

2024

Northern Committee Report

into 
Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann



156th Annual Congress

Europa Hotel Belfast • 1-2 March 2024

Northern Committee Report

156th Annual Conference
Europa Hotel Belfast
1 - 2 March 2024

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Table of Attendance at Northern Committee Meetings

Northern Committee Meetings Attended

There were 10 meetings in total

Name	Surname	TOTAL	
Seamus	Hanna	10	
Dorothy	McGinley	9	5 as President
Patrick	McAllister	8	
Michelle	McCrystal	10	
Siobhan	McElhinney	10	
John	Kelly	7	
Caroline	McCarthy	10	
Geraldine	McGowan	10	
Caoimhin	MacColaim	10	
Marty	Lavery	9	
Noreen	Kelly	10	
Clare	Kearney-Kirwin	1	Replaced MOS Oct 2023
Marie	O'Shea	7	2 as NC Rep, 5 as Assistant Northern Secretary
Moira	O'Kane	9	
Annmarie	Conway	8	
Rachel	Poland	2	Maternity Leave
David	Nolan	10	
Dermot	Gallagher	9	
Gerry	Murphy	3	
Mark	McTaggart	10	

Section 1: SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

1.1 Teachers' Salaries and conditions of service

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service in Northern Ireland are determined by the Teachers' Negotiating Committee [TNC], consisting of two parties - Management Side and Teachers' Side. Up until February 2024, Management Side comprised of the Education Authority (EA), Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), Governing Bodies Association (GBA), Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and the Department of Education (DE).

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) is the Teachers' Side of the TNC. NITC consists of the five recognised teachers' unions, INTO, NEU, NAHT, NASUWT and the UTU.

Discussions continued, in a mix between face-to-face and Zoom, in relation to the establishment of the resumption of the TNC. After the pay agreement of 2020, much of the previous TNC was simply re-established, however, one new aspect of a Joint Secretaries' Forum was agreed and is now fully functioning. This new group has effectively replaced the Joint Working Party (JWP). Each side of the new Committee has appointed Joint Secretaries. The Joint Secretaries have attempted to meet on a monthly basis to progress the strategic agenda and programme of work of the TNC and to establish sub-groups and working parties, where necessary, to both update and establish new policies and procedures. The TU side Joint Secretaries, Mark McTaggart INTO (Mark McTaggart replaced Gerry Murphy as INTO's Northern Secretary 2023) and Justin McCamphill NAS/UWT, have a shared responsibility to effectively support the work of the TNC and its sub-committees. It has already established joint working groups and commissioned research and investigations in relation to updating TNC papers.

The 'ICTU 2009' mediated agreement for the NITC, continues to provide a basis for the operation of the negotiating arrangements. This agreement between the five constituent unions, provided for a revised NITC Constitution with decision making for the two-year period from April 2009 to April 2011 being on a consensual basis of the five NITC Interests. It was agreed that after April 2011 decision making within the NITC, will be on the basis of agreement of four out of five of the teacher unions. In 2022 this agreement of 4/5 remains in place.

ICTU agreement (extract)

Having reflected on the discussions held during the above meeting I propose that the following clauses are adopted by all constituent members of the NITC in a spirit of solidarity and unity so necessary for meeting the challenges ahead in the current economic environment and in conformity with the NITC Constitution:

- 1) All NITC constituents accept fully that the TNC is the sole negotiating forum for teachers in Northern Ireland.
- 2) Section 10 of the NITC Constitution sets out the procedure for constituents wishing to submit claims and as this Constitution has been accepted by all concerned then the agreed procedure MUST be adhered to.
- 3) Accepting the above any current industrial action should be suspended. The issue at the centre of this industrial action shall be pursued through the agreed procedures.
- 4) On the matter of issues other than terms and conditions of employment for teachers such as policy implications it is recommended that all constituents participate in the Strategic Forum initiative on the basis of the preamble to these clauses.
- 5) The inter-trade union transfer of members is being processed by apparently all constituents in contravention of Paragraph 46 of the ICTU Constitution. As this article is designed to promote harmonious relations between unions, I recommend all constituents implement forthwith.
- 6) Nothing in the above negates the autonomy of any constituent union to carry out its activities as endorsed by its membership. However, such action should only be engaged in following exhaustion of the procedures as contained in the NITC.

1.2 Negotiating Arrangements 2023/24

INTO is represented at the meetings of the TNC by Mark McTaggart, and Marie O'Shea, Assistant Northern Secretary (Marie O'Shea replaced Mark McTaggart as Assistant Northern Secretary 2023). Work undertaken through Joint Working Party subgroups is also carried out during the year and INTO was represented by the relevant official or Northern Committee representatives.

Since 2021, monthly meetings of the Joint Working Party (JWP) have been superseded by the Joint Secretaries forum which have happened both face-to-face and via online platforms. While normally these meetings are primarily focused on the management and progression of agreed agenda items and claims, much of the business, since the last Northern Committee report, has been taken up with Covid-19 regulations and pay negotiations. Substantive work on a number of other issues was carried out by NITC but has not been fully progressed to a conclusion through the Joint Secretaries Forum.

The primary focus, outside of the main pay negotiations, was based on a number of issues including:

- NISTR –employment of substitute teachers.
- NITC pay claim
- Covid-19 related issues
- EA Contracts
- TNC Reconstitution /Normalisation of negotiating Machinery through new Joint Secretaries group
- Workload, Joint Consultative committees Pilot (JCCs) & new initiatives
- Transition group - nine review areas
- Family friendly contract variations
- Attendance procedure
- Teacher redeployment

Progress was made in some areas most notably the TNC reconstitution through a new Joint Secretaries Forum which has, since its first meeting, now subsequently meet face-to-face. A programme of work has been firmly established which has resulted in the ongoing revision of four family friendly TNCs and an update of the Teacher Attendance procedure. The Secretaries' Forum is attended on behalf of INTO by Mark McTaggart.

The group tasked with the Upfront Asks, which as part of the last pay negotiations, was known as the Transition Group and managed the transition away from the previous industrial action short of strike. This group primarily looked at the upfront asks which focused on three areas: Workload (directed time budgets), Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs) & new initiatives. General agreement by the transition group in respect of Directed Time Budgets has been reached with both sides providing training.

While the Cycle to Work issue has been resolved other issues, inter alia, NISTR, Teacher Health and Well-being (THAW) and Parental Complaints largely remain ongoing. INTO is hopeful of progress especially as NISTR and THAW are included within the nine reviews areas. NITC remains of the opinion that the parental complaints procedure is unfair, and needs amended.

From INTO's perspective much of the business of the early 23/24 academic year, to this point, has again been overshadowed, albeit to a lesser degree than last academic year, by the pay claim.

1.3 Teachers' pay

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC), in pursuance of its objective to improve the terms and conditions of its members in schools and colleges in Northern Ireland, in April 2021 agreed to submit a claim of a 6% uplift on all pay and allowances, including the leadership scale. This was not accepted by management side which meant that teachers did not receive a pay uplift for the 2021/22 financial year. However, 2023 also saw teachers facing a worsening economic crisis in over forty years with the cost of living rising to over 11%. With that as a backdrop, the Central Executive Committee of the INTO commenced a ballot of its member on the 12th September and on the 5th October 2022 informed all employers of the results of the ballot and their intention, on the back of the results, to issue instructions to the membership to engage in continuous action, up to and including strike action. On this occasion INTO engaged Popularis Ltd as an independent scrutineer who independently verified the results as 85% in favour of strike action and 98% in favour of actions short of strike.

Subsequently INTO has embarked on action short of strike which was introduced through an escalated approach which coincided with termly markers.

- Phase one began on 17th October 2022.
- Phase two followed after Hallowe'en mid-term on 1st November 2022.
- Phase three began at start of new 2023 term on 4th January 2023.
- Phase four began on 3rd April 2023.
- Additional specific actions were added for school leaders in the autumn term of 2023.

All four phases are still in 2024 ongoing and have resulted in combined instructions to members. (SEE APPENDIX 1 and 2)

1.4 Review in nine key areas

Eight of the nine Reviews, agreed in the 2020/1 Pay and Workload Agreement, were completed in March 2023. Mr Kevin Daly was appointed by NITC as Teachers' side lead on the project team tasked with coordinating the reviews and continues within this role. Each review consisted of a working group made up of agreed representatives of trade union and management sides. These working groups ultimately reported to a dedicated project Oversight Group (OG), also made up of agreed trade union and management side representatives, who were tasked with considering reports from the working groups and when agreed, progressing the outcomes to TNC for implementation of any recommendations emerging from the reviews.

The nine reviews, were in no particular order:

1) Review of employment model of teachers.

Management Side has taken the lead in this review. Professor Tony Gallagher agreed to assist the group with further research, and he presented on the Education Employment Models in Estonia, Finland, Alberta (Canada), Singapore and New Zealand.

The group discussed the merits of delegated autonomy to schools as opposed to centrally held control. They have reviewed the most significant parts of the Terms of Reference focussing on the areas to be considered and potential outcomes. The group recognised that if there is to be a significant proposed change to the employing authority model it will require legislative change.

