualifications, that has been placed on Scotland’s Secondary teachers over the past few years.”

“The introduction of the new qualifications has been rushed and has also been significantly under-resourced. The demands placed on teachers as a result have been both excessive and unsustainable, with serious implications for teachers’ health and wellbeing.

“Significant pressure has also been placed on pupils – both as the result of the changing qualifications system and due to continuing over-assessment in order to meet SQA requirements.

Excessive workload related to National 5 and National 6 Unit Assessments and SQA verification procedures continues to place a huge burden on pupils and teachers alike.

“The clear message that we are getting from members in the secondary sector is that enough is enough, which has resulted in today’s decision to move to an industrial action ballot.”

Mr Flanagan added, “Today’s decision has not been taken lightly, and industrial action is always a last resort that teachers are traditionally extremely reluctant to take.

“But the reality is, that despite years of discussions with the Scottish Government, local authorities and the Scottish Qualifications Authority over the desperate need to reduce the excessive workload associated with the new qualifications, too little has been done to tackle this problem.

“That is why the EIS has taken the decision to ballot its members, and why we plan to launch a sustained programme of industrial action until real and lasting reductions in qualifications-related workload for pupils and teachers are delivered in Secondary schools across Scotland.”

The consultative ballot opened the week following the meeting of Council, and will run for three weeks. Following the closure of the ballot on 16 December and, assuming a strong turnout and a clear result, the EIS intends to move to a



statutory industrial action ballot as soon as practicable thereafter.

John Inglis (East Lothian) asked if the EIS would be preparing a full briefing for EIS Reps and members in relation to the ballot and potential industrial action. The General Secretary responded that information and advice was being prepared for issue to Reps and that this would also be placed on the EIS website.

Further information on the ballot and a Q&A on relevant issues are available on the EIS website www.eis.org.uk. Further information and advice relating to the type of industrial action will be issued as part of the future statutory ballot process.

If you are eligible to vote in this ballot, and have not yet done so, please return your ballot paper or vote digitally online via the EIS website prior to the deadline of 1000hrs on Wednesday 16 December

How to Vote

Check your email

Members who we hold a current email address for, should receive an email the same day the ballot opens.

Open your post

For members without an email address on file, ballot papers have been posted and should be with you by the 27th of November.

Nothing Received?

If you have not received anything by Tuesday 1st of December, contact the EIS membership department: membership@eis.org.uk

The EIS Council is the principal executive committee of the EIS. It meets around five times a year, usually in Edinburgh, and also at the AGM.

Nomination forms for members interested in standing for election to Council for 2016/2017 are available from your Local Association Secretary and from the EIS website www.eis.org.uk

Executive

Vice-President Margaret Smith updated Council on a number of industrial action ballots– the consultative industrial action ballot on SQA-related workload in secondary schools, the consultative ballot on a national programme of industrial action in FE colleges in pursuit of the 2015 pay claim, an indicative ballot on industrial action in West Dunbartonshire secondary schools in relation to management restructuring, a statutory ballot of EIS-ULA members in pursuit of the 2015 pay claim, plus statutory industrial action ballots in Edinburgh College and Glasgow Kevin College.

Ms Smith went on to update Council on financial matters, including an update on the Institute's investments and information on the refurbishment of the EIS headquarters buildings in Edinburgh.

Equality

Convener Bill Ramsay said that a good EIS turn-out was anticipated at the annual STUC St Andrew's Day March and Rally against Racism and Fascism (*Editor's note: both overall turnout and EIS representation at the rally subsequently proved very impressive*). Mr Ramsay also told Council that the Equality Committee had agreed to purchase 380 copies of the STUC book 'Inspiring Women' in order that one copy could be provided for every Secondary school in Scotland.

Mr Ramsay went on to say that the Committee had also agreed to donate £1000 to the Remember Mary Barbour Campaign, which is raising funds for a lasting memorial to one of Glasgow's greatest heroes. Details of the campaign are being circulated to Local Associations and further information can also be found at remembermarybarbour.wordpress.com



STUC St Andrew's Day March & Rally - Pics: Neil Anderson

Education

Convener Susan Quinn updated Council on developments and discussions around the National Improvement Framework (NIF). See feature on **pp12-13** for more on NIF and Standardised Assessment.

Ms Quinn also advised Council that research analysis on Nursery Education, commissioned by the EIS, was close to completion and that a Report was expected prior to the next meeting of the Committee.

Employment Relations

Convener Mairi Raeburn updated Council on Legal Affairs Casework and Benevolent matters. Ms Raeburn told Council that the Committee had considered 42 legal cases and noted that, since its last meeting, a total of £32,500 had been secured in settlements on behalf of 4 EIS members. On benevolence, the Committee had approved a total of 16 grants totalling more than £31,000, said Ms Raeburn.

Salaries

Convener Tom Tracey answered a number of questions from John Inglis (East Lothian) and Des Morris (East Renfrewshire) relating to national insurance changes, pensions, and the impact of the 2015 pay agreement on contribution levels. In answering each of the specific questions, Mr Tracey also highlighted that information on the pay agreement and recent pension scheme changes are available on the EIS website.

Obituary

Peter Quigley BA (Hons), FEIS, EIS President 2006 - 2007

Teacher of English, Balwearie High School, Kirkcaldy

Peter Quigley joined the EIS in 1971. He started his career in further education and transferred to secondary education when he began teaching at the Multi-Media Resource Centre in Fife, where he was closely involved in the development of new approaches to teaching and in the closer integration of subjects. He then took up a post in the English Department at Balwearie High School. He was a valued member of the staff there, contributing to developments over many years, in particular new areas of study. He played a significant part in activities related to the introduction and promotion of Media Studies which eventually led to its acceptance as a separate and legitimate subject.

At local level, Peter served as a

school representative, editor of the Fife EIS magazine, district office-bearer and member of the Local Association Executive. He was Publicity Officer and President of Fife Local Association and then EIS Local Association Secretary from 1991 – 2008. As LA Secretary Peter was tenacious in defence of members' rights in both grievance and discipline cases. His negotiating skills and attention to detail were a great asset to the Local Association in dealing with the local authority.

At national level, Peter became an AGM delegate for a number of years and a member of the Standing Orders Committee. He was a member of the EIS Council for many years. He became Vice-President of the EIS in 2005 and



Peter, at the 2015 AGM

served a year as President from 2006. He served on the Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee and the Finance and General Purposes Committee. He was also a delegate to both the STUC and TUC.

For many years Peter worked tirelessly on behalf of the Workers' Educational Association as Fife Convener and delegate both to the Scottish AGM and to the Biennial National Conference. He raised awareness of the WEA and its work through new initiatives and activities.

Peter Quigley made an extremely valuable contribution to the work of the EIS both locally and nationally.

News...

College Lecturers Reject Pay Offer - EIS Ballots on Industrial Action

A Special Meeting of EIS FELA members, held on the 13 November, has delivered a clear rejection of a 'final' pay offer from college managers. The Special Meeting also called for a ballot on industrial action in Scotland's Further Education colleges, and for a coordinated and sustained campaign of industrial action in pursuit of pay equality and a fair pay settlement.

As a result of the meeting, the EIS opened a consultative action ballot of FE lecturers. The final management offer,

including a 1% pay award, came after almost a year of protracted discussions and would do nothing to address pay inequality in Scotland's colleges.

More information about the Special Meeting and the ballot can be found on **pp14**. The consultative ballot was ongoing at the time of writing, but will have closed by the time the SEJ is published. See the EIS website for updates. A move to a full statutory ballot is anticipated in the near future.



EIS at Holyrood TU Bill Lobby



The EIS joined trade union colleagues from across Scotland at a Scottish Parliament lobby against the UK Government's Trade Union Bill. MSPs from the Scottish Greens, Scottish Labour, Scottish Liberal Democrats and Scottish National Party joined the protest, spoke to trade union members to hear their concerns, and made speeches highlighting their strong opposition to the Trade Union Bill.

Following the lobby, MSPs held a related debate in the Holyrood chamber

and overwhelmingly passed a Motion opposing and condemning the Trade Union Bill, highlighting the damage it would cause, and stating the importance of trade unions to a modern democracy.

The Motion, which was moved by the SNP's Roseanna Cunningham, the Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training and amended by Scottish Labour's Opportunity Spokesman Iain Gray, was backed by 104 votes to 14. All Scottish Green, Scottish Labour, Scottish Liberal Democrat, Scottish

National Party and Independent MSPs backed the Motion, with only the Scottish Conservatives voting against.

EIS members and officers also attended the TUC lobby of Parliament in London on November 2nd to coordinate protests and gain MP support against the draconian Trade Union Bill. This was followed by a protest outside Fife Council HQ on 5 Nov. The trade unions were supported by Fife Trades Council, The People's Assembly, MSPs Alex Rowley, Claire Baker, Jayne Baxter, and elected members from SNP and Labour. A Motion was tabled and passed at the meeting of the full Council condemning the proposals in the Trade Union Bill.



EIS Survey finds that College Mergers have not Delivered on Promise

The EIS has published a new report exploring the impact of Scotland's recent programme of College mergers on the delivery of learning and teaching. The report's findings, based on a major survey of lecturers across Scotland, offer clear indication that the mergers programme largely failed to deliver what it promised.

The survey was carried out online by the EIS Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA). Approximately one in seven of all FE teaching staff responded to the survey.

Some of the most significant findings in the survey report include:

- 89% of respondents do not believe their merger has improved learning and teaching quality
- 91% of respondents do not believe their merger has improved management of their college
- 94% of respondents do not believe their merger has improved staff morale in the college
- 86% of respondents do not believe their merged college better meets the needs of the community
- 81% of respondents indicate that their workload has increased following their college's merger.

Commenting, EIS General Secretary Larry Flanagan said, "The EIS-FELA survey report demonstrates that the many benefits that were promised as part of the mergers programme have not been delivered. The college sector has paid a heavy price over the past few years, with deep cuts to funding, significant job losses and major reductions in student numbers. However, the evidence is that the financial savings that have been achieved as a result of the mergers programme have not been reinvested to deliver enhancements in core learning and teaching activity."

