

Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee
Draft Scottish Budget 2016-17 and outcomes of 2015-16
12 November 2015

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Scottish Government on how the 2015-16 draft budget has affected education, particularly regarding spending in primary and secondary schools.
2. The NASUWT also welcomes the opportunity to put forward suggestions for consideration in drafting the Scottish Budget for 2016-17.
3. The NASUWT is the fastest growing teachers' union in Scotland representing teachers and school leaders.

GENERAL COMMENTS

4. The NASUWT understands that the draft budget has been developed in the context of the Westminster Government's flawed economic strategy of cuts to funding. Given that the block grant adjustment for the devolved taxes has yet to be agreed with the Westminster Government, it is possible that Scotland could end up financially worse off following these changes.

5. However, as a result of a number of policy decisions by the Scottish Government, education has been placed in an increasingly fragile position over a number of years because:
 - (a) the education budget has not been sufficiently ring-fenced, leaving individual authorities able to divert key resources from education and providing limited accountability in relation to the overall education budget. Where funding allocated for specific education strategies is not the most appropriate for a local authority's needs, there is no mechanism for that funding to be reallocated to another area within education with higher priority; and
 - (b) an enforced council tax freeze for almost nine consecutive years limits local authority options in raising additional revenue.
6. The NASUWT draws the Committee's attention to last year's Audit Scotland Report which listed a number of councils' strategies and approaches to reducing their education spending, which included employing fewer staff, changes to teacher terms and conditions, increasing classroom teaching time, seeking efficiencies in school transport and reducing training budgets.
7. The Report further noted that *'Council education services are likely to continue to face budgetary pressures and they need to be alert to the potential impact of increased workloads on remaining staff'*. The NASUWT contends that the Scottish Government is facing a ticking time bomb on teacher workload. Teacher workload has already escalated to an unsustainable degree, without further workforce reductions being factored in. Councils cite the Scottish Government's policy on maintaining teacher numbers as the main reason for budgetary cuts elsewhere. However, teacher workload will continue to increase due to the cuts in other education staff, as well as a range of other factors.
8. The NASUWT welcomed the CfE Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy Report and is involved in the review of its recommendations, including:
 - Education Scotland using the inspection process to challenge unnecessary bureaucracy in schools, reducing its own bureaucratic requirements and providing clearer advice and support to schools on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) implementation;

- reducing verification procedures for new qualifications and supporting teachers and school leaders more effectively in qualification delivery; and
 - streamlining local audit and accountability requirements to the most critical areas of CfE implementation.
9. The recommendations set out in the Report should have already begun to be addressed in current School Improvement Plans. However, there is little evidence that this has happened. This Report could have fundamentally improved the working lives of teachers but insufficient priority has to date been given to its effective implementation. Reduced funding for education, resulting in fewer teaching staff, will compound an already unsustainable workload situation. The lack of statutory imperative is also an inhibiting factor.
10. The effects of poverty on educational attainment have been well documented and the NASUWT welcomes the Scottish Government's recent announcements to make addressing this a priority. The Union is heavily involved in campaigns to highlight child poverty, through its work with Child Poverty Action and other organisations. The NASUWT conducts an annual 'Cost of Education' survey of parents and carers in Scotland to identify the effects of austerity on free education. The NASUWT believes that many of these hidden costs are having a huge impact the educational experiences and opportunities of children and young people and believes urgent attention is needed to be focused on poverty-proofing the school day.
11. In considering the Draft Scottish Budget for 2016-17, a radical rethink of priorities for education is required. Funding needs to be sustainable in the long term to have any chance of improving attainment and mitigating the impact of poverty. Local authorities have been trimming the fat year on year and, simply put, there are no further efficiencies to be made. Any future reduction in spending is a cut and to brand it an '*efficiency saving*' merely supports the Westminster Government's austerity agenda.
12. The Scottish Government must acknowledge that short-term, swift and deep cuts will result in a long-term detriment to the education of children and young people.