The working group submitted a report to the Oversight Group in December 2022. The broad areas of recommendation include adoption of a proposed 'redeployment scheme' for teachers and a scheme related to development opportunities scheme for school leaders; revisiting the definition of 'unavoidable redundancy'; consistency of recruitment; shared roles across schools where recruitment is problematic; a review of the common funding formula; HR support for Irish Medium, Integrated and voluntary grammar schools.

2) Review of the use of temporary and substitute teachers.

Management Side have taken the lead in this review. A call of tender to supply the NISTR replacement system went live from September 2022.

The review group was involved in the NISTR Tender Group, assisting in development of the specifications for this contract was engaged again at design stage. The discussions identified

additional areas that the review group will now consider for possible inclusion in the planned guidance for schools on effective engagement of supply teachers for example, need for minimum cancellation periods and definition of a half day. The guidance will also include best practice examples around good induction which are being sourced.

The group completed and were informed in their business by a survey open to all teachers on NISTR. This provided a greater understanding of the supply workforce capacity in terms of how often they are available to work and why they are registered on NISTR.

The group has considered a draft outline options paper.

Because of a hold-up with the changes to the NISTR register post-summer 2022, the report was postponed until the end January for consideration by Oversight Group in February 2023.

3) Review of workload agreement.

This is an NITC led review chaired by Kevin Daly INTO. The group have reached agreement on potential amendments to the Workload Agreement TNC 2011/8.

The group has worked towards the development of a dedicated webpage as a central point for all documentation pertaining to all teachers' terms and conditions of employment similar to the provision of same in neighbouring jurisdictions (for example the burgundy book in England).

The proposed amendments to the Workload Agreement have been agreed by the Oversight Group (OG) for consideration along with proposals around consistent application and regular training in the provisions of the Workload Agreement.

A final report was re-submitted by working group in December 2022 and their recommendations are now with the TNC for implementation.

Further to the issues outlined above, other recommendations relate to setting up a detailed exploration of tasks undertaken by teachers which have no educational value with a view to reducing workload at source; agreement around school and system level new initiatives continue to be developed; a DE led review of School Development and 'Baker Days' should be carried out.

4) Review of workload impact on school leaders.

This examined current practices and the impact on the workload of principals and vice-principals. This is a TNC directed review and the trade union Side led this review.

The group participated in sessions with representative practitioners, facilitated by Dr Noel Purdy and have gathered written submissions from trade unions and principal locality groups. A number of drafts were written following detailed scrutiny, discussion and attempts to reach agreement. A report, agreed at working group level, was submitted to the oversight group in May 2022. Management side of the OG, at a meeting in June 2022, asked the working group to reconsider the report. Inevitably this has delayed the progression of the report and associated recommendations. Detailed correspondence and several meetings followed resulting in the recommendations of the report being reworked with the intention of submitting this to the OG in January 2023.

At this stage it can be reported, broadly, that the following areas (including but not exclusive to) are likely to produce recommendations in the final report: bureaucracy; excessive communication;

school development planning; school improvement services and the efficacy of support services to school leaders; health and wellbeing of school leaders; hours of availability; school governance; funding; professional development; teaching principals; nursery principals; complaints and the impact of SEN provision on workload.

5) Review of workload associated with Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision.

This review is a DE led review of the end-to-end administrative processes associated with special educational needs provision and in particular the statementing process. This has been led by DE in collaboration with trade union side. TU side ensured practitioner involvement in the selection of their representatives who were senior lay activists with current experience in a range of SEN settings. The Working Group comprise ten members including representatives from each of the five recognised unions, EA, DE and CCMS. Given the level and volume of associated reviews and investigations into SEN provision across the education system in Northern Ireland during this period, arrangements were in place for the working group to engage quarterly with DE and EA nominated officials to receive updates on various programmes for change and associated workload implications.

A final report has been submitted to the OG in December 2022, making recommendations in a number of areas including use of data and ICT; administrative processes; the role of SENCO; review and referral process; PLPs; SEN in mainstream, specialist provision and ASD settings; administrative processes; SEN in Nursery/ Early Years; teacher professional learning in relation to SEN and budgetary issues.

6) Review of accountability framework.

This was a DE led review into the accountability within the education sector and was taken forward by a core working group chaired by DE.

Membership included up to five MS representatives and up to five TU representatives.

The review sought to identify where any of the processes within the Accountability Framework create excessive workload and provide recommendations for reducing this without losing quality. The key focus of the group was on school support, development, improvement and inspection.

Given the broad scope of this review, to maintain focus and manageability, it was necessary to determine a discrete, priority number of issues to be considered. It was agreed that it would be helpful to focus the review around specific areas that appeared to be drivers of excessive workloads: school improvement, school development planning, and inspection. Three subgroups were formed to this end.

It is expected that the review might have the potential to achieve the following outcomes:

- Recommendations around an enhanced model for teacher learning and development that ensures TPL is a continuous, iterative process and consideration given to the need for a potential system for effective recording throughout a career.
- A reduction in workload associated with the inspection process with clear guidance around what is and what is not required.
- A clear picture around school improvement in respect of the roles and responsibilities and signposting for help and support.
- Proposals for a revised, streamlined School Development Planning process with examples of good models provided in some form of Desk-aid type guidance.

- Proposals for a system that ensures effective, periodic review of School Development Plans that provides constructive feedback at a high level.
- Proposals around how performance measures encourage improvement and are used to set targets / ensuring effective accountability at pupil, school and system level and impact on workload.
- Development of an 'accountability framework user guide'.

The working group reported to the OG in March 2023.

7) Review of consultation arrangements.

With the stated aim of promoting positive industrial relations, this joint management/NITC review will develop consultative arrangements in schools. This is a TNC led review and management Side took the lead in this review and aimed to set out the progress and key changes made in industrial relations since the Agreement was reached in April 2020 and the ending of the industrial action including:

- The review of the TNC Constitution.
- The establishment of a Joint Secretaries Forum.
- The arrangements in place to ensure early consultation between management and teaching unions in respect of any new policies or proposals for change that may impact on teacher workloads; (Work has commenced on a pilot of Joint Consultative Committees within schools)
- The establishment of the joint working groups to address the 9 identified areas in the Agreement.
- Commencement of joint reviews of the programme of policy and procedures reviews.

Management Side and NITC jointly considered:

- The principles of consultation with an agreed understanding of what consultation means.
- Consultation machinery covering engagement with NITC on initiatives which potentially impact on teacher workload.
- The practical arrangements for establishing consultative arrangements in schools – local arrangements.
- The manageability of proposed arrangements both central and local.
- Training support for management and trade union participants in the consultative process.

An attempt was made to develop an agreed protocol or guidance on the development and implantation of new initiatives at system level, a previous draft version having been rejected by DE following work undertaken by the 'transition group'. However, NITC could not support the proposed document and therefore agreement was not reached.

The initial findings of the group have been agreed by the Oversight Group and is currently with TNC for implementation.

Areas for recommendation include a draft proposed guidance document for schools on effective consultation has been developed and agreed by the working group with significant input and support from the Labour Relations Agency; extension of the pilot period for JCCs; training in HR for school leaders and aspiring leaders to be developed; ensuring consistent HR advice is available for schools; in line with the review of the Workload Agreement this review lends voice to the importance of a central resource for documents relating to teachers' terms and conditions.

8) Review of Statutory Assessment at Key stages 1,2 and 3.

This DE led group, while working closely with NITC, will make policy recommendations regarding the purpose, nature and design of key stage assessment in Northern Ireland. The group will hope to benchmark against best practice and produce proposals and recommendations to support the development of fit for purpose arrangements for key stage assessment. This will be led by DE in collaboration with trade union side and will have practitioner involvement.

Unfortunately, DE have yet to appoint staff to this review and there is no indication of timescale for this.

9) Review of initiatives to promote and support teacher health and well-being.

A joint Management/NITC review to promote teacher health and well-being. This was a TNC led review and the trade union Side took the lead in this area, chaired by Nuala O'Donnell, INTO. The group reviewed existing potential support for teachers in their role so that they have access to help, advice and practical intervention which promotes health and well-being. The review has identified good practice and sought to make recommendations to address gaps in support provision.

The group considered:

- The availability of existing support services to teachers and school leaders across all sectors.
- Gaps within the current provision of 'help, advice and practical intervention' in relation to health and well-being for teachers including principals and vice principals.
- Specific consideration of gaps in provision of support, advice and practical intervention around health and well-being linked to equality issues and the need for greater awareness and training in this area.
- Specific consideration of the teaching workforce profile in relation to health and well-being.
- Health and well-being challenges faced by teachers and school leaders in relation to challenging behaviours and complex needs.
- Support available to improve health and well-being of staff experiencing excessive workload.
- The need for a revised TNC Strategy in relation to Teacher Health and Wellbeing (THAW).

The group finalised their report and presented this to the Oversight Group in February 2023.