He added, "As the current dispute with employers over their meagre pay offer demonstrates, money certainly has not been reinvested in the terms and conditions of college staff. While former members of senior management have enjoyed huge pay-offs and millions of pounds have been squirrelled away into secretive Arms' Length Foundations, education provision

has continued to be cut and staff continue to suffer a divisive postcode lottery on their terms and conditions."

The issue of excessive pay-offs to senior management has been under close public and political scrutiny in recent months, with the Auditor General, the Scottish Parliament's Audit Committee and the Cabinet Secretary for Education questioning the scale of the packages.

Larry Flanagan said that it was right that the payments were being scrutinised: "While payment in case of redundancy is normally appropriate, it is essential that the process is robust and fair, particularly when there have been significant job losses for teaching and support staff throughout the further education

"The college sector has paid a heavy price over the past few years, with deep cuts to funding, and significant job losses"

sector over the past few years. It is clear the redundancy terms offered to lecturing and support staff were nowhere near as generous as some of the packages that were paid to very senior managers."

Read the full college merger report at www.eis.org.uk

The EIS Highlights Concerns over Proposed Return to Standardised Testing in Scottish Schools.

EIS Education Convener Susan Quinn gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee on the National Improvement Framework and emphasised the incompatibility of a narrow testing regime with Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence.

Ms Quinn told the Committee, "It is only a very short time ago, almost within the lifetime of the current Scottish Government, that we stopped gathering national assessment data. We did this precisely because such narrow testing was contrary to the ethos of Curriculum

for Excellence."

On the reasons for the development of the National Improvement Framework, Ms Quinn said, "The potential benefit of the framework might be that the Scottish Government, in their opinion, would then have more of an oversight of developments in education across the country."

However, Ms Quinn argued that much of the data that the Scottish Government is seeking to gather is already collated at local authority level: "There is already a significant amount of data within the

system – we in the EIS believe that there is already a sufficient amount of data."

Ms Quinn went on to say that local authorities have their own policies on the use of standardised tests to support teachers' professional judgement, but that there was a risk of attaching too much importance to a single test under the proposed national system. Turn to **pp12** of this SEJ to find out more about the National Improvement Framework.

When Ideology

ATTACKS

Nothing Festive in Government's Actions

We are now six months into the term of the majority Conservative government at Westminster and, for all of us who believe in such things as public services, the welfare state and trade unionism, the signs are that we are in for a very long and painful four and a half years ahead.

In the early stages of the post Con-Dem government, it has become ever more clear the degree to which the worst excesses of the austerity-driven cuts agenda were tempered by the realities of a coalition administration. Now, unencumbered and emboldened by their parliamentary majority, the government of Cameron, Osborne, Duncan-Smith, May, Javid and company are making their true intent abundantly clear.

Welfare, Benefits & Tax Credits

The government's recent desire to cut the level of tax credits paid to some of the poorest people across the country was a shocking indictment of the true cost of the austerity agenda. In Scotland, there are around 350,000 working families in receipt of tax credits. One recent estimate indicates that as many as 93% of these families would have seen their income reduced if the tax credit cuts had indeed come to pass. For many families, the government's planned changes would have reduced their income by more than £1300 a year.

To some people, such as the millionaires of the Tory cabinet, the loss of around £108 a month might not seem like much. But, to those families who rely on tax credits to put food on the table, or to pay the heating bill, or to clothe their children, the loss of that amount of money from their budget would have been absolutely devastating.

These people are clearly not the 'scroungers' that they are often portrayed to be by right-wing politicians and media.

These are families with at least one working parent but where income from paid work is so low that tax credits are a vital lifeline. Already, many families have to make difficult decisions, particularly in winter, over whether to heat or to eat.

If the cuts proposed by George Osborne had been implemented, many families would have had even this difficult choice removed – they would have been left unable to heat or to eat.

Of course, the scale of the cuts and their potential devastating impact were so deep that even the House of Lords – perhaps not always noted as an assembly that wholly appreciates the views of the person in the street – refused to let them pass. This refusal by the Lords to back tax credit cuts sparked a furious rebuke from the government, including the threat of enforced 'reform' of the Lords as a punishment for daring to perform one of its major obligations as the second House – to act as a safeguard against bad or damaging legislation.

Just as this SEJ was about to go to press, the Chancellor announced in his autumn statement that his £4.4Billion in planned tax credit cuts were to be scrapped. This astounding U-turn, which was as surprising as it was welcome, was a victory for the broad coalition of voices that had spoken out against this vicious and unnecessary programme of cuts. While we await the full detail of the removal of the threat to tax credits, the fact remains that deep welfare cuts, totalling some £12Billion, remain central to the government's austerity programme. It is highly likely that the same people who



would have suffered from tax credit cuts will again see their income under threat when the Universal Credit changes are implemented.

The current series of reforms follow earlier rounds of government cuts that have disproportionately impacted on some of the most disadvantaged people in society. Welfare reforms, excessively harsh fitness for work assessments, cuts to disability entitlements, together with the aborted assault on tax credits, combine to paint a picture of an uncaring government whose determination to keep cutting takes priority above all else.

Refugees & Asylum Seekers

The UK Government's response to the refugee crisis has been both extremely slow and profoundly disappointing. While millions of people were displaced by conflict in Iraq and Syria and hundreds of thousands of refugees made the dangerous journey into Europe, the government did little to help alleviate the situation.

As countries across the continent opened their borders and their doors to welcome refugees from conflict, the UK government initially refused to offer a safe haven to families from the region. Only once the tales of the dangerous daily crossings of the Mediterranean came to light, and the tragic pictures of drowned children and babies began to be widely published, was the government – slowly and reluctantly – eventually shamed into agreeing to accept refugees into the UK.

Even when David Cameron finally did announce, following many weeks of dithering, that the UK would welcome some refugees from Syria, the detail of that announcement was profoundly disappointing in its scale. Just 20,000 refugees will be allowed into the UK over a five year period – only around 4,000 people each year. In contrast, Germany expects to process 800,000 applications for asylum in 2015 alone.

The UK government argues that it is amongst the most generous in terms of providing aid to the region, and has chosen to focus its support on those in established refugee camps rather than those who have taken matters into their own hands to take the expensive and dangerous voyage to Europe. While this may be true, it does not excuse the stark reality that the UK has turned its back on many victims of the Syrian conflict for far too long.

Recent violent acts of extremism, both in Europe and elsewhere, have fed the far-right agenda and the growing misrepresentation of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Growing Islamophobia can be seen in political comment and in the output from some sections of the media. All of this is combining to create a worrying situation where acts of bigotry and attacks on certain sections of society are increasingly common. Claims from Home Secretary Theresa May that migrants drive down wages and damage the economy, together with David Cameron's description of refugees as a 'swarm', have only served to make the situation worse. We must continue to oppose the anti-refugee, anti-asylum agenda wherever and whenever it manifests itself, and send the clear message that Scotland welcomes refugees, asylum seekers and migrants into our communities.

The Trade Union Bill

As we highlighted in the previous edition of the SEJ, one of the first pieces of legislation introduced by the newly elected Conservative government was its vindictive anti-Trade Union Bill. Dressed up as a reforming piece of legislation, it was laid before the House of Commons by the government's union-buster in chief, Savid Javid.

Opposition to the Bill has been massive, right across the country

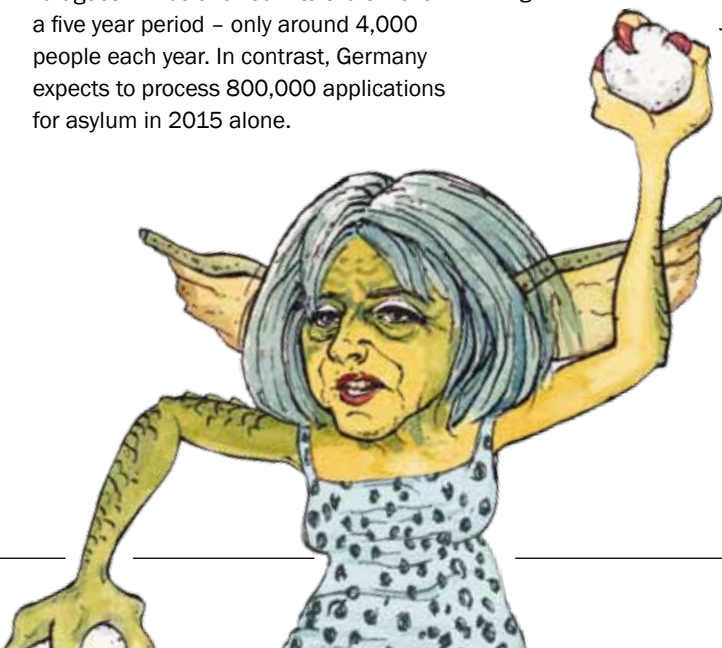
and from all parts of the political spectrum. The Scottish Government has stated that they absolutely oppose the Bill and, even if it should become law, they will seek to have Scotland exempted or will refuse to implement it. Scotland's local authorities have taken a similar stance, as have the majority of political parties at Holyrood with the sole exception of the Scottish Tories.

Some of the provisions in the Bill, such as the end of the check-off system for paying union subscriptions and the cap on facility time, are so nonsensical and counter-productive that they have even encountered opposition from Tory MPs at Westminster. Faced with this degree of opposition, the government has made some limited changes to the legislation but it remains, in essence, a politically motivated and damaging attack on trade unions and the rights of employees to organise to defend and protect their jobs, pay and conditions.

The EIS has been working with our sister unions, through the TUC and STUC, to fight the Trade Union Bill. We have attracted a significant amount of publicity, a great deal of public and political support, and achieved some significant victories in the early running. But the battle to protect trade unions and the public sector is far from over.

Wider Impact on Society

In Scotland, we are currently in the midst of a coordinated drive to create a more equal society. In education, the focus on closing the attainment gap is shared by teachers, local authorities and government alike. However, this challenge will continue to grow ever more difficult while the impact of poverty is deepening, the gulf between rich and poor continues to increase, and the ideologically-driven austerity agenda continues to bite.