Education develops the knowledge and skills a country needs to build its economy. Investment in education is an investment in the future of the Country.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

13. One of the significant difficulties for the Scottish Government in assessing the national picture is the variation in funding priorities across each local authority. The current draft budget has impacted negatively on pupils and families, and teacher recruitment and retention. It has increased pressure via the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) and the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT) on teacher terms and conditions. However, this picture will vary across the country as each local authority may have chosen a different area to cut, and pupils and teachers could be subject to a postcode lottery of education provision.

Additional Support

14. A tidal wave of cuts has and continues to hit Scotland as austerity measures filter down. Critical entitlements to additional support for pupils, for example, are under continued threat. The presumption of 'mainstream' in schools can only work when there are sufficient resources and properly trained staff available to support teachers in the delivery of appropriate learning.

15. Currently, the reduction in additional support needs (ASN) support staff, speech and language specialists and many other peripatetic staff is resulting in children and young people with ASN not having their needs met.

16. Another area of concern relates to the ever increasing number of children who arrive in schools unable to speak or understand the English language. Despite the recognition and celebration of the growing diversity in our schools, many English as an additional language (EAL) teacher posts have been cut and children left with no support in integrating into education. All of this has an impact on the teaching and learning including in pupil behaviour. To ensure the success of the inclusion agenda, more investment is required. It cannot be delivered by the

goodwill of the profession. Failure to recognise and address this may result in those children and young people who currently have additional support ASN losing this vital support.

Workload

17. Scotland has a world-renowned education system. This is due to the commitment, dedication and hard work of teachers, who to ensure pupils receive the best educational experience possible. Their efforts over the past two years in supporting the implementation of a new qualifications framework being one such example. The over reliance on goodwill in the face of excessive workload is unsustainable and the Draft Budget did not in any way address this issue.

National Priorities

18. Some of the national priorities on education referenced in the Draft Budget were quite vague, in particular those referencing CfE. It is inevitable in the context of a reduction in education spending by councils that many national commitments will be placed under increasing pressure.

19. In 2003, Scotland's First Minister was committed to placing music '*at the heart of young people's learning*' and intended that by 2006 all school children would have had access to a year's free music tuition by the time they reached Primary 6. Unfortunately, this vision has not been sustained and local authorities, in light of the funding restrictions, are increasing charges for instrumental music teaching to as much as £340 a year, dropping fee exemptions and cutting instructor posts. Young people have lost their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum and access to a creative subject in which they may excel, which may lead to further disaffection.

Early Years

20. Further to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, additional funds were made available to increase the annual provision of 475 hours' pre-school education for three and four year olds to a minimum annual provision of 600 hours' early learning and childcare for three and four year olds and looked after two year-olds. From August 2015 this also included two year olds with a parent in

receipt of qualifying benefits. This additional investment is welcomed. There is a wealth of evidence which demonstrates that investment in early years education and early intervention will pay dividends in the long term for children and young people's outcomes, as well as saving costly interventions in later phases of education and adult life. While welcoming a preventative spending approach, Scottish children remain disadvantaged compared with their counterparts in England. In England, more than 40 per cent of two year olds are entitled to free nursery education, compared with 15 per cent in Scotland from August 2014.

Schools for the Future

21. The NASUWT welcomed the increased investment in school infrastructure. The construction of new schools is essential to ensure working and learning environments fit for the 21st century, for pupils and staff alike. The NASUWT would not support any reduction in future proposed investment. Any funding shortfall, whether as a result of slippage or flowing from cuts to capital budgets, would be of genuine concern.

Child Poverty

22. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) originally estimated that 400,000 more children would be forced into poverty between 2010 and 2015 as a result of the Westminster Government's economic and social policies. The estimate that over 200,000 more children will be plunged into poverty in the next three years, with over one million more children in poverty by 2020, has now been identified as conservative. There is a direct link between poverty and low educational attainment, and addressing poverty in the context of a health and housing strategy must be a priority. Funding policies to reduce child poverty should not be seen as a cost but as a saving, an investment in all of our futures.

23. More than half of all school children in the UK living in poverty are not receiving free school meals. Due to the financial climate, much of the ground the Scottish Government gained in widening access to free meals was lost. West Dunbartonshire Council, for example, scrapped universal free school meals from early primary provision. Therefore, it is welcomed that the commitment in the Draft Budget to *'implement our commitment to free school meals for all P1 to P3*

children worth around £330 for each of around 170,000 children' was honoured in 2015. Work now needs to be undertaken to widen this out further to enable older children to benefit in future.