1.5 Teachers' pay and conditions - other issues

- Work experience visits – INTO have advised its members that the new policy is totally unworkable and sees benefit in consulting with EA to highlight issues. Kevin Daly has taken the lead for INTO in this regard.
- Code of Conduct – This document is still within the consultation period, however, INTO members have been instructed not to sign the document that was delivered to schools.
- EA contracts – Meetings led by Northern Secretary, Mark McTaggart, continue with EA officials in regard to hybrid contracts, essential car use, permanency delays and SEN allowances. The NITC sub-committee is now as follows:

Mark McTaggart (INTO)
Maxine Murphy-Higgins (NASUWT)
Alastair Donaghy (NEU)
Jacquie Reid (UTU)
Liam McGuckin (NAHT)

This group has been very successful in securing many permanent posts for EA employees.

Much of the normal work of the TNC/JWP had initially been interrupted because of the pay negotiations. This was a concern for NITC and was raised to management in 2023 as being possibly detrimental to the advancement of teachers' terms and conditions. Sara Long, the Chief Executive for Education has welcomed the idea of re-establishing the full TNC and so with the reconstitution of the TNC, measures are now in place to upgrade policies and procedures using the joint Secretaries Forum. The first two areas, as already noted, that have been agreed as being priority are in regard to the Attendance Procedure and the mix of family friendly policies.

Teachers' terms and conditions continues to be a feature of the negotiating arrangements. INTO remains of the view that such a review should only commence when sufficient funding has been secured and an agreed process had been developed.

1.6 Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

The work of the NITC sub-committee to review this Act and provide guidance is ongoing.

The members of the group were...

Justin McCamphill (NASUWT)
 Paul Groogan (INTO)
 Carney Cumper (UTU)
 Liam McGuckin (NAHT)
 Gordon White (NEU)

Objections to the introduction of the Act were raised again at NITC and it was agreed that the detail of the act was, among other things, bureaucratic and not conducive to teacher/parent relations.

While the review of TNC 2011/1 Teacher Health and Wellbeing Strategy (THAW) was finally completed in 2016, the revised and updated document still (2024) remains under consideration by Management Side. As previously noted, this document will be considered under the review of initiatives to promote and support Teacher Health and well-being.

Redundancies continues to be a subject of discussion at the negotiating machinery. Because of the covid-19 crisis identification of potential redundancies has temporarily ceased. Only category one redundancies in respect of school closure and amalgamations have been actioned.

1.7 Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC)

NITC has the following representation from the recognised teachers' unions.

NEU	3
INTO	5
NAHT	1 [with 1 observer]
NASUWT	5
UTU	5
Total	19

INTO representation on NITC

INTO representatives on the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council in 2021/22 are:

Caoimhín MacColaim (NC Chair)
Geraldine McGowan (NC Vice-Chair)
Mark McTaggart
Marie O'Shea
Tommy McGlone

NITC Officers

The NITC Officers were re-elected in September 2023 and are:

Chair:	Jacque White (UTU)
Vice Chair:	Justin McCamphill (NAS/UWT)
Honorary Secretary:	Mark McTaggart (INTO)
Minutes Secretary:	Mark Langhammer (ATL)
Treasurer:	Graham Gault (NAHT)

Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC)

Each NITC union has two representatives on the Teachers' Side of the TNC. Initially the INTO representatives in 2022/23 were Gerry Murphy, Mark McTaggart and Tommy McGlone.

NITC Side of the TNC

NEU:	Mark Langhammer
I NTO:	Mark McTaggart, Marie O'Shea (Tommy McGlone)
NAHT:	Graham Gault
UTU:	Jacque White, Stephen McCord (Rebekka Gilpin)
NASUWT:	Justin McCamphill, Raymond Beggs

DE Strategic Forum

INTO continues to engage in the Strategic Forum to promote education partnership and planning. INTO is represented at the forum by Mark McTaggart, Northern Secretary.

1.8 Education Authority (EA)

The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) were dissolved on 31 March 2015. The Education Authority was established under the *Education Act Northern Ireland 2014* and became operational on 1st April 2015. EA is a non-departmental body sponsored by the Department of Education. It employs over 39,000 people across Northern Ireland in a wide variety of roles. This includes teachers in controlled schools, school-based support staff and staff in administrative headquarters. EA remains responsible for all of the operational functions previously carried out by the five ELBs in accordance with the Education Orders. Sara Long remains the chief executive and Cynthia Currie has taken up position as the Director of Education.

1.9 Department of Education

INTO held several meetings with Departmental officials in the past year. In particular INTO raised a number of ongoing concerns including:

- Continued provision in respect of Covid-19
- Investing in Education and associated cuts
- The governance of schools
- Teachers' pay and industrial action
- School inspections and ETI

1.10 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council have been positively engaging by the ETI and the resumption of meetings is seen as a welcome opportunity to exchange views. While the current action short of strike allows members not to engage with the ETI, INTO, as an organisation, remains committed to negotiations to improve future educational evaluation.

Section 2: PENSIONS

2.1 NORTHERN IRELAND TEACHERS' PENSION SCHEME PENSION BOARD (NITPSPB)

There were four NITPSPB meetings in 2023, 8 March, 5 June, 11 September and 11 December, two of which were conducted online, and two in Antrim Board centre. Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official INTO, attended the March meeting as a member representative on this body. This was the end of her second term of 5 years on the pension board. Kevin Daly, Trade Union Official, INTO, was appointed to the Pension Board in March 2023 and attended the June, September and December meetings as a member representative.

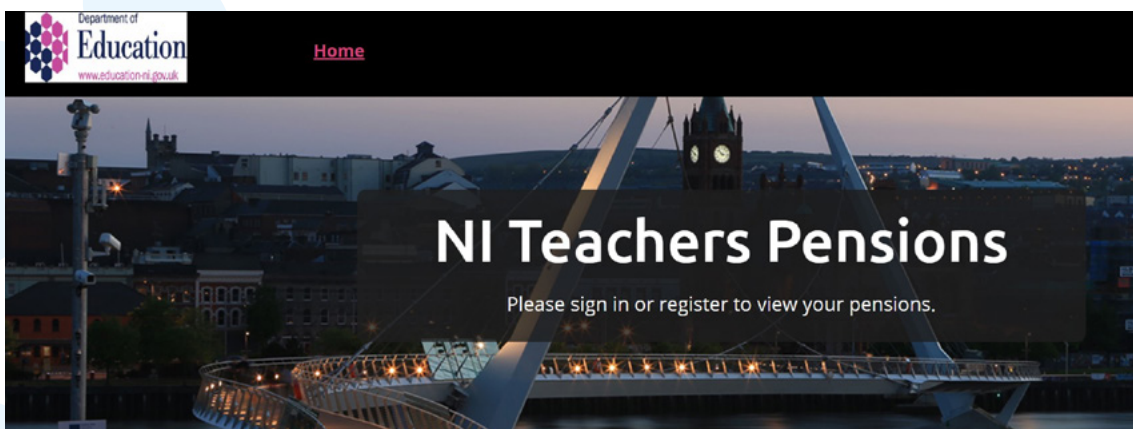
For each meeting a quarterly report on performance and governance is produced to enable Board members to monitor the administration and management of the Teachers' Pension scheme. Minutes of meetings are published on the DE website. Items discussed at the Pension Board meetings include;

2.1.1 Pensions Dashboard

The Pensions Dashboards (Amendment) Regulations 2023 deal with the requirement for pension schemes to enable individuals to access their pensions information online, securely and all in one place. Dashboards are to provide clear and simple information about an individual's multiple pension savings, including their State Pension.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has made the Pension Dashboards (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2023. The regulations include a connection deadline of 31 December 2016, with DWP and The Pensions Regulator to publish staging timeline guidance for schemes.

The regulations come into force on the 09 August 2023



NITPS input to this will be guided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Pensions Dashboards launch which has been delayed. Confirmation of a proposed timetable for NI schemes is pending. Whilst the final connection deadline is 31 October 2026, it is anticipated that DWP and the Pensions Regulator will issue guidance requiring schemes to connect before this date.

2.1.2 Pension Applications

73 pensions were set up in the period from May to July 2023. 57 of the applications received were completed on time. 5 applications were processed by or before the end of the next month. 11 applications were processed later than the next month due to the need to manually update service in those cases.

467 pensions were set up in the period from August to October 2023 and 392 of these applications were completed by the target month. 54 applications were processed by or before the end of the next month. 21 applications were processed later than the next month due to the need to manually update service whilst Civica continue to develop the service interface and training with less experienced staff is delivered.

2.1.3 Ill health retirements

The waiting time for ill health pension applications and appeals to be processed in the early part of 2023 was a major cause of concern to INTO. Reports of members waiting for up to 24 weeks and beyond for decisions were received and acted upon by Officials by way of representation to Teachers' Pensions personnel. The delays were caused, in the main, by staffing issues at the DE Occupational Health Provider. The matter was raised at both the Pension Board and Scheme Advisory Board by INTO representatives. At the September meeting of the Pension Board, it was reported that the Department has secured the services of a new OH assessor and had cleared a backlog of 35 out of 40 ill health applications at that point. Decisions on applications for ill health pensions were reported as being returned within ten days and were accompanied by detailed reports justifying the decisions which should benefit members who are considering appeals against decisions. The issue of undue delay appears, on the whole, to have been resolved.