Engaging with Your Union

Since becoming EIS President in June, Pat Flanagan has been active at meetings and events throughout Scotland, representing the views of members on the key challenges facing Scottish education today. Here, Pat looks back over his first six months in office and highlights the issues that members have been raising across the country.

A key aspect of the role of EIS President is representing EIS members at a wide variety of events. We meet regularly with the main political parties to discuss our concerns and also hold EIS fringe meetings at the political party conferences. Meetings with the SQA, ADES and Education Scotland allows us to progress the issues raised by members and to action Motions passed at our AGM. I recently represented the EIS at the Education International Conference comprising of over 350 teacher TUs and 32 Million members worldwide and also moved Motions on education issues at both TUC and STUC conferences. Discussing issues from teacher colleagues from other parts of the UK and worldwide does place into context the challenges facing Scottish teachers.

However, the most important aspect of the President's role is the internal working of the EIS through our Council and its Committees which are, of course, made up of elected lay members. The breadth and depth of work undertaken on members' behalf in the Education, Equalities, Salaries and Employment Relations Committees is difficult to convey but is, in the main, driven by AGM Motions and responding to new initiatives such as the National Improvement Framework. This national work is complementary to work undertaken in the 32 Local Associations and LNCTs and the work of EIS Reps at school and branch level.

It has been, perhaps, the most enjoyable and informative part of the Presidential role to accept the many invites to visit schools and speak at Local Association meetings. Visits to, among others, Orkney, Inverclyde, Angus, Perth & Kinross, Highland, Shetland, East Lothian and Dundee has demonstrated that, while there is a commonality across LAs and schools, there are also quite a number

of differences in terms of local issues. The visits and meetings allow for detailed dialogue with the local EIS activists and leadership in terms of both national issues and such local issues.

Visits to Brae High School in Shetland, with a total roll of fewer than 300 across its Primary and Secondary Departments, and to Dunbar Primary, with a roll of over 1,000 across nursery and Primary, illustrate the variety of school provision across Scotland. However, the most striking difference that I noticed between schools is the teaching and learning conditions for teachers and pupils; the benefits of quality new build schools are obvious.

School visits provide the opportunity to observe some fantastic teaching and learning both inside and outside the buildings. It also provides an opportunity to meet a wide range of members and the school EIS Representatives. Our members rightly view their school EIS Rep as the most important person in the EIS. Through their school Rep they can access, if and when required, an unrivalled support network of LA Secretary and Area and National Officers. In a number of schools, Reps have found it beneficial to share the role.

I have also visited some schools with substantial EIS membership but with no nominated Rep and I have encouraged members to become the EIS Rep or to share the role with colleagues. New Reps should be assured that there is significant support available primarily through their LA Secretary. It has also been recognised that there is an increasing need to offer support to members and encourage them to become active in the EIS by revamping our Reps' training as well as strengthening our unrivalled support network. In addition to the LA Secretary and Area Officers, we have employed two National Organisers

to support recruitment work of members and Representatives. In some areas, "Reps networks" are being developed and this may provide a model which could be replicated in Local Associations across the country.

Key national issues such as pay negotiations, the Workload Campaign, National Qualifications and the National Improvement Framework are areas where members are keen to see action on these issues and the processing of the related AGM Motions and decisions taken are the responsibility of Council – on which all 32 LAs are represented – and the committees elected by Council.

Invariably, current and future budget cuts to education and local plans on how the savings are to be achieved are a key issue that LNCTs are dealing with at a local level. The commitments on maintaining teacher numbers is acknowledged locally as a key protection given the scale of Local Authority budget cuts. However, recruitment difficulties including shortage of supply and particular shortage in certain subject areas has been raised in most areas.

The Workload Campaign was also a common theme and there is a recognition that while progress can and should be made at school level, that outside factors such as the SQA have an impact. The National Qualifications was the major issue brought up by secondary members and it is important that members continue to notify the EIS, through the school Rep and LA Secretary, of particular issues in each subject area so that we can raise them with the SQA.

My visits have provided further evidence that the EIS remains in robust health. Nationally we are seeing a renewing of Council with significant numbers of new activists taking on leadership roles and in a number of areas that is also the case with many Local Associations having new activists coming to the fore. I would encourage members to see what support can be offered to existing school Reps and, if you are in a school without a Rep, to meet with EIS colleagues and contact your LA Secretary to address the situation.

Pat Flanagan, EIS President

“School visits provide the opportunity to observe some fantastic teaching and learning both inside and outside the buildings”



“Our members rightly view their school EIS Rep as the most important person in the EIS”



Pictured: EIS President Pat Flanagan at **St Luke's & St Matthew's RC Primary School** during an LA visit to Dundee.

The National Improvement Framework



Education Secretary **Angela Constance**, writing exclusively for the SEJ, outlines the Scottish Government's view on how the National Improvement Framework can help to close the attainment gap.

With record Highers and Advanced Highers, and more than nine in ten school-leavers securing jobs, training or continued education, we are building on solid foundations as we seek to ensure we have an education system that is continually improving.

Teachers have been at the forefront of the successes achieved through Curriculum for Excellence and are at the heart of achieving our ultimate ambition for Scotland to have a world class education system. But as I have said many times, we need to go further if we are serious about achieving equity and excellence for all.

It's now been just over a year since I was appointed as Education Secretary. As we prepare to move onto the next phase of Curriculum for Excellence, it's an exciting time. Central to that next phase is the National Improvement Framework.

The draft Framework was published on 1 September alongside the First Minister's Programme for Government. Every EIS member reading this knows we want to close the gap in educational outcomes between children from the most and least deprived parts of Scotland.

The Framework will play a vital role in how that work is realised. The EIS Child Poverty campaign and Face Up To Poverty publication expertly highlights the impact that poverty can have on educational outcomes for children.

Since September, we have undertaken an extensive process of engagement, with teachers, parents, children, academics and others with a key interest.

From my speech at the Scottish Learning Festival to a recent Facebook Q&A session I undertook, I am grateful for such an in depth discussion.

It's to the great credit of the profession

that teachers, including many EIS members, have participated extensively in this process. As a Government, we are listening and reflecting carefully on all views raised.

The Framework sets out four main priorities for everyone working in Scottish education:

- To improve attainment – specifically in reading, writing and numeracy
- To close the attainment gap between the most and the least disadvantaged children
- To improve children and young people's health and wellbeing, and
- To improve sustained school leaver destinations for all young people.

Six inter-connected areas have been identified to help achieve these priorities: school improvement; school leadership; teacher professionalism; assessment of children's progress; parental involvement and performance information.

Evidence from all of these will help us understand how well we are doing and where we need to do more. The Scottish Government and Education Scotland will provide further support for teachers, schools and local authorities in each of these areas.

The aim of the Framework is to take a holistic view of assessment and evaluation. Teacher judgement is key, as teachers know the strengths and areas for development of the children in their classroom.

Standardised assessments will not replace teacher judgement. They are being designed to help teachers in the

classroom as well as to provide more consistent evidence of children's progress in learning. To be absolutely clear, Ministers have no intention to:

- Increase teacher workload
- Return to the high-stakes testing of the past
- Increase pressure on children
- Force teaching to the test or take a narrow approach to the curriculum
- See results used to trump teacher professional judgment, or
- See results used as a measure to judge schools or teachers.

We will continue to work with teachers and with others, to finalise how we will make use of information and how we will publish that information in a way that does not lead to crude league tables.

I am proud of the Scottish education system and internationally, there are many positives. Scotland's scores in the latest PISA assessments were similar to the OECD average in Maths, and above the average in Reading and Science.

And we must keep learning from international perspectives. The imminent publication of the OECD review of Scottish education will provide us with a detailed and independent view of our strengths and next steps.

The voice of teachers is one I am listening to very carefully as we finalise our plans. I want to ensure teachers in all our schools have the right tools to be successful in helping each and every one of our children to achieve.

As we approach the Christmas school holidays, I wish to thank our teachers for everything they do for our children and I look forward to hearing more about the great work happening in classrooms across Scotland in the New Year.

The EIS View

Education Convener **Susan Quinn** outlines the EIS position on the National Improvement Framework and highlights specific concerns on the proposed return to national testing.



‘Local improvement, national assurance’ has been the promotional tag-line of the National Improvement Framework (NIF). Who can argue with that as a shorthand articulation of the aims as we move to the future stages of CfE implementation? Certainly not the EIS.

However it’s not the purpose of NIF that we would take issue with but rather the pace of delivery, the lack of detail, the tone of draft paper and, most significantly, the return to any form of National Testing, even if presented in some other guise.

In June 2015 a stakeholders’ meeting was held where a draft of the NIF was presented and discussed. Until this point there had been no discussion around this development and indeed at that meeting all key stakeholders were clear that there was plenty of data around attainment and achievement within the system for Broad General Education (BGE). What was agreed were the challenges of having this data shared across the country as each local authority has their own systems for moderating, tracking and reporting on progress but no-one felt there was a need to gather even more data.

Stakeholders were also assured at this meeting that Scottish Government were not planning on a return to National Tests and had no desire to return to the high stakes, target-setting agenda of the past. So why then, when the document was presented by the First Minister to the public later in the year, was the headline a system of standardised, national tests to be carried out by all pupils at key stages? Indeed this was the only specific detail of what NIF would include along with the fact that a system of standardised tests would be introduced as a pilot in 2016. Such haste brings pressures on the system and leads to concern about how valid any consultation will be.

During the weeks that have followed the announcement of the introduction of NIF, the EIS has represented members’

views in many fora within the consultation: NIF Design Team, stakeholders groups, public consultation meetings, CfE Management Board and in the Scottish Parliament. In doing so we have made clear our position regarding National Tests, leading with educational arguments against wholesale testing of year groups and expressing concern that there is no real way to avoid a return to the target setting which narrowed the curriculum in the past, if we pursue the approach as outlined in the draft. We have indicated there are ways to develop a system which can provide the information desired by Scottish Government but which can avoid the ‘perverse incentives’ that all in the system seek to avoid. We have also raised concerns about the move away from CfE principles that is threatened by a return to National Testing. We have reiterated that assessment for learning ought to remain the cornerstone of assessment policy and that the value of teacher professional judgment must not be downgraded in favour of National Test Results.