24. Three quarters of teachers now report regularly experiencing children coming to school so hungry that they lack energy and are unable to concentrate. It is welcomed that the Scottish Government continues to work with partners, including NASUWT and other trade unions, to respond to tackling inequality. The NASUWT has conducted much research in this area to inform our campaigns and will continue to support initiatives which challenge this inequality.

Cost of Education

25. Part of the challenge in addressing poverty and raising attainment are the hidden costs of education. The following areas present financial challenges for parents and contribute to a two-tier system for those who can afford the additional costs and those who cannot. The cost of school uniform, PE and educational equipment, lunchtime arrangements and the cost of food, educational visits and activities; of extra-curricular activities; of travel to and from school.
26. The NASUWT welcomed the introduction of the Scottish Attainment Challenge in February 2015 which allocated £100 million of funding across seven pilot authorities, although questions the almost total focus on areas of urban deprivation. Many children in rural areas are prevented through poverty from taking part fully in all aspects of their education, one example being: breakfast clubs and after-school activities cannot be accessed due to restrictive transport availability. In the roll-out of funding to all local authorities planned for 2016, careful consideration must be given in the draft budget to poverty-proofing the school day to ensure equality of access for all.

Draft Scottish Budget for 2016-17

27. In considering the Draft Scottish Budget for 2016-17, the NASUWT proposes the following measures;

- (a) reinstatement of the ring-fencing for education budgets in each local authority;
- (b) the introduction of central government compliance mechanisms to ensure local authorities do not divert money from education;
- (c) the setting of specific and measurable targets for local authorities, tied into an effective enforcement mechanism;
- (d) greater incentivisation of flexible working to local authorities, for example, through a central government funding matrix;
- (e) guaranteed sustained spending in real terms within education;
- (f) guaranteed maintenance of teacher numbers across each local authority, including peripatetic specialists;
- (g) a statutory basis for reduced class sizes across all ages and stages;
- (h) a statutory basis for terms and conditions for teachers and the return of supply teachers to the same terms as other teachers.

28. There needs to be detail provided as to what any commitment to funding improvements in the quality of teaching and leadership in the teaching profession will mean to individual teachers. The NASUWT would wish for the Scottish Government to provide funding for all masters-level learning and to ensure that funding for continuing professional learning is maintained.

29. Consideration needs to be given to the growing challenges of teacher recruitment and retention and how the budget might assist local authorities in funding initiatives that will attract and retain teachers to specific areas that cannot fill teacher posts. For example, Aberdeen City is one authority where a number of new teachers are appointed through the preference waiver scheme, gaining a financial incentive of £6,000 or £8,000 for agreeing to undertake their induction year in a specific area. When looking for work following induction, and already having to take a reduction in salary through the loss of the preference waiver bonus, such teachers are unlikely to stay in an area where the cost of living is so high. If something could be introduced to mitigate the loss until the salary point catches up, then teachers would be more likely to stay longer than a year, allowing them to build social networks and establish roots in the area.

30. Investment in early years is undoubtedly a key aspect of the preventative spending agenda. However, despite a commitment by the Scottish Government to provide ‘*access to a nursery teacher for every nursery-age child*’ and considerable evidence demonstrating the long-term impact of trained teachers in pre-primary settings, many local authorities have been diluting or dismantling their nursery provision. Local authorities have been undermining standards in nurseries by employing fewer teachers and more nursery nurses. Statistics from 2012 suggested that one in four nursery-age children in Scotland did not have access to a qualified teacher. The situation continues to deteriorate year on year. The loss of experienced, qualified nursery teachers deprives children of expert support at a crucial stage in their development. Greater priority needs to be given in 2016 to increasing, or at least maintaining, qualified teachers in nursery.

31. The NASUWT recommends that Equality Impact Assessments are routinely used by both the Scottish Government and local authorities to assess the full impact of any budgetary proposals on pupils, families and the school workforce.

32. In addition to these measures, the NASUWT believes there should continue to be full disclosure of financial data and statistics relating to all and any future Scottish Government economic funding proposals.

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