2.1.4 Risk Register

A risk register is updated regularly to ensure that all risks to the teachers' pension scheme are identified, monitored and addressed in a timely manner.

2.1.5 Annual Benefit Statements (ABS)

Annual Benefit Statements are now accessible through the Teachers' Pension Portal. Members of the scheme must register on this portal for access. Guidance on this was issued to all members throughout 2023 and is available on the DE website.

2.1.6 Dealing with queries from scheme members

INTO members have reported difficulty in getting in touch with Teachers' Pensions. This anecdotal information has been substantiated by the data provided by the Department in relation to calls received and responded to. The percentage of calls responded to in August, September and October were 38%, 40% and 60% respectively. Deficits in staffing and loss of experienced staff has been cited as the primary reason alongside a large increase in the volume of calls associated with the launch

of the Pension Portal. The percentage trends seem to indicate improvement and a moratorium on recruitment across the Department has since been lifted to allow for recruitment to fill a number of vacancies across the Teachers' Pay and Pensions Team.

2.1.7 Scheme Finance/ Scheme Valuation

The results of the 2020 actuarial valuation of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) have been published on the Department of Education website.

The three component reports which make up the formal reporting of the NITPS actuarial valuation are available on the DE website.

The finalised valuation results for NITPS confirm an employer contribution rate of 29.1%, resulting from the SCAPE discount rate change, with effective from 01 April 2024.

HM Treasury (HMT) has committed to providing funding for increases in employer contribution rates resulting from the SCAPE discount rate. For devolved administrations, it is understood that proportional funding via the Barnett consequential process will apply. Confirmation from HMT/ Department of Finance on how the funding mechanism will operate is pending.

2.1.8 Legislation

McCloud

The McCloud judgement refers to the Court of Appeal's ruling that Government's 2015 public sector pension reforms unlawfully treated existing public sectors differently based upon members' age. This affects the period between April 2015 and April 2022.

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) has introduced a 'deferred choice underpin' which will allow all affected members, at the point at which they access their pension, to choose how they wish to have their service during the remedy period awarded ie either in their legacy scheme or the reformed scheme.

All relevant legislation is now in place. INTO responded to a consultation on the proposed remedy in relation to how this will operate in the NITPS.

Teachers' Pay and Pensions Team (TPPT) have completed checks to identify all eligible members who are subject to the McCloud Remedy - member data continues to undergo cleansing. Due to delays in delivery, by Civica, of updated system structure/processes/calculations, the deadline of 1st of October 2023 has been missed. However, TPPT continue to meet regularly with Civica to ensure delivery of the project.

Reports have been run by TPPT to identify those scheme members who will be affected by Immediate Choice (those already in receipt of pension and affected by the remedy period). Letters and guidance notes have been developed in relation to those members who applied for ill health benefits during the remedy period that may require the initial application to be reassessed. Some of these have now been issued to members and those in receipt of family/ survivor pension benefits.

TPPT have a 'McCloud Team' in place to assist with the necessary work to apply the remedy to those already in receipt of pension and affected by the remedy period.

Goodwin

The Goodwin case identified male survivors of opposite-sex marriages and civil partnerships are treated less favourably than survivors in same-sex marriages and civil partnerships.

Scheme rules will be changed to ensure that the male spouse or civil partner of a female member is treated in the same way as a same-sex spouse or civil partner. Survivor benefits will be calculated using service from 1 April 1972, or 6 April 1978 if the marriage or civil partnership took place after the last day of pensionable service.

This change will apply for deaths in respect of female members which occurred from 5 December 2005, which is the date that same-sex civil partnerships were introduced.

In the interim period, DE will consider application of the policy intent if a priority case should arise.

2.1.9 Annual Pension Increase

Pension Increase is always applied on the first Monday falling on or after 6 April. The increase in 2023 was 10.1%, which was applied from 6 April 2023.

Pension Increase is based on the rate of Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in the year to the preceding September.

2.1.10 Major Initiatives – Replacement Pensions System

The introduction of the on-line portals is complete. The Annual Benefit Statements are now online, with a paper statement able to be accommodated in certain circumstances.

The Department of Finance has plans to reduce the estate costs by reducing the number of civil service offices. This directly impacts TPPT in Waterside House, which will see staff move to Orchard House.

2.2 NORTHERN IRELAND TEACHERS' PENSION SCHEME ADVISORY BOARD (NITPSAB)

Three meetings of the NITPSAB took place in 2023 on 14 February, 13 June and 17 October 2022. INTO is represented on the NITPSAB by Nuala O'Donnell INTO Senior Official and Kevin Daly INTO Official.

The meetings dealt with the following issues:

2.2.1 Opt out data

The number of teachers opting out of the Teachers' Pension scheme in Northern Ireland remains low with no discernible trends apparent and to date has given no cause for concern.

2.2.2 Scheme Valuation

The Government Actuary Department (GAD) has completed the 2020 NITPS Scheme Valuation

The outworkings of this valuation are reported in the previous section of this report.

The finalised valuation results for NITPS confirm an employer contribution rate of 29.1%, resulting from the SCAPE discount rate change, with effective from 01 April 2024. Increased costs to be funded by HM Treasury and proportional funding via Barnett consequential to be provided to devolved administrations.

2.2.3 Member Contribution Rates 2023/24

DE Circular 2023/04 set out changes from 01 April 2023 to salary bands for contribution rates for members.

Salary bands applicable to member contributions for the NITPS changed in line with an increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). CPI rose by 10.1% in the year to September 2022, therefore, the salary bands for contribution rates for members have increased by 10.1% with effect from 01 April 2023.

These arrangements apply to all members.

1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024	Member Contribution Rate
Up to £32,135.99	7.4%
£32,136 to £43,259.99	8.6%
£43,260 to £51,292.99	9.6%
£51,293 to £67,979.99	10.2%
£67,980 to £92,697.99	11.3%
£92,698 and above	11.7%

Contributions are based on a member's annual salary rate (actual earnings).

2.3 ICTU PENSIONS/ CCWG

INTO along with other public sector trade unions, through NIC ICTU, continue to meet with the Department for Finance and Personnel and the other public sector government department officials. Nuala O'Donnell continues to represent INTO, and the NITC, on the NIC ICTU/DFP Public Services Pensions Bill Collective Consultative Working Group. (CCWG). This group continued to meet during the year to address issues of concern in relation to the implementation of the Public Sector Pensions Act NI.

The CCWG met on three occasions in 2023, with pre-meeting of the Trade union side on 7 February, 6 June, and 13 Sept. All meetings were conducted online via WebEx.

At the June meeting the members were informed that Dooley Harte, who had been the TUS Co-chair, had left NIPSA and that Maria Morgan will be the NIPSA representative at future CCWG meetings. 1.1 CH acknowledged Dooley Harte's contribution as TUS Co-chair of CCWG and on behalf of all CCWG departmental colleagues extended the group's appreciation and gratitude to Dooley for his positive contribution and commitment at CCWG during his tenure. JO'F agreed to take the role of TUS Co-chair for purposes of that meeting. In September Jim Quinn FBU agreed to take on the role of TUS co-chair.

Issues discussed at CCWG meetings included:

2.3.1 CCWG Subgroup – Statutory review of effects of PSPA (NI) 2014

The report was prepared to be laid before the Assembly by the end of November 2022 (in line with the statutory requirement). However, in conjunction with DSO advice the Department opted to await formal guidance on departmental decision making in the absence of Ministers before seeking Permanent Secretary approval to lay the report in the Assembly. There was no consequence to the late laying of the report. Following the issuance of this guidance DoF laid the report in the Assembly on 16 January 2023, and published it on the DoF website. An email was issued to members on 17 January 2023 confirming the laying of the report and contained a link to the report on the DoF website. These Directions instruct schemes on requirements when implementing and administering the various elements of the remedy and have enabled schemes to progress to the consultation stage for their remedy regulations. The Directions are published on the PSPP&L page of the DoF website alongside the related consultation with GAD on remedy interest.

2.3.2 Executive/Assembly absence

There was a discussion on approvals for remedy regulations in absence of Ministers. Members were asked to note that guidance for civil servants was published on 19 December 2022 by SoS under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation Etc) Act 2022, (which received Royal assent on 6 December 2022). This enabled Permanent Secretaries to take some decisions in the absence of Ministers and should facilitate approvals required for remedy regulation consultations (and potentially also the making of regulations themselves if an Assembly does not return before September 2023).

2.3.3 DoF Directions under PSPJOA 2022

DoF wrote to TUS on 23 December 2022 on the scope and content of these Directions, although there is no requirement for formal consultation, and included a draft copy inviting any comments. No comments were received, and the draft directions were given approval to be made by the Permanent Secretary on 6 February 2023. The draft directions were signed on 9 February 2023 and subsequently published on the DoF website.