We await the next draft of the document to see which, if any, of our suggestions have been taken on board.

Aside from concerns about content, the EIS continues to be of the view that the introduction of NIF alone will not deliver significant change in reducing inequalities of educational outcome or impact greatly on the attainment gap created by socio-economic inequality. We are in favour of ring-fenced funding linked to specific objectives as a means of driving forward policy aims in a meaningful way and are of the view that education authorities at present have the mechanisms and structures to support actions that are aimed at tackling inequalities of outcome but the resources available for this have been a limiting factor, e.g. smaller class sizes, as Scottish Government has acknowledged, can contribute significantly to reducing inequality of outcome but this

requires expenditure. Without increased resources the actions necessary will not happen and the NIF will simply be a static source of data not able to do anything to improve attainment for any young people but simply tell a story of where things are perceived to be falling short.

We are clear that if a more joined up approach to gathering information to inform national policy is required then adequate time should be taken to get this right. A rush to a conclusion when there are still so many questions to be answered will not lead to a system which will have long term positive outcomes.

In looking to the future we would want Scottish Government to note the EIS:

- Rejects the use of national testing as a bench marking tool
- Affirms the importance of assessment for learning as the approach most beneficial to pupil learning
- Supports the continued use of professional judgement within the CfE framework as the basis for system evaluation
- Recognises that diagnostic predictive assessment can support professional judgement, alongside a range of other evidence, but should never be allowed to supplant it
- Recognises the accountability imperative of both Scottish and Local Government but underlines that a National Improvement Framework in and of itself simply measures outcomes – improvements within the service require significant inputs also
- Expresses a continued willingness to work with Scottish Government and other partners to build upon the CfE programme and to address the impact of poverty on educational attainment.

The logo for EIS (Education Industry Society) features the lowercase letters 'eis' in a white, sans-serif font on a purple rectangular background.

FELA Further Education
Lecturers' Association



Special Conference



John Kelly, EIS - FELA President

Last year the Scottish Government reintroduced National Bargaining into the Further Education sector in Scotland, after an absence of over 20 years.

The past 22 years of local bargaining have seen colleges create huge inequalities between lecturers, in terms of pay and terms and conditions of service. The

EIS welcomed the return of National Bargaining as a means to establishing equality for FE lecturers across Scotland.

However, the process of National Bargaining has not been easy and lecturers now find themselves in a position where the Employers' side have put forward proposals which will widen the inequalities between lecturers rather than reduce them.

Those proposals do not offer any movement on equal pay for lecturers in FE, but do offer a 1% uplift across the sector. EIS - FELA National Negotiators find this unacceptable, and a Special Conference of delegates from Colleges all over Scotland met on Friday 13th November 2015 to consider their response to the proposals.

FELA Negotiators and the FELA National Executive recommended rejection of this offer on the following grounds:

- 1% is not enough to compensate staff as a cost of living increase;
- 1% does not remotely come near to our claim;

- The offer reinforces rather than reduces differentials between lecturers across Scotland;
- The offer does not make any attempt to harmonise lecturers salaries in FE in Scotland;
- The offer fails to introduce "National Bargaining" in any meaningful way.

EIS - FELA Negotiators have been meeting with management regularly since the submission of a National pay claim in October 2014. To date the Employers' side have failed to respond in any way which the negotiators feel effectively deals with that pay claim.

The pay claim seeks equality for FE lecturers from Aberdeen to the Borders, from Edinburgh to the Western Isles and all points in between. The claim also seeks a fair pay rise to take account of recent cuts in real pay over the past few years.

- John Kelly, EIS - FELA President

Conference Report

Over 70 delegates from 18 colleges braved Storm Abigail to attend the EIS FELA Special Conference in Glasgow on 13 November to discuss management's 1% pay offer and the progress to date of National Bargaining. The conference drew delegates from almost every college in Scotland, from Dumfries & Galloway to Shetland, Lews Castle to Dundee & Angus.

President John Kelly opened the conference, reminding delegates that the purpose of meeting was to discuss our campaign for equal pay for lecturers across the FE sector, and that the Conference was the culmination of over a year's negotiations at the NJNC, during which time the management side had consistently prevaricated.

20 Motions were received for the Conference, with 16 on the agenda after compositing.

The first Motion, moved by Mark Gillan of West College Scotland, called on the conference to reject the 1% offer as an inadequate offer which would reinforce rather than reduce the inequality of lecturer salaries in FE. Reflecting the angry mood of the sector, the Motion was carried unanimously.

Delegates described developments in recent years in FE as 'hell', and many college Reps highlighted the anger in their institutions among members who had experienced year on year of mergers, cuts and below-inflation pay rises.

Delegates lined up to challenge the claims by management that they could not afford a fair pay claim when millions had been stashed into Arms Lengths Trusts in recent years. Frances Curran (Glasgow Kelvin College) spoke of the lack of accountability on principals' pay and severance packages, and called on colleges to 'open the books' on where the money has gone.

Angela McCormick from New College Lanarkshire spoke of the anger at her college at the recent appearance of former

senior managers from Coatbridge College in front of the Public Audit Committee, and their claims that huge pay-offs were not funded with public money intended for the provision of education, while Billy McChord (Forth Valley) told Conference that principals were behaving like 'lower league Sepp Blatters'.

Conference then moved on to the question of how to pursue our pay claim. Conference agreed unanimously to pursue a national campaign of industrial action, and Donny Gluckstein of Edinburgh College argued successfully for this to be a sustained campaign, contrasting the recent victories of the Dundee porters and Glasgow homeless case workers with the defeat of public sector unions on pensions after the one day strike in 2011. An Executive Motion moved by Salaries Convenor Charlie Montgomery (Glasgow Kelvin College) for an immediate statutory ballot was passed unanimously.

Delegates highlighted the crucial timing of the dispute, coinciding with preparations for the 2016 Holyrood elections, giving a vital opportunity to highlight the SNP government's poor record on FE. Delegates from West College Scotland called for the EIS to work with the other FE unions and NUS to use every means possible to further our claim. A publicity campaign is needed, one

which will expose the impact of FE cuts on learners, on college places, and on the quality of learning and teaching. Mike Cowley (Edinburgh College) argued for our pay dispute to be firmly positioned as part of a campaign against austerity and public sector cuts.

The situation in the UHI colleges was of particular concern, and Linda Martin (Inverness College) explained why. Describing UHI as an 'overarching mess', she told Conference that 40p in every £1 received for Higher Education (mostly HNC and HND programmes) is 'top-sliced'



Pam Currie, EIS FELA Vice President

by the Regional Board, with the previous Chief Executive receiving £220,000, a driver and a limo! The situation has gone from bad to worse this year, with top-slicing now extended to FE funding as well. Jane Haswell (Shetland College) assured delegates that while their college had not yet signed the nRPA, the branch shared the anger of the rest of the country and were ready for industrial action.

Conference also supported Motions to support part time, temporary lecturers in FE – many of whom are only paid for 32 weeks of the year and live with the constant uncertainty of zero hours contracts. Motions from West College Scotland and the Executive called for financial support for these members as well as material highlighting that national bargaining is also about T&C, including permanisation of temporary staff.

General Secretary Larry Flanagan closed the conference with assurances of 100% solidarity from the EIS main body in pursuing this dispute, recognising the difficulties faced by FE members in recent years, and echoing the call of FE delegates to ensure a high turnout and maximum 'yes' vote for industrial action.

We can win this campaign – but we won't win it just through conference votes and speeches, important as these are. The campaign for equal pay for lecturers will be won in college staffrooms up and down the country, and it will be won on the picket line. Vote yes for industrial action!

- Pam Currie, EIS FELA Vice President

“40p in every £1 received for Higher Education is ‘top-sliced’ by the Regional Board, with the previous Chief Executive receiving £220,000, a driver and a limo!”

Quiz

2015



Your exclusive resource for money off deals and promotions. Save on groceries and weekly shopping, home improvements, eating out, holidays or even buying a car!
www.countdowncard.com/eis

Greetings! It's that time of year again where Secret Santa, Christmas Parties, the end of term Cheese and Wine and the departmental lunch will all be to the fore. So time to sit back and chill out by having a go at the renowned EIS Great End of Year Quiz.

- Quiz by tandalus

Section 1

Were you Paying Attention?

1. Who started the year as a coach on The Voice but ended the year as a judge on The X Factor?
2. Which character made a surprise and unannounced return to EastEnders in February despite the character having been said to have died in a car crash in South Africa in 2006?
3. Which member of One Direction quit the band in March?
4. Which golfer won his first championship at the age of 21 at the US Masters in April?
5. The General Election in 2015 took place on which date?
6. In June, the members of which trade union took part in industrial action over the tendering of the contract for Caledonian MacBrayne's Clyde and Hebrides ferry routes?
7. Which two countries re-established full diplomatic relations on 20 July ending a 54-year stretch of hostility between the nations?
8. Up until the ATP Tour Final in London, world number one Novak Djokovic defeated Andy Murray in 6 out of their 7 2015 encounters. In which tournament was Murray successful in August 2015?
9. In September, which car manufacturer was accused by the United States Environmental Protection Agency of rigging diesel emission tests?
10. Which former Scottish minister became the first woman to chair the Institute of Directors in Scotland in November?