2.3.4 Pensions Dashboard

The group were advised that DfC has confirmed that it intends to make regulations for NI as soon as possible after the regulations for GB are made. The NI Regulations will come into operation on the same date that the GB regulations come into force.

It was noted that public service pension schemes were expected to be on-boarded by September 2024. The group were advised that DWP had issued a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on pensions dashboards connection timeline on 2 March 2023. The WMS explains that the Pensions Dashboards Programme (PDP) will be unable to meet the connection deadlines set out in existing legislation. PDP is working with DWP to establish a new achievable plan for delivery. It is DWP's aim to stay as close as possible to the original timeline.

The framework for dashboards will remain unchanged, but DWP will legislate to provide new connection deadlines. Any comparable NI legislation that is required will be taken forward by DfC. Further information on the revised timeline will be made available following agreement on PDP's delivery plan.

The group were advised that DWP had since launched an informal consultation on amending the Pensions Dashboards Regulations 2022. DoF circulated a link to Policy Leads on 5 May 2023. The consultation closed on 17 May 2023.

The draft proposal comprises amending legislation to include a final single deadline by which time all schemes in scope must be connected. The staging profile with updated connection dates would then be set out in guidance. All public service pension schemes will be in the same cohort for on-boarding. Further information on pensions dashboard is available at www.pensionsdashboardsprogramme.org.uk.

2.3.5 2023 Revaluation

The group were reminded that on 22 September 2022 the SoS for Health in GB announced plans to change pension scheme rules so NHS scheme members would not be disadvantaged by the interaction of high CPI and pensions AA. An amendment of the revaluation date from 1 April 2023 to 6 April 2023 is being made by NHS and LGPS in GB and the Treasury Order will carry the necessary provision for this. It was confirmed that HSC in NI is also implementing the change and that LGPS(NI) are still considering changing the date. No other schemes have indicated that they intend to amend the date for their effective revaluation in 2023.

2.3.6 2023 CARE Revaluation Order

The Public Service Pensions Revaluation Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 was made on 30 March 2023. This Order is used by schemes to revalue active member benefits according to the process set out in their scheme regulations. For 2023, the annual change in prices (CPI) is 10.1% and for earnings the figure is 7%. The revaluation had effect from 1 April 2023, or from 6 April 2023 for those schemes who have amended their revaluation process accordingly for 2023 (LGPS(NI) and HSC).

2.3.7 Draft Valuation and Employer Cost Cap Directions (NI) 2023

Representatives from GAD attended the June meeting to deliver a presentation providing a technical overview of the purpose of the draft Valuation and Employer Cost Cap Directions (NI) 2023, and to field questions from members. The GAD representatives and TUS representatives introduced themselves and their roles and then GAD delivered their presentation '2020 Valuations: Draft Department of Finance Directions - Key takeaways'. GAD's remit was limited to the technical actuarial aspects of the valuation process and directions, and they were not expected to respond to questions on HMT/ DoF policy.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, GAD were asked if the life expectancy figures used in the assumptions were for NI only or the whole of UK, NI life expectancy always trails the rest of UK .

In response GAD advised that the figures referenced the experience for the whole of UK but that the Directions also provide for scheme level experience on mortality etc. to be factored in the valuation.

2.3.8 Pensions Increase (Review) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023

The Pensions Increase (Review) Order (NI) 2023 was made on 30 March 2023 and public service pensions in payment were increased by 10.1% from 10 April 2023 in line with the September-to-September change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in the previous 12 months. Pensions which came into payment on or after 11 April 2022 and before 10 April 2023 would receive the correct pro-rata increase.

2.3.9 Resource implications

In response to a question from the TUS as to the impact of 23/24 budgetary pressures on resourcing, members were informed that DoF have undertaken a significant budgetary exercise over the last few weeks. Each business area has been investigated for savings and an analysis undertaken for statutory versus discretionary work. The current understanding is that resources may be obtained for specific priority exercises.

It was noted that NITPS had undertaken a resource review. There were some vacancies within McCloud teams which have never been filled, some of which were subsequently approved to fill with agency staff.

2.4 NI Public Service Pension Scheme Conference, Tuesday 10 October 2023, at the Titanic Hotel, Belfast.

INTO were represented at this conference by Kevin Daly, Trade Union Official and Lisa Magennis, INTO Intern. The conference largely dealt with scheme valuations, governance of pension schemes, pensions dashboards legislation and potential outworking of this.

2.5 CONSULTATIONS

2.5.1 DE Consultation 'Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme: Transitional Protection Regulations Consultation'

NITPS launched its consultation on retrospective regulations on 21 April 2023 and it closed on 16 June 2023. INTO responded to this consultation reiterating the profound disagreement with the policy approach by the Treasury to redirect the benefits of the Cost Cap arrangements from the 2016 valuations to pay for the outcome of the redress, following the McCloud judgement. INTO also highlighted the lack of information in the consultation document in relation to Phased Retirement and any implications arising from when a scheme members may have taken, their first, second or subsequent phased retirement. The response stated that clarification is required on this and whether any other scheme regulations are required in this context. It also highlighted concerns that the level of financial support and advice that will be required by members to understand the rolling out of these regulations is beyond that currently available to public sector workers in Northern Ireland (as all public sectors are similarly affected by the McCloud judgement). The INTO therefore requested that DE, possibly in conjunction with other public sector departments, submit a bid to Treasury for funding to facilitate this provision.

The outcome of the consultation was published by DE on 6 September 2023. INTO were broadly satisfied that the concerns in their response were addressed. Clarification has been sought however in relation to some remaining ambiguities in relation to Phased Retirement.

2.5.2 The Public Service Pensions (Valuations and Employer Cost Cap) Directions (Northern Ireland) 2023 | Department of Finance ([finance-ni.gov.uk](https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk))

The Department of Finance made the Public Service Pensions (Valuation and Employer Cost Cap) Directions (Northern Ireland) 2023 on the 3rd October 2023.

2.5.3 HMT consultation – SCAPE (Superannuation Contributions Adjusted for Past Experience)

We still await the HMT response to the SCAPE consultation.

2.5.4 HM Revenue & Customs Technical consultation on the draft Public Service Pension Schemes (Rectification of Unlawful Discrimination) (Tax) Regulations 2023.

HM Revenue & Customs has issued a technical consultation on the draft Public Service Pension Schemes (Rectification of Unlawful Discrimination) (Tax) Regulations 2023.

The proposed regulations make changes to how the pensions tax framework operates in certain circumstances as a result of the public service pensions remedy. This consultation closed at 11:59pm on 6 January 2023. ICTU submitted a response on behalf of the NIC ICTU unions.

HMRC subsequently consulted on the draft Public Service Pension Schemes (Rectification of Unlawful Discrimination) (Tax) (No. 2) Regulations 2023. These draft regulations give pension scheme administrators details of additional tax requirements they will need to consider as a result of the remedy. They also make provision on handling any annual allowance, lifetime allowance or unauthorised payments tax charges for remedy purposes between the tax year 2019/20 to the tax year 2022/23. DoF circulated a link to the consultation on 24 May. This consultation closed at on 19 June 2023.

Section 3: Education

3.1 SEN

3.1.1 CYPS

A new interim Director of CYPS: Elaine Craig, was appointed in September 2023, along with a new Interim Assistant Director of SEND Support Services, Gillian Cuthbert, who was appointed in September 2023 following the departure of Terry Kelly to the EA Education Directorate. The majority of the quarterly CYPS/ Teacher Trade Union Consultation meetings were cancelled with only one taking place virtually on 25th September 2023.

Issues discussed included:

SEND Transformation Programme

TUS raised concerns that some Literacy Service staff have been told to travel to different areas and cover schools outside their normal area without consultation. TUS are concerned that this may be the approach adopted under the revised proposal. They were advised that the Proposal will begin with a modelling process to understand where demand lies and to work out best fit. The final configuration will be one that all parties feel acceptable including staff and trade unions.

TUS again raised concerns around how any best fit model of delivery will align with current staffing levels. TUS continued by emphasising that this will require a mindset shift in schools and that consultation with principals should begin as early as possible in order to be ready for September 2024 and to avoid support staff being left to convey difficult messages.

TUS advised that if parents feel their child's needs are not being met at stage 2, they will jump to stage 3 and create other issues. Parents simply want teachers to work with their child in school. EA Staff need security of knowing what school they will be working in; otherwise, good staff may leave the system. They were informed that the Proposal plans to make the system more efficient within the resources available and advised that the communication piece is important, and that EA will make use of every opportunity already in the calendar in addition to the Transformation Programme communication schedule, to take feedback from schools on their needs.

TUS advised that concerns have been raised by their members within newly established SEN units attached to mainstream schools that Team Teach training has not been provided. TUS asked for clarification from management on this. They were advised that Team Teach is currently only available in special schools and EOTAS settings and that the Post Primary Behaviour Support Service provides a range of support options for mainstream schools which focus on preventative measures in order to avoid the need for hands on de-escalation and diffusion. The full suite of training and support is available to staff following referral.