Section 2

That's Entertainment

1. Which band had a hit in 1980 called "That's Entertainment"?
2. With which song did Bryan Adams have a number 1 hit for 16 weeks?
3. What was the title of the long-running television sitcom about a British Army concert party stationed in India during the final days of the Empire?
4. Released in 1958, which was the first Carry On film?
5. Who hosts the Radio 4 programme "Just a Minute" where contestants attempt to talk on a subject for sixty seconds "without hesitation, repetition or deviation"?
6. In 2007, which band completed a 14 date European Tour schedule including two UK dates at Twickenham and Old Trafford despite not having toured for 15 years?
7. Released in 1998, who has (apparently) given 314 live performances of the song "Let Me Entertain You."
8. What was the title of Abba's last number 1 hit in the UK?
9. (a) The Winner Takes It All
(b) Dancing Queen
(c) Super Trouper
(d) The Day Before You Came
10. That's Entertainment! is a compilation film released in 1974 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of which Hollywood film studio?
11. Used as the theme music for the 1973 Oscar-winning film The Sting, "The Entertainer" was a 1902 classic piano rag written by which composer?

Section 3

Food and Drink

1. Cambozola is a cheese which appears to be a 'portmanteau' of Gorgonzola and which other cream cheese?
2. Which fruit is used to make the liqueur Chambord?
3. Champagne is made mainly from Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay and which other grape variety?
4. The Bellini is a cocktail invented by Giuseppe Cipriani, founder of Harry's Bar in Venice, Italy. It comprises Prosecco and the puree of which fruit?
5. Which is the odd one out from the following list of Scottish single malts? Balvenie, Bowmore, Bruichladdich, Bunnahabhain.
6. What is the traditional main ingredient of the Scandinavian dish called Gravadlax?
7. What name is given to a cold summer tomato soup?
8. What name is given to a type of thick wheat flour noodle of Japanese cuisine?
9. Which cocktail was invented by the Raffles Hotel barkeeper Ngiam Tong Boon in 1915?
10. In which English county is Brie made?



Section 4

The Lyrics Round

What more is there to say? It's the Lyrics Round! Simply identify the artist and the song containing the following lyrics. Where "cover versions" have been identified marks will be awarded for either the original artist or the cover artist. Let the round commence!

1. "I've been a puppet, a pauper, a pirate, a poet, a pawn and a king."
2. "I see friends shaking hands. Saying, "How do you do?" They're really saying, "I love you."
3. "Let's hope you never leave old friend Like all good things on you we depend."
4. "Let it never be said, the romance is dead. Cos there's so little else occupying my head."
5. "In this world we're just beginning To understand the miracle of living"
6. "We the people fight for our existence We don't claim to be perfect but we're free"
7. "Children gaze open mouthed Taken by surprise Nobody down below believes their eyes."
8. "Swing your partner round and round End of the night, it's going down One more shot, another round End of the night, it's going down."
9. "So I've been telling old stories, singing songs that make me think about where I came from."
10. "Six o'clock already I was just in the middle of a dream."

Section 5

And Finally

1. Which Star Wars character said: "I find your lack of faith disturbing"?
2. What is the cube root of 64?
3. Multiply the numbers of checkers at the beginning of a game of backgammon with the number of American Football teams in the NFL. Divide that number by 10 and finally subtract the total number of points on a single dice cube. What number remains?
4. In which US city would you find LaGuardia Airport and Pennsylvania Station?
5. In which James Bond film did 007 leap from the 220 metre Contra Dam in Switzerland?
6. Who hosted the BBC2 show Room 101 before Paul Merton?
7. Which character does Keifer Sutherland play in the TV Series "24"?
8. Who wrote Mr Tambourine Man by The Byrds and The Mighty Quinn by Manfred Mann?
9. Which family inhabits the house at 10 Glebe Street?
10. Which character was played by Sir Nigel Hawthorne in Yes Minister and Yes Prime Minister?

Send your completed entry form to:
**QUIZ COMPETITION, SEJ, 46 Moray Place,
 Edinburgh EH3 6BH.**

The winner will then receive a terrific prize.
All entries should be received by FRIDAY 8 JANUARY 2016

Section 1

Section 2

Section 3

Section 4

Section 5

1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9
10	10	10	10	10

Name.....Phone.....Email.....

Address.....Postcode.....

Employees of the EIS and their families are not eligible to win the competition.

Editor's decision is final: No correspondence will be entered into regarding the correct answers or the selection of the winning entry.

CPD

Learning Reps

The SEJ's regular round - up of CPD news and views

Beginning Professional Learning Conference

The EIS held a Beginning Professional Learning Conference on Saturday 31 October 2015 at the Stirling Court Hotel. This event, aimed at EIS members within their first five years of teaching, follows on from a previous Beginning Professional Learning Conference in June 2014 which received extremely positive reviews.

There were various stalls provided by the groups who presented the workshops and participants were given the opportunity to network with the stakeholders and attain information on the various organisations and upcoming workshops. There was also an EIS stall where participants could pick up EIS promotional materials and chat to Annie McCrae, one of the EIS Organisers, about the union, how to get more involved as a member and the benefits this can bring.

The Conference featured several keynote speakers – Larry Flanagan, EIS General Secretary, opened the Conference and set the scene for

the day; Lesley Whelan and Tracey Henderson, from the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) presented on the Framework for Leadership; Ellen Doherty, GTCS talked about Professional Update and Professional Learning and Jayne Rowe, EIS Glasgow Learning Rep presented on her role as a Learning Rep and how Learning Reps can support colleagues with their CPD/Professional Learning on a practical level. The Conference was chaired by Susan Quinn, EIS Education Committee Convener.

Eight workshops were on offer and participants were able to attend three in total. Workshops were provided on Motivating Learning; Dyslexia Toolkit, Recognising and Responding to Racist Incidents in Schools; Problem Solving – Tailoring the Learning of Life Skills for Individuals; Reflecting on Practice: Developing motivated and energised teachers, learners and classrooms; Open Educational Resources to Support your Professional Learning; Studying

with the Open University as part of your Professional Learning and Practitioner Enquiry and Professional Learning.

Participants enjoyed a lunch in the main restaurant which again was a great networking opportunity and also a chance to discuss the workshops they had already attended. This was followed by the third session workshop and the Conference ended with a short plenary session conducted by Susan Quinn.

The evaluations from the Conference have been extremely positive with participants explaining how much they enjoyed the day and felt it was well worth giving up their Saturday to attend. All of the events and Conferences run by the EIS are proving to be of great benefit to those who attend and more of these will be run in 2016. All events and conferences are promoted by email, on the event sections of the EIS website www.eis.org.uk, on posters displayed in schools, SEJ and the member e-bulletin.

Keeping Up-To-Date with GTCS

It has never been more important than now to ensure that all registrants with GTCS keep their contact details up to date with the sign off on the first year of Professional Update and the next cohort of registrants about to undertake their Professional Update year. If your details are not up to date then GTCS cannot contact you – this means you will not receive any communication from them about any topic including the sign off of your Professional Update.

It does not take long to update your details – this can be done easily on the GTCS website:

www.gtcs.org.uk/registration/update-details.aspx

If you have not updated your details with GTCS since the last time you moved house, school etc then contact them today to make sure your details are correct.

For further information about Professional Update and how it applies to you, visit: www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-update

For practical help and guidance on your Professional Learning, PRD and Professional Update contact your local EIS Learning Rep. Details of all EIS Learning Reps can be found on the EIS website www.eis.org.uk and by clicking on the CPD/Learning Rep icon. Contact your Learning Rep for assistance on all aspects of your Professional Learning.

Masters Practitioner Award

The EIS and City and Guilds were successful in a bid submitted to the National Implementation Board for funding for 200 teachers across Scotland to undertake Unit 1 in the Masters in Education Programme. The programme was delivered online from September 2014 and primarily focussed on Additional Support Needs.

Teachers who have undertaken this programme and have benefited from it explain below about their experience and why they dedicated the time to undertake the course. Further funding has been obtained from the National Implementation Board for another group to undertake Module 1 and some of those who undertook this module to move to Module 2.

Why did you decide to undertake the course?

Karen Boyd

As Principal teacher in a school for pupils with complex learning difficulties I felt the Masters Practitioner award would be an excellent CPD opportunity not only as a class teacher but also as part of my mentoring role within the schools Senior Management Team. I completed the Diploma in 'Understanding support for Learning' in 2008 and I wanted to extend this knowledge by continuing to study at Masters level. I hoped that by undertaking this CPD it would enhance future opportunities within my career.

Blair Kirk

I decided to undertake this course because I believe that higher education and higher-level degrees, such as that of an MEd level and beyond, should be more prevalent across education generally so to enhance the quality of the profession overall. Indeed, there should be more professionals within Senior Management Roles with higher qualifications. In fact, holding such a position should demand a higher qualification than a BEd (Hons) if our goal, in education, is to win back the trust of the public. It is through this type of professionalism and accreditation of degree that will, ultimately, win back and restore the trust in teachers and the teaching profession generally.

I was part of the cohort of 2008 – 2012 at Strathclyde University where I graduated with a 2:1 in Primary Teaching. Throughout this degree, permeated the underlying importance of philosophy with and in education, and also of the importance in the link of understanding critical theory to better off teaching practice. This belief, I actually refer to it now more as a value, led me, quite quickly, to opt for a Masters-level course and one that was of an online context to suit my own personal and professional needs.

Let us compare Law, Medicine and

Architecture, for example, to that of an educational degree. All of these require a MEd degree before professional practice. So why, then, does education, one of the four pillars of democratic society, so quickly accept less than this?

How did you overcome any barriers during the time of the course?

Karen Boyd

I found the learning forums online a useful way of exchanging ideas and any areas of concern with colleagues. However I did encounter some challenges when uploading my final essay which was supported by my online tutor. Overall, I found the Masters Unit 1 very worthwhile in terms of my professional development and if funding is available I intend to embark on units 2 and 3.

Blair Kirk

There were no barriers to learning during the time of the course because of the excellent support offered by the consultant tutors at City and Guilds. The whole idea of the open and online course meant that there was always flexibility within my studies and classroom teaching. I could study and complete the MEd work whenever I chose to best suit the needs of my school and, most importantly of course, the pupils' learning.

What did you gain from the course?

Karen Boyd

During Unit 1, I had the opportunity to observe and reflect on my current classroom practice, highlighting my strengths and development needs within the classroom. I also analysed the strengths of my staff team and was able to deploy based on their professional development needs. I was able to identify the characteristics that work effectively together to make a positive contribution towards the learning needs of the pupils. I also found Brian Boyd's 'The

Learning Classroom' extremely insightful and motivating. It supported me in reflecting upon the layout of my classroom and how I could make this motivational and structured for my learners.