TUS advised that feedback from teaching staff in mainstream schools is that staff do not feel equipped to deal with the level of behavioural issues presenting in school. Staff feel they are not getting the training needed and are not clear who to ask for training. It was agreed to share Post Primary Behaviour Support Service referral web link to TUS.

TUS side advised that staff in special educational units are supporting pupils with complex needs such as aggression and hypersensitivity and many staff in these units feel ill-equipped to support such pupils and have difficulty identifying an EA officer who can help. They were advised that an 'all service' meeting takes place with the school when a new specialist SEN setting is being established in order to plan for the school's needs and to ensure staff at the school know who to contact for support. A key contact for each setting is a Specialist Setting Support Team (SSST) link officer who provides a single point of contact for support of signposting.

TUS advised that on the ground schools are having to seek out this support and it is not clear who they should contact. TUS requested that a communication be sent to schools to advise of this. They were advised that there would be a follow up with the head of the SSST to request a communication be issued to schools clarifying support network for schools and that TUS would be supplied with a list of SSST link officers and the jurisdictions they cover.

SEN Placement Project

TUS were provided with an update on 2023/24 pupil placements (pupils with statement of SEN). 4200 pupils in transition year have been placed, an increase of over 500 pupils on the previous year. 90 pupils remain as requiring change of placement identified by EP, parent or school. 127 new specialist classes are in place for the start of September 2023. EA has engaged with the community and voluntary sectors to create additional early years SEN places in 4 provisions.

Placement planning for 2024/25 is underway incorporating lessons learned from this year.

Being Well Doing Well Programme update

Head of Service, Pupil Emotional Health & Wellbeing, delivered a presentation to the group which provided an overview of the Whole School Approach to Emotional Health & Wellbeing - Being Well Doing Well programme. This is a five-year programme and has received initial funding from DE until 31 March 2024. The Programme has resulted in the creation of 21 new posts AAOs, APOs and SCOs which include teaching staff, youth staff and staff from universities.



Awareness sessions were held with principals and vice-principals to provide information on the programme and emphasise that Being Well Doing well is a whole school approach. Schools were not selected, but rather were asked to consider as a whole school community whether they were ready to join the programme. Schools can sign up for September 2024 cohort. Sub-cover will be available to participating schools and schools can prioritise the developments they wish to undertake. schools would be provided with 2.5 days cover to assist with analysis of the whole school audit.

Education Psychology Form

TUS raise the matter of a revised Educational Psychology School referral form which was meant to simplify the process but is reportedly making the process longer and more complicated. They were advised that the form was intended to make things easier for schools and should not mean additional work for SENCOs and were advised that a communication would be issued to schools to clarify.

Inappropriate use of NISTR

TUS raised the issue of inappropriate use of NISTR whereby teachers are being employed beyond 6 months rather than under temporary contract. They were advised that CYPs is aware of extended use of NISTR but that steps are being taken to correct this.

Permanent Contracts

TUS raised the issue of delays in issuing permanent contracts to teaching staff who have accrued permanent rights, and that two cut off points seem to be in place - September and June. They were advised that CYPs was not aware of any cut off point but will seek clarity.

SEN Specialist Setting Support Team (SSST)

SEND SSD/ Teacher Union Meeting on Thursday 12 January 2023

Time Budgets

TK confirmed that staff were encouraged by the senior staff within the Literacy Service, to complete work either in school or base as this encouraged an improved work/life balance. However, if they chose to work from home, that was their choice. TK reiterated this during engagement sessions.

Administrative workload

Discussion with the senior team confirmed that staff are required only to keep Outlook calendars updated in order that the service can track absence of students, changes in timetable, etc.

Discussion with the senior team has taken place where it was agreed that:

- reports would be reduced to a maximum of 4 pages. However, staff will need training on this transition to ensure consistency so it is unlikely that the move to a shorter report will happen before the February reporting session. Further, schools/setting will need to be informed.
- the 15-page referral form has been replaced with direct contact with schools, i.e., telephone calls, Teams meetings. Again, this will need to be communicated to schools and TK is also taking the opportunity to share this message when engaging with schools.
- During sessions, and in conversations with the senior team, TK has emphasised the need for a common-sense approach.
- Classroom Assistant Pilot, which literacy staff felt was successful and eventually put on hold, will be re-established.

INTO met with Gillian Cuthbert, Interim Assistant Director of SEND Support Services in November 2023 to discuss ongoing concerns in relation to the changes being introduced to the Support Services and the impact of these on the Support Service teachers and schools. It was an initial meeting which will be followed up in the New Year. INTO held an online meeting with the INTO members of the EA Literacy Support Services to update members on the meeting with Gillian Cuthbert.

Education Welfare Service (EWS) Transformation Project

The service is moving away from a reactive model of delivery to one which is more proactive and responsive to the emerging needs of children and young people. Service delivery will incorporate a restorative approach to issues such as suspensions which are currently growing year on year. A copy of the EWS Draft Delivery Model will be shared with TUS. TUS welcomed the update and advised that their main area of interest will be on how the service interfaces with teaching staff in schools and EA.

3.1.2 SEND Strategic Development Programme

Implementation of the SEND Act (NI) 2016

The Department of Education has recognised that there may be an additional resourcing impact due to the legislative requirements of the new SEN Framework, and this could bring increased pressures for schools. In particular, the Board of Governors of each grant-aided and special school will be required to designate a teacher on the staff of the school (the Learning Support Co-ordinator (LSC), currently known as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator/SENCO) as having responsibility for co-ordinating the provision of education for those pupils attending the school who have special educational needs (SEN).

The Governors will also need to ensure the SENCO (LSC) is given enough time, off-timetable, to do their job. In addition, completion of a Personal Learning Plan (PLP) for each pupil on a school's SEN register will become a statutory requirement for all grant-aided schools. The PLP will need to be created and should be reviewed at least twice a year, however it will be up to the professional judgement of the school as to when they review a child's PLP. The creation and review of the PLP will involve the class teacher(s) and the SENCO (LSC) alongside input from the child and their parent. In order to assist schools in preparing for these new arrangements, £22m is being made available for the 2022/23 financial year.

Please note that until such time as the new SEN Framework is implemented and the provision for the LSC is commenced, the budget title will be '*SENCo Implementation SEND Act NI 2016*'. When the LSC duty is commenced, the funding will be for the new LSC role, and the budget title will change.

In response to this INTO issued Bulletin 1, SEND Implementation Guidance for SENCOs/Class teachers/Principals in October 2022.

3.1.3 SEN Area Planning Frameworks

Education Minister Michelle McIlveen approved a number of Specialist Provisions in Mainstream Schools as part of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Area Planning pilot exercise in June 2022. The pilot includes the simultaneous provision of 128 Specialist Provisions across 58 schools. The 128 Specialist Provisions includes 88 existing temporary provisions and 40 additional Key Stage pathway provisions. Overarching this SEN Pilot is a wider Area Planning Strategy which includes the development and publication of two new Strategic Area Planning Frameworks (for Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (SPiMS) and Special Schools) and the development of a new regional Special Education Strategic Area Plan 'Planning for Special Education Provision' (SESAP: 2022-2027) which (along with the second strategic Area Plan for mainstream primary and post-primary provision) is due to commence on 1 September 2022.

3.1.4 Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) DE Circular 2023/03 Revised Personal Education Plan Guidance for Children Looked After

Revised guidance on Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for Children Looked After at primary school level has been published on 17 February 2023.

The guidance and associated training are being delivered by the Education Authority to primary age educational settings which support children looked after and to social workers within Health and Social Care Trust children's teams who have corporate parenting responsibilities for the young people.

The revised PEP will be structured around five themes – care arrangements, educational arrangements, emotional health and wellbeing, learn and achieve, and play and leisure.

The core network around the child, including the school, field social worker, parent/carer, and a range of psychologist and education support services, will jointly complete the PEP with the voice of the child integrated into all aspects of this new process.

3.1.5 Multi-Disciplinary Professional Advice And Support For School Leaders, Sencos, Teachers And Classroom Assistants Following The Establishment Of Additional Special Educational Needs Provisions

In a letter to the Teacher unions in May 2023, following a meeting with the Unions Una Turbitt, Interim Director of CYPs stated:

‘The process of projecting and mapping specialist placement for children with special educational needs is complex. There are more than 27,000 children and young people currently with statements of SEN across NI and in any given year upwards of 6,000 of them will be transitioning between phases and therefore need to have new or alternative placements arranged. For the majority of children, their statement is already in place at the start of the year, and this allows longer-range mapping to take place.

Early projections indicated that specialist placement demands for September 2023 would at least match that of the previous year (which had already constituted a 5% increase from September 2021), but by March 2023 it was clear that the number of placements would be significantly higher (by at least 270 places). By the end of April, that had increased dramatically to 920 (16% more than had been required at the end of June 2022). Demand has continued to grow and last week the increase was reported at 18% above June 2022. This growth in demand translates into a need for at least 140 additional special school classes and 60 additional specialist provisions for September 2023 (more than two-thirds of which are for preschool and/or Yr1).