Blair Kirk

I gained essential and detailed insight into my own professional strengths and development needs. This linked directly to the Standards and codes of the CLPL and in turn, provided relevant information to use in my PRD meeting. My evaluations then turned into action points for the following school year. This was done systematically through a series of tasks to provide relevant, reliable and consistent evidence. For example, a weekly timetable was analysed by lesson-by-lesson reflections to really hone in what learning and thinking was actually going on in my classroom from an objective stance. It gave me an opportunity to stand back in a rigorous manner unlike anything I have done before.

Another task, which I found to accelerate my professional learning, was the examination of educational theory that underpins current Scottish legislation. My understanding of HGIOS (How Good is our School) has particularly developed as a result, as well as access to publicised Education Scotland resources on both theory and practice. In particular, extensive work with HGIOS has allowed me to gain better understanding of the SMT's role in creating School Improvement Plans that are founded on a triangulation of different evidence. The emphasis on assessing current practice in my school with HGIOS' Quality Indicators has deepened my understanding of the journey my school is on in its own development!

The opportunity to plan for an in-service day with suggested resources from Education Scotland was both theoretical and practical. I am already sharing resources with colleagues and plan to actually implement the in-service session that I created as part of my assessment!

Gwen Mayor Trust



The tragedy which occurred at Dunblane primary school on March 13 1996, when sixteen young children and their teacher were murdered, and many others wounded, remains firmly embedded in Scotland's collective memory. While the community of Dunblane has taken great pains to move on from the horror of that day, the victims of the tragedy cannot and will not ever be forgotten.

The teacher who was killed beside sixteen of her primary one pupils that day was Gwen Mayor. In the days and weeks following the tragedy, there was a huge level of demand from EIS members for a fitting memorial to Mrs Mayor and the pupils who had died. Following a flood of financial pledges, both from EIS members as well as from other organisations across the country, the EIS established a charity known as the Gwen Mayor Trust.

The purpose of the Trust is to advance education by providing financial support for projects in connection with the arts, culture, music or sport. Gwen Mayor's daughter and a former colleague from Dunblane Primary School are among the Trustees to the Fund.

Here we look back at some school projects that benefited from Gwen Mayor Trust Funding last year, and also highlight the schools which have been awarded funding this year

Learning and Nurturing Together



Before



After

Cowdenbeath Primary School has owned an allotment within the community for a few years now. When we first took over the allotment it was in desperate need of a tidy. Our pupils, led by staff member Miss Margaret Couper, spent endless afternoons tidying the allotment and creating an area that would be able to grow vegetables. Children across all stages of the school have been able to plant a wide range of vegetables such as potatoes, beetroot, cabbage, peas, carrots and turnip. An after school club run by Miss Couper worked hard to prepare the soil, plant the vegetables, tend to them during growth and then taken them home once ready to enjoy with their families. As well as this, children work at the allotment two afternoons per week to maintain the area. Our parents and carers also help us to look after our allotment. The money donated by the Gwen Mayor Trust has helped us to buy a new wheelbarrow and stones to help tidy the area. We are also going to be purchasing a polytunnel. This will help us to grow fruits and vegetables throughout the year as the polytunnel protects from all types of weather.

Karyn Rennie

HT, Cowdenbeath Primary School



Aladdin

Sorn Primary School received funding last year for a production of Aladdin which took place in the local village hall. Headteacher Mrs Carol McCulloch said: "Local elected members were present as well as members of our village Community Council, parents and of course all of our children from P1 - P7. The evening was a huge success and we hope to be able to sustain such community events in the future." The photos show cast members and pupils painting scenery for the production.



The Gwen Mayor Trust recently announced its awards for 2015/16. Twelve school projects from across Scotland have been successful with amounts ranging from £200 to £500 being awarded. A total of £4321.81 has been awarded from the Trust fund this year.

Glencoats Primary School

£400 To purchase Ukuleles and accessories to allow children to gain a broader range of musical knowledge and interests

Carinish School £260

Lochmaddy School £370

Paible School £370

Pupils participate fully in devising a whole new original song and writing the lyrics in Gaelic and English

Forgandenny Primary

£426 To involve the whole school and local community in a celebration of Midsummer Night's Dream.

St John's Primary

£342.81 To purchase an iPad Air to assist with Christmas Nativity, the School Choir P7's preparing a WW2 musical play 'Archibalds War'.

Sunnyside Primary School

£350 To purchase a licence and costumes for a performance of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat

Eaglesham Primary

£330 To purchase new Playground equipment in order to encourage higher levels of pupil participation during playtimes and lunchtimes

Forteviot Primary School

£415 To purchase 2 x wood burning writing tools to develop a pupil inspired outdoor timeline.

Hillhead Primary School

£500 To purchase loose play materials, storage unit, other storage, paint and building materials.

St Constantine's Primary School

£200 To purchase 2 x Bricks & More 5508 Deluxe Brick Box Lego, 2 x Lego Duplo Deluxe Box and 2 x K'nex 70 Model Set for the school technology club.

Knockando Primary

£358 To purchase two England Athletics Med Ball Challenge Packs. The project is a new initiative to promote the development of throwing activities with primary school children.



Natural Art Exhibition
Middleton Primary School received funding from the Gwen Mayor Trust in order to create a "Pop up Natural Art Exhibition." Some of the pupils also created a film of the finished forest art gallery which can be viewed at www.vimeo.com/127289881



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Changing the Culture of Conflict in Scotland

Every year in Scotland, 5000 young people become homeless due to relationships breaking down at home. This number is equivalent to the population of five high schools.

As shocking as this figure is, it's just the tip of the iceberg. Legally you cannot present as homeless until you are 16 years old or above. This means that under 16s who leave home often have to stay with extended family and friends - but some are not so fortunate and are left out on the streets.

Other families struggle with arguments behind closed doors, but it doesn't have to be this way. When conflict is managed constructively, through support and mediation it can lead to a positive change in relationships and lives.

Talking about his experiences of conflict at home Sam, a 16 year old, says (sic): "Before we attended mediation, my mum and I argued almost daily. That really took it out of me, I was so exhausted because they were so constant. It made me feel depressed and almost lonely.

"It wasn't till I left home that I realised how bad things had become. It was then that a Guidance teacher suggested mediation as my situation at home had been affecting my school attendance.

"Through mediation we have both learnt how to deal better with arguments and how to avoid escalating the situation and things are much better at home."

The Cyrenians' Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution (SCCR) was set up to support families – just like Sam and his mum – and the professionals they come into contact with, to resolve conflict before it reaches crisis point. It is a national resource centre promoting and supporting best practice in mediation, family conflict resolution and early intervention work with a particular focus around young people and families.

We do this by providing free events including training, conferences, seminars and workshops and through our resource rich website that acts as a platform for our innovative online resources.

The SCCR is committed to breaking down barriers and changing the culture of conflict in Scotland. We nurture, connect and grow communities of specialists that

share their knowledge and experience with other professionals, parents and young people, creating a community that is supported and connected across Scotland, a community that empowers people to improve both their relationships and life chances.

It is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that we are getting it right for every child in Scotland. We have achieved a great deal to date, but there is still more work to do.



SCCR

Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution

In our National Survey, one in four young people told us they thought about running away on a monthly basis, whilst a third of parents told us that they argued with their teenagers every week.

The research also showed that many professionals don't know how to support struggling families. 50% of professionals didn't feel they had the skills or knowledge to support families at such times, despite 83% saying it was part of their role.

To date we have delivered training sessions to over 1000 attendees across 27 of Scotland's 32 local authorities, with 80% of the delegates saying that they feel more confident about dealing with conflict after taking part in the training.

Since 2010 homelessness in Scotland has been falling, including among young people. We know that homelessness among young people can not only be damaging in the short term, but the effects of the experience can last for years.

It is recognised that mediation and early intervention are key when supporting families struggling with conflict. But it needs to be readily available. We need your support to make access to it more straight forward.

We are continuously looking to connect with more people and to find new ways to engage with and create communities to deal better with conflict. We are also open to working collaboratively with you in designing training events. Going forward we will work with charities, schools, colleges and other organisations to create clearer links to our online resources.

In addition to the many training events and sessions being held around the country, the SCCR has recently developed a series of free 3-day Conflict Resolution training courses – the next sessions are being held in January and March 2016.

The courses are aimed at anyone who works with young people and their families. It will support participants to develop their skills in conflict resolution by exploring how conflict can develop. Participants will be provided with the skills to support young people and families to have more positive conversations and how to manage a situation if things become difficult.

Through our national initiatives and by working together with other organisations and groups we can challenge the culture of conflict and normalise mediation as a tool to resolve conflict – before more families reach breaking point.

Please visit our website and discover our online resources and attend one of our events or upcoming seminars. You can also follow us on social media.

www.scottishconflictresolution.org.uk

To discuss working together please contact Diane Marr, Network Development Manager
DianeMarr@cyrenians.scot

Improving Your Pension

EIS Assistant Secretary **Drew Morrice** and **Chris Bain** of EIS Financial Services look at the possible steps that members can take to improve their future pension benefits.

The significant changes to teachers' pensions which took place from 1 April 2015 have led to a large number of queries by members who are considering how to improve their pension benefits.

Buying Additional Pensions

Under the previous Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (STSS) arrangements which still apply to those with full or tapered protection, it was possible to buy additional pension in blocks of £250 up to a maximum of £6,300. This would provide an improvement to the annual pension. Any teacher who wishes to take advantage of this provision can apply to the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) and will receive a quotation which is based on their age and Normal Pension Age. Once an amount of additional pension is agreed between SPPA and an individual teacher the additional pension can be bought by a one off payment or monthly salary deductions over an agreed period.

Additional pension can also be bought by those in the new Scottish Teachers Pension Scheme (STPS) 2015. The maximum of additional pension is now £6,500 but the minimum block of pension is still £250.