EA has a statutory obligation to ensure that every child has a suitable school placement.

TUS colleagues consider the proposed timeframe for setting up additional multi-disciplinary teams to be unrealistic.

In total, at least 80 FTE staff would have to move for these proposed service models to be viable and additional funding is not available to support this process. It will be a temporary, volunteer-led measure to reprioritise resources in a cost neutral way. Staff wishing to transfer to the Specialist Setting Support Team (SSST) or the SEN Early Years Inclusion Service (SENEYIS) on a temporary basis will retain their existing pay and terms and conditions of employment. Given

the budgetary constraints, promotional opportunities are not available at this time and there are no backfill arrangements currently planned for staff transferring from non-statutory services. Should promotional opportunities become available then the normal arrangements for filling promotional posts would apply via an expression of interest/recruitment process. Travel expenses will be paid in accordance with agreed terms and conditions.

127 new classes were set up in various primary schools throughout the North and training was provided by EA in two stages. The initial training on the setting up of the new specialist classes in June was positively received by members. However, the next training, entitled "Effective Inclusion of Pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties in Mainstream and Specialist Settings" was not as well received. Members were disappointed that the training did not 'provide teaching and learning strategies to support children with SLD within educational settings' as per the aim of the training. The 'training' was delivered by EA representatives presenting PowerPoints covering difficulties experienced by children with SLD. It was theory based and provided little to no practical advice to assist teachers.

3.1.6 Independent review of Special Educational Needs

The IPSOS review which was commissioned by the Department in April 2022 to look at current SEN services and provision with the aim of improving outcomes for children with SEN right across Northern Ireland, issued their report in May 2023.

Acknowledging the wide-ranging recommendations within the report, Dr Browne, the DE Permanent secretary stated "This report indicates that systemic reform is critical to ensure the delivery of high quality, child-centred provision through earlier intervention, a highly skilled and trained workforce and pupil support services that are flexible, timely and responsive as children's needs emerge.

"There are a number of recommendations contained in this review, some of which will challenge how things are currently done, however, I am confident that in collaboration with key partners we can drive forward change at pace to improve the lives of all children with special educational needs."

Following consideration of the report, the Department will publish a more detailed response to the findings and recommendations in due course.

3.2 Independent Review of Education 2023

The Report on the Independent Review of Education was launched on 13 December 2023. The remit was to take an overview of education in Northern Ireland as a whole.

The report stated that Education in Northern Ireland has great strengths. Most young people experience success in its schools and many then go on to achieve highly in its colleges and universities. Levels of attainment exceed those in the other UK jurisdictions. International comparisons are highly favourable. At every level, a talented and dedicated workforce makes a huge contribution. However, there are weaknesses. Many can, at least in part, be attributed to lack of funding and too many young people, disadvantaged by poverty, emerge under skilled and underqualified



after compulsory education. Education is the greatest investment any society makes in its own future. Responsible citizenship, prosperity and fulfilled lives depend on it. In a world changing at an unprecedented pace, peace and prosperity depend on education more than ever before. Northern Ireland can be a 21st century success but only if it develops a capacity to operate at the cutting edge of knowledge and has a workforce that is constantly extending and refreshing its capabilities.

When referring to 'investment' in education, the panel include investment in knowledge, social cohesion, creativity, wellbeing – both physical and mental – and caring for and helping others. Success in each of these areas will bring great economic, as well as societal benefits.

Additional spending will not of itself guarantee better outcomes. Investment will have to be carefully targeted, and outputs carefully measured. In the report the panel set out recommendations for the major educational issues they identified during the review. They believe many of the changes will require additional funding, although there will be some medium-term savings. However, they firmly believe the future prosperity and wellbeing of Northern Ireland requires commitment to sufficient funding of education.

There are 25 recommendations in the report, broken down into three areas, all of equal importance:

- Investing in the education journey.
- Investing in support for our learners, educators and parents.
- Investing in the education system and structures.

Which included recommendations to:

- Expand early years education;
- Undertake major reform of the curriculum and keep it under continual review;
- Modify the transition process;
- Ensure assessment supports progression;
- Invest in education;
- Value the education workforce;
- Facilitate learner-centred interventions;
- Prioritise wellbeing;
- Establish a single Department for the entire education journey;
- Use broad measures of success;
- Strengthen accountability.

INTO welcomed the recognition that the Education Sector in the North is in crisis and the recommendation to Value the Education Workforce but had concerns that the report did not go far enough in addressing the major issues in SEN or tackle the controversial issue of the Transfer test. INTO is considering the extensive report and will respond in 2024.

3.3 ETI

3.3.1 Inspections

The meetings between ETI and NITC continued in 2023. No formal inspections took place in schools in 2023, due to INTO and NITC unions action Short of Strike from September 2022. ETI continued with their Development of Inspection with schools and other stakeholders

Development of Inspection

ETI's Empowering Improvement Programme continued with a series of development of inspection visits to schools/ organisations that have self-nominated to be involved in this collaborative work. Feedback from the consultation around the development of inspection has been analysed and considered in depth (see: ETI publishes findings from a consultation on the development of inspection) and has informed the new inspection process, including function and purpose of inspection, and the development of the new models. Pilot inspections, informed by the prototype inspections which took place in 2022/23, across the early years, work-based learning and youth phases.

ETI findings from their consultation on the development of inspection

On 21 August 2023 ETI published findings from their consultation on the development of inspection.

In the conclusion of the Findings ETI stated:

The consultation process provided a timely opportunity for ETI to engage constructively with our many stakeholders. It has assisted us in drafting the revised Quality Improvement Strategy (Appendix 3), of which the inspection of individual schools/organisations is a key strand. The purpose of the Quality Improvement Strategy is to empower schools/organisations to be the best they can be for their learners.

We are very grateful for the high levels of engagement by schools/organisations and for the time and feedback which they have willingly provided. The detailed analysis of this comprehensive feedback activity has provided much food for thought, and indeed, while we are unable to act on every view or opinion, clear themes are emerging from the feedback which have been trialled and further developed and which we will continue to act upon.

In terms of our next steps around the development of inspection, we will continue collaboration and consultation through self-nominated school/organisation visits, focus groups and the further prototyping and piloting of inspection models. The development work around inspections of the future continues at pace, and much has already been achieved.

They included as Appendix 1 the Draft purpose of inspection

The purpose of all inspection activity is to build capacity within the organisations inspected to provide high quality education and outcomes for learners.

This will be achieved by:

promoting processes of self-evaluation which will endure beyond the period of the inspection; evaluating and reporting objectively and fairly on the quality of provision in the best interests of the learners;

helping to inform and establish improved ways of working through professional dialogue; and identifying, affirming, reporting, and disseminating examples of highly effective practice from which others may learn.

Draft guiding principles

1. Learners are at the heart of everything we do.
2. Inspections/evaluations are impartial, reliable and based on first-hand evidence.
3. Inspections/evaluations are transparent and involve schools/organisations as fully as possible.
4. An important focus is the quality and impact of learning and teaching.
5. Evaluations (inspection findings) are reported constructively, balanced fairly and focused on promoting improvement in the interests of the learners.
6. Effective practice is recognised, affirmed and shared.
7. Inspections are proportionate to risk.
8. The context of each school/organisation is taken into account to inform the inspection activity, which will be adapted accordingly.
9. Engagement in inspection/evaluations will empower organisations in their improvement journey and build capacity.
10. As a reflective organisation we will continue to encourage and act upon feedback on how the inspection process can be improved.

3.3.2 Follow-up Inspections for a Proportion of Organisations in ETI's Follow-up Process

Follow-up inspections of early years settings and schools continued to take place. To assure schools/organisations and their respective community, parents, the Department of Education (DE) and other stakeholders that improvement is being achieved in the best interests of the learners, a proportion of the organisations currently within the follow-up process will be prioritised for a follow-up inspection by ETI.

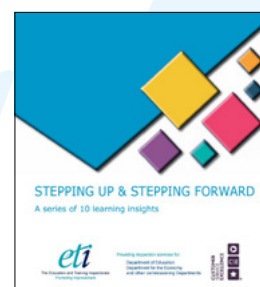
3.3.3 Professional Learning for Impact: Planning for 'Empowering Improvement II' Programme

The ETI has recently sought expressions of interest for a potential second 'Empowering Improvement – Stepping Forward Together' project. The project will be aimed at senior leaders and will be based on five core questions around whole-organisation self-evaluation. The five questions will be central to all inspections going forward and include an enhanced focus on: the ethos and culture of the school/organisation; its context; its vision and values; and how it creates a community of learning.

3.3.4 'Stepping Up and Stepping Forward'

Based upon ETI's "Stepping Up and Stepping Forward" publication, along with the consultation feedback from school/organisation leaders and other stakeholders, ETI compiled five high-level questions and nine contributory areas for inspections in the future (see below).