You will find more information on Buying Additional Pension on SPPA's Website www.sppa.gov.uk

Faster Accrual Rates

Under STPS 2015 it is open to members to increase contributions to obtain a faster accrual rate to build up their pension pots. The accrual rate is the rate at which the

career average pot grows annually. In the new scheme the normal accrual rate is 1/57. This is index linked by CPI + 1.6%. However, by annual election any member of the new scheme can increase benefits by agreeing to receive an improved accrual rate, set at 1/45, 1/50 or 1/55. The faster accrual rate will operate from 1 April to 31 March and further information can be found on the SPPA website.

Standard Early Retirement Reduction Buy Out (ERRBO)

Those who joined the scheme on 1 April 2015 could elect to have bought out the standard Early Retirement Reduction. This is a facility to pay extra contributions to reduce or remove the normal early retirement reductions which apply if a scheme member retires at age 65 but before reaching the State Pension Age. In STPS 2015 the Normal Retirement Age is the same as the State Pension Age.

SPPA has determined this facility will be offered only once. Therefore, it will apply to those who have joined the Scheme in August but those who have tapered protection will have 6 months from their date of entry to the new scheme to take out an ERRBO. The EIS is surprised that this provision requires scheme members to plan now for retirement many years on and we will raise this at the Scheme Advisory Board.

Independent Financial Products

There are a number of Financial Products through which members can supplement their pensions. It is important that members take independent financial advice when taking steps to improve their

pensions. EIS Financial Services, which is an independent financial adviser, for EIS members, provides such advice. Chris Bain of EIS FS states:

"With the recent changes to the Teachers' pension scheme, and to the wider pensions market, it is now more important than ever to seek sound, Independent Financial Advice. Whilst the new flexibility is a welcome addition to the options available at retirement, there are many pitfalls to avoid and making the wrong decision could cost thousands in extra tax payments."

Additional Voluntary Contributions are packages which can be purchased to top up pensions. SPPA operates an in-house AVC facility through Prudential which provides in-house AVC provision across teachers' pension schemes in the UK. Deductions are made by employers directly from pay. Members can, however, choose to enter into a Private Pension or Stakeholder arrangement with payments made by direct debit to the provider.

Chris Bain states:

"The decision of how best to top up your pension is far from straightforward and will vary from person to person – there is no one right answer for everybody! All forms of pension planning will receive valuable tax benefits and whether you are considering Faster Accrual, Additional Pension Benefit, AVCs or a separate pension top up, speaking to an Independent Financial Adviser is always the best place to start."

In the box opposite Kenny Wood (SPPA) and Robert Stormonth (Prudential) set out a description of the in-house AVC



provision. Members should note that as a result of changes to private pension provisions, funds in commercial packages can be accessed at age 55 and benefits can now be taken as a lump sum and are no longer to be converted into annuities. This provision does not apply to public sector schemes and does not apply to previous or new pensions.

Conclusion

Many teachers will not be in a financial position to invest in improving their pension position. However, others will wish to do so particularly if they were late entrants to the profession, had breaks in service or wish improved financial security in retirement. The new scheme flexibilities and external packages offer the means to improve pensions. The EIS endorses no particular flexibility or package. It is for individuals to consider, having taken sound independent financial advice.

EIS Financial Services Ltd is an Independent Financial Services Company formed by the EIS in 1990, as a member benefit. They can be contacted on **0141 332 8004** or **www.eisfs.co.uk**



for your money matters

Additional Voluntary Contributions

Changes agreed to allow more flexibility with AVCs

As well as implementing the new Scottish Teachers' Pension Scheme in April SPPA also agreed that the new pension "freedoms" available to money purchase pension schemes should be permitted within the scheme's additional voluntary contribution (AVC) facility. The necessary changes to the regulations are now being made however will be retrospective to April 2015 meaning that members have been able to take advantage of the new rules since 6th April.

What does this mean for members?

Making AVCs has been a common method used by teachers since their introduction in 1989 to save more for their retirement. Currently over 4000 teachers are saving extra via the AVC facility. Members can start, stop, increase and decrease contributions at any time. Payments are deducted from salary and qualify for tax relief, meaning that for every £100 saved by a basic rate tax payer the cost is actually £80 and for the higher rate tax payer the cost is £60.

The contributions are invested on your behalf by our appointed AVC provider, Prudential in a fund(s) selected by you so you build up a separate "pension pot" alongside your main teachers' pension. The new rules mean that you can access this fund at any time from aged 55 and you no longer need to buy a pension with your savings, although this is still one of the options available. The new flexibilities include the option to take partial or full withdrawals with 25% of each withdrawal tax-free and the remainder taxable as earned income. Alternatively you can transfer to what is known as a Flexi-Access Drawdown and access 25% of your fund tax-free and "draw down" the remainder of your fund as you need it during your retirement.

How do I access further information?

Further information, including a new online application facility is available at:- **www.pru.co.uk/teachers** or by telephoning the Prudential support team on:- **0800 151 3665**

Kenny Wood, Scottish Public Pensions Agency
Robert Stormonth, Prudential

Student Teachers and the EIS



The EIS offers a wide range of services and support to Student Teacher Members - including free membership throughout ITE programmes and during the subsequent probation period. The EIS also has strong links with Student Teacher Societies in Universities across Scotland. Here EIS Organisers Annie McCrae and Louise O'Hara outline some of the benefits of EIS membership to student members. If you have a student or probation year teacher in your school, please advise them of the benefits of joining the EIS - initially for free.



This session 3,250 students in Scotland have enrolled for courses leading to teaching, a slight increase from 2014/15, with two-thirds of these post graduates who will begin their induction year in August 2016. Geographical recruitment difficulties are reflected in the small increase in intakes targeted at Aberdeen and Dundee Universities, the University of the Highlands and Islands and the University of the West of Scotland. Student teacher intake targets were reduced in 2009 and kept low in 2010 and 2011, ostensibly to address teacher unemployment, but have risen since then and it looks likely that the upward curve will continue with the objective of maintaining teacher numbers and coping with increased retirements from the teacher workforce.

The EIS attends the induction events at Scotland's nine Teacher Education Institutions meeting the new students and encouraging union membership. Like probationer membership, being a student member is completely free. These students automatically become members of the EIS Local Association in their University area and are welcome to attend its meetings and events.

Many of these establishments include in their courses an introduction, often presented by the EIS, to the role of the teacher unions covering employment rights and what teachers should know about the law. Student feedback suggests that more of this would be useful. The union organises University based drop-in sessions for student members seeking professional advice and information, particularly relating to placements, as well as a regular Student ebulletin with campaigning updates, details of EIS events and activities and CPD opportunities. Student members attended the EIS "Beginning Professional Learning" Conference in Stirling at the end of October.

When students are on placement the significance of union membership really kicks in and the need to organise collectively in a workplace becomes obvious. Meeting the school EIS Rep and being included in union discussions should be part of every student's experience. It's particularly important at the start of a teaching career to have an opportunity to learn what is involved in negotiating an effective annual working time agreement.

Local Associations by University

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Glasgow Local Association

University of Aberdeen
Aberdeen City Local Association

University of Dundee
Dundee Local Association

University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh Local Association

University of Glasgow
(depending on place of study)
Glasgow or Dumfries and Galloway
Local Association

University of Stirling
Stirling Local Association

University of Strathclyde
Glasgow Local Association

University of the Highlands and Islands
(depending on place of study)
Highland, Orkney Islands, Shetland
Islands, Moray, Argyll and Bute or Western
Isles Local Association.

University of the West of Scotland
South Ayrshire Local Association



Student Members Describe Their Journey into Teaching

Alistair Clarke

Aberdeen University, Year 2 MA Primary Ed, EIS Student Member

I first considered becoming a Primary Teacher when I was 17. I had known that I wanted a career working with young people for some time but had struggled when it came to choosing a specific course to pursue. I chose Primary Teaching because out of all the work experience opportunities I had in Secondary School - all of which involved working with children - Primary Teaching stood out.

This year, on my course, there has been a greater focus on schools themselves. In First Year we spent a lot of time understanding different learning

techniques, in order to identify not only how pupils learn but also the ways in which we preferred to learn as individuals. However, this year we have been considering the type of teacher we would like to be and the ways in which we could achieve this. As we are in Second Year, we have been given Placement Schools. We are paired up and attend these schools once a week, with a two week block in May.

I have loved being on placement. It's incredibly rewarding to actually go into a School and get to work with pupils who see you as a teacher - even though this can simultaneously be quite a daunting thing. My partner and I begin to lead our first lessons very soon so we have spent the last few weeks preparing them and trying

to make them as engaging and entertaining as possible. It's also very interesting to see the dynamics within a school and how it operates. Child Policy has been a prominent feature of this semester and it is interesting to see the approach which a school has taken to cover all the areas they need to.

I think that the key issue that I have as a student teacher is perhaps a lack of awareness of the broader picture. I believe that the best way for the EIS to support and organise student teachers is to provide an easily accessible supply of information.

I am excited by the prospect of becoming a qualified teacher and spending time in a classroom working with young people.

Erin McAuley

University of Stirling (Politics, History and professional Education) and EIS Student Member

My desire to follow a teaching career came from the influence my own teachers had on me. I was guided to see how education can be the golden ticket for any young person in any situation to become anything they want to be. I want to ensure every young person gets this opportunity and guidance. I want to help shape, develop, and influence young people to discover themselves and

their abilities. The pressure of teaching may be challenging but that's why I want to do it because I want to challenge these challenges.

I have enjoyed my course so far. It's interesting to be in a class with student teachers who aren't all from Scotland and who have gone through different educational experiences. It's been interesting to listen to their opinions on our education system and how it differs. At the moment we are focussing upon the purposes of education and the development of the Curriculum for Excellence.

I have had my placements in my home town. I am a member of the Scottish youth parliament for North Ayrshire and I can take back information and youth concerns to the youth parliament. I think having a strong connection with my local authority helps a lot and makes me feel a little bit more at ease. I have also really enjoyed learning from teachers who have been in the job for years, watching them and asking them questions about their experiences.

Simon Taylor

University of the West of Scotland, Year 2 MA Primary, EIS Student Member

I had a really inspirational primary school teacher and ever since then I've always wanted to be a teacher. It's such a privilege to play a formative role and I want to encourage and inspire children to be the best they can be.

We've spent a lot of time on our course developing ourselves and our own skills as communicators and learners, not just as teachers. One of the best experiences has been a 10-day placement in a primary school in Spain. It was so humbling.

Placement has been fantastic because it contextualises all the theory. It brings relevance to what we're learning but most

of all, being out in a classroom and in the midst of learning and teaching reminds me every day why I wanted to get into this vocation. School experience becomes the catalyst to propel me through the exams!

I think it's important as student teachers that we understand it's how we teach that is important, and not just what we teach. Our interactions with pupils will leave a footprint and I want to make sure I know how to be an inspiration that will encourage my pupils long after they've left my classroom.

The EIS is a fantastic support because it's made up of people who are active in the profession. We can really benefit, as students, from drawing on the experience of people in the field and getting to know other professionals so we can share resources and experiences, and offer the best we can

to children in Scotland.

I've worked with the EIS in launching a CPD society at UWS. The EIS has been really supportive right from the start.

I'm looking forward to being creative and using CfE to be as cross-curricular and inventive as I can. I want my classes to be engaging and right now I'm squirrelling away so many ideas I can't wait to use. In particular I want to bring literature to life in a really exciting way.

The Government needs to do more to help every single child achieve everything they can, regardless of their background. It's not good enough, in 2015, that children from deprived areas are leaving primary school without basic numeracy and literacy skills. As a society, we need to do much better. I support the EIS Face Up to Child Poverty Campaign.

Forum

With regards to the advertising feature *Saint Andrew* in the SEJ, October 2015, pp 27 there was a description of a battle fought by the Emperor Constantine in 312 outside Rome, the location was erroneously given as Athelstaneford, instead of Milvian Bridge. We would like to apologise for this error.

In the October edition of the SEJ, the Forum contribution entitled *Dozing in the Closet* omitted the name and address of the contributor, Judith Mackinlay. Ms Mackinlay is concerned that this could have created the mistaken impression that she was not comfortable being named as the author of the piece in the SEJ. This is not the case, and we apologise for the error which led to the omission of Ms Mackinlay's name on this piece.

FE Finances Anger

I am a lecturer at the former Coatbridge college. I watched what I could of the evidence being given to the Scottish Parliament Public Audit Committee as it heard from our former college Principal and Board Chair- John Doyle and John Gray. As I watched, I couldn't help but think of what they left behind. Stressed, overworked and underpaid staff who are now doing the work of all the lecturers and support staff who left the sector. Students who are daily struggling on poverty funding. The money that all the former principals and managers now enjoy was not theirs to take. It is needed now in our FE colleges. There is anger across colleges in Scotland at the greed of these people, who we perceived to contribute very little while they were here.

We have faced massive cuts year on year to FE funding. College staff have gone through the stresses of a merger process which I can only describe as an 'every senior manager for them self' unedifying scramble.

We care deeply about the education we provide and understand its importance to working class communities. As steel workers face job losses, it will fall to us to ensure that those who return to education in a college receive the best possible learning experience. This means our work needs to be valued and supported. In the meantime, in college staff rooms up and down the country, we will be watching the proceedings intently. Unfortunately many of us will be listening to familiar excuses we have heard too many times. Something has to be done. Let's hope it is.

- Name and address supplied

Thank You and Farewell

I am writing to let you know that I have retired from teaching.

As your records will show, I have been a member for 42 years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the EIS for all their hard work. It is a great organisation. I have enjoyed reading the monthly magazine which always contains articles of interest. Your academic year diary is excellent – just the right size.

Thank you to all in the EIS for your commitment to education.

- Name and address supplied.

Testing Times

I am a teacher in a Govanhill Primary school, part of the First Minister's constituency. I am also a very active member of the SNP.

It cannot be overstated how bitterly disappointed I now feel, however, as I read that my party is determined to return to "Standardised National Testing" for Primary School pupils (and S3). It actually hurts to think about it – a strange kind of heartache.

I agree with Nicola Sturgeon that the notorious "Attainment Gap" does need to narrow – and the faster, the better. But, and it's a seriously large "but": National Testing will not do this job. And this does smell like National Testing.

I started teaching when National Testing was imposed the last time, under the Tories. It quickly became a phenomenon out of control, with Headteachers becoming increasingly desperate to prove that they were not in charge of "failing" schools.

Even when proper procedure was being followed, pupils' experiences of school became extremely narrow, with other aspects of learning forgotten in favour of teaching more easily measured points of

numeracy and literacy.

When testing finally ended in Glasgow, there were only a few whoops of joy. The reason? Many teachers had known nothing but "teaching to the test". They were de-skilled. How were they to now know how their pupils were doing without a letter of the alphabet to tell them?

Under CfE, grossly under-funded, as it is, confidence has slowly returned. We found a way. Instead of merely passing on meaningless grades to the next teacher, we talked to one another – about the strengths and weaknesses of individuals. Discussions with Headteachers became more meaningful as the next session's classes were formed with this in mind. In Glasgow we used benchmarking tools, which provided exactly what Glasgow City Council's Education Department needed to know. We no longer felt we had to achieve "better" meaningless results than the neighbouring schools. We concentrated on our own particular pupils and their own particular needs.

And those needs are many. Now, as then, there are multiple, complex, deep-rooted barriers to learning. Hungry children, refugee children, children whose lives at home are chaotic due to parents' addictions, children from abroad who are

new to the whole experience of schooling and have no English – if anything the list is longer than the first time round.

No form of blanket National Testing is going to help these children. As before, many will simply learn they are failures at a very early age – their grades will be found on their annual reports. The Attainment Gap will not be narrowed – it will merely be better described. It may even widen, as money spent on starting up and maintaining the scheme could be better spent creating smaller class sizes, where pupils have more individual time with their teachers.

I would like to think Ms Sturgeon might change her mind on this issue, but know this is an unlikely prospect... at fifty years old, I have yet to hear a politician admit being wrong...

Of course, I may be wrong myself. Perhaps what the FM has in mind is a form of Diagnostic Testing, whereby the results will flag up the resources required to ameliorate matters - and subsequently those resources will be put in place to do so. However that is not the message one hears in Primary staffrooms.

- Carolyn Ritchie, Glasgow
(First published in the National)



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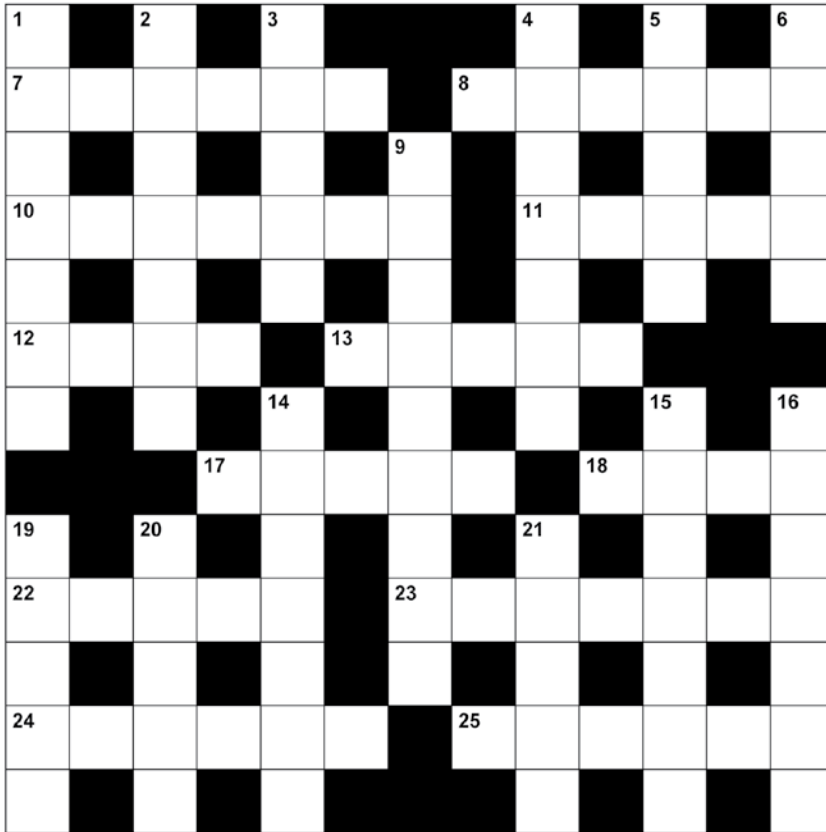
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across

- 7 - Body of work of a painter or composer (6)
- 8 - ___ O'Sullivan: English snooker star (6)
- 10 - Great ___ Reef: located off the coast of Queensland (7)
- 11 - River of west central France (5)
- 12 - Solid type of fuel (4)
- 13 - John ___ : second US President (5)
- 17 - Albert ___ : French Nobel Prize winning author (5)
- 18 - ___ Turner: singer whose real name is Anna Mae Bullock (4)
- 22 - Arboreal primate with a pointed snout (5)
- 23 - Hot wind blowing from North Africa (7)
- 24 - Tree or shrub also known as wattle (6)
- 25 - John Maynard ___ : English economist (6)

down

- 1 - Male deer (7)
- 2 - Traditional form of Japanese puppetry (7)
- 3 - Daniel ___ : James Bond actor (5)
- 4 - SI unit of electric charge (7)
- 5 - Broadway musical with music by Charles Strouse (5)
- 6 - Country whose capital is Sana'a (5)
- 9 - Frontman of the band Limp Bizkit (4,5)
- 14 - Country in western Asia (7)
- 15 - ___ van Gogh: Dutch artist (7)
- 16 - ___ Valley: Australian wine-producing region (7)
- 19 - Edward ___ : English composer (5)
- 20 - ___ Khan: former Pakistani cricket captain (5)
- 21 - Germaine ___ : Australian writer and journalist (5)

Crossword 87 Answers





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