Between January and April 2023, the development of inspection visits focused on the five high-level questions and the contributory areas. The number and scale of the visits, particularly in schools, was greatly reduced by the ongoing industrial action and ETI were not able to carry out the planned prototype inspections in schools during this period. However, 19 development of inspection visits took place, including: 7 in post-primary; 5 in primary; 6 in early years; and 1 special school. The visits continued in the summer term (April to June 2023), with a focus on undertaking full or partial prototype inspections;



Having assessed the feedback, ETI noted the following key learning points were emerging and informing the ongoing development of inspection work.

Development of Inspection - Key Learning Points

- The context of the individual school/organisation should be firmly embedded in the inspection process, and the co-design day, in advance of the inspection visit, really helps with this.
- The 5 high-level questions will be central to the inspection (and report), with the school/organisation drawing evidence from the 9 contributory areas.
- The schools/organisations involved with the prototype inspections tell us they like the tone, language and format of the new report; it exemplifies the uniqueness of each organisation, along with its effectiveness and identifies aspects of their work from which others may learn.
- Most schools/organisations tell us that they want an overall summary conclusion, bespoke to them, in the written report.
- The use of the 9 contributory areas work better now that they exemplify more clearly the 4 core areas (presented in blue on page 4) - the pillars of work in schools and organisations. The associated effective and less effective indicators are very helpful and allow schools/organisations to provide evidence related to their context.
- Language – a small number of terms used around the contributory areas need to be reviewed (but most schools/organisations did not raise the need for phase-specific versions).
- Schools/organisations tell us they are supportive of a communication strategy, at various levels and including teachers/tutors, around the inspection process, underpinned by clear guidance and exemplification. We have begun work on this.
- There is strong potential for the contributory areas and associated indicators to be a creative, effective tool for self-evaluation and school/organisation improvement.
- Schools and organisations like the dialogue-centred approach by inspectors and the decreased focus on documentation.
- The strong emphasis on 'vision' is welcomed, it is more holistic and reflects well into the whole-organisation ethos and what it is trying to achieve for the learners.
- Lesson observations and engagement with children and young people are vital. The focus should be on experiences that children and young people receive, the skills they develop and can apply and their meaningful participation in the life and work of the school/organisation.

Report on The Preventative Curriculum in schools and EOTAS centres

The ETI published a thematic evaluation of the preventative curriculum in schools and EOTAS centres on 26 April 2023.

The Department of Education (DE) commissioned the Education and Training Inspectorate to undertake a thematic evaluation of The Preventative Curriculum in Schools and EOTAS Centres. During November 2021 to June 2022, the ETI engaged with primary, post-primary and special schools and Education Other than at School (EOTAS) centres to collate their views and experiences of delivering the preventative curriculum.

The evaluation provided an opportunity through online questionnaires for all schools/centres to provide their views and included visits to 50 settings to provide further engagement with leaders, staff, pupils and governors and to observe existing effective practice in the delivery of the preventative curriculum. Additional meetings also took place with seven groups of parents.

The views of children and young people were sought through online questionnaires in February to March 2022. There were 14,665 pupil responses to the questionnaire from pupils in years 7, 10, 12 and 14 who provided their views about how well they are learning to make informed choices and keep

themselves safe. There are two easy read versions of the report for primary and post-primary pupils to summarise their views and the wider report findings. The report recognises the complex landscape within which schools/centres are delivering the preventative curriculum and identifies the next steps to be considered and acted upon collectively and decisively by schools, DE and other stakeholders.

The recommendations stated:

The current curriculum arrangements for the preventative curriculum are not effective enough in meeting the needs of children and young people. Many of the issues and challenges reported here have persisted for a long time. It is critical that all stakeholders, led by DE and its professional advisors in CCEA, should:

- agree key principles around what makes an effective preventative curriculum;
- work towards developing curriculum delivery models which are in keeping with the aims of the statutory NI curriculum; and
- ensure all children and young people can access a preventative curriculum which is agile, contemporary, relevant and useful in their lives now and in the future. The next steps in making this a reality are outlined in the full report.

ETI will carry out follow-up activity to this report to evaluate the impact of the steps taken by stakeholders to address the issues and challenges in delivering an effective preventative curriculum that best meets the needs of pupils.

3.3.5 ETI Report on an evaluation of the Department of Education's Engage II Programme

On 12 May 2023 ETI published an evaluation of the Department of Education's Engage II Programme in schools, pre-school settings and EOTAS centres during 2021-2022.

This evaluation of DE's Engage II Programme in schools, pre-schools and EOTAS centres focused on how effectively the Engage II fundings was used to provide intervention programmes, in the form of one-to-one, small group or team-teaching support for pupils whose learning had been impacted by the periods of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary of key findings in the report:

- All schools and educational settings were positive about the continuation of the funding. The expansion of the programme to include special schools, funded pre-school education settings and EOTAS centres ensured parity of access to the funding for all pupils, allowing for a wider range of support for more children and young people whose learning had been impacted adversely by the COVID19 pandemic.
- The adaptations to the use of the funding were appropriate and enabled schools and educational settings to provide more individual, creative support to their pupils.
- Almost all of the forty lessons observed were effective in meeting the needs of the pupils.
- The Engage II Programme funding allowed for a range of pedagogical approaches and enhanced adult interactions that have improved pupils' confidence, motivation and engagement in their learning. Leaders reported that the periods of remote learning and lockdowns had resulted in increased levels of anxiety, gaps in curriculum knowledge and skills, and difficulties for pupils in returning to routines. The support sessions gave dedicated time, strategies and resources to address these barriers to learning.
- In almost all of the pre-school settings sampled, the funding was used to provide the children with the opportunity to develop mentally, emotionally, physically and academically; this holistic approach impacted positively on the outcomes of the children.

- In almost all of the primary schools sampled, the Engage II funding was used to support the development of aspects of literacy and numeracy; a small number of schools focused support specifically on emotional health and/or physical development.
- Almost all post-primary schools prioritised English and mathematics support programmes for targeted pupils across year 8 to year 12; most provided intervention such as mentoring or mindfulness training to enable pupils to engage more with their overall learning. Almost all schools reported improvement in pupils' motivation, disposition to learning and acquisition of skills.
- The Engage II GCSE Mathematics Programme has been successful in helping pupils to recover aspects of mathematical learning lost as a direct result of the two periods of remote learning and ongoing absences due to COVID-19, and to rebuild the pupils' confidence in mathematics.
- The Engage II Programme has enabled special schools to: source bespoke interventions and resources relevant to pupils' individual learning needs and each school's context; target the skills affected most by COVID-19 to improve pupil progression and outcomes; and, develop leadership capacity by securing appropriate training to build the capacity of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating effectively the schools' Engage II Programmes.
- The Engage II Programme has enabled EOTAS centres to focus on helping pupils use strategies and behaviours to improve their reading skills, supported with appropriate resources and Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) aligned to mainstream schools. The centres are now tracking pupil progress more rigorously, which allows for more timely interventions.
- A majority of schools and educational settings completed the online planner, and 98,182 pupils were identified for support. The evaluations in the online planner show that the interventions had a high or very high impact on the learning objectives for most of the target areas. Schools and educational settings were required to complete the planner, which DE had reviewed and streamlined in response to feedback from the first year of the programme. Despite a series of reminders from DE and EA in following up with schools that had not completed the planner, a significant minority did not complete the final evaluation and no sanction was imposed for non-completion; reasons for non-completion cited by schools to inspectors included time pressures and staffing shortages.
- Overall, too many schools and other educational settings submitted no information on the online planner, which is the only formal mechanism available to DE to audit and monitor the impact of the £24.4 million programme across all schools and educational settings.
- The EA reports that there was no underspend by the schools and educational settings that availed of the funding. However, due to financial coding limitations, the EA was unable to determine how much of the funding was redirected to cover for staff shortages.

ETI evaluation of teacher professional learning in meeting the special educational needs of learners

ETI published the evaluation of teacher professional learning in meeting the special educational needs of learners on 11 December 2023. In 2022/23, DE commissioned ETI to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher professional learning in meeting learners' special educational needs. The purpose of the evaluation was also to identify examples of effective practice, challenges and areas for consideration to inform policy development and practice.

The report highlights examples of effective practice, details challenges facing schools and teachers in accessing TPL and identifies areas for consideration to inform policy development and practice. The impact of quality TPL to meet the SEN of the learners should be two-fold: learners should be better supported to make individual progress and teachers, as reflective practitioners, should be better supported to develop further their skills and expertise.

The findings are based on visits to, or engagement with 39 organisations, lesson observations and discussions with learners and key staff, 899 teacher responses with 956 written comments to an online questionnaire about the effectiveness of their TPL for SEN, and evidence from district inspector visits and other evaluations completed by the ETI throughout 2022/23. Inspectors also held discussions with the Education Authority (EA), Initial Teacher Education providers, a range of organisations and specialists and Post-Graduate Certificate of Education student teachers. A sample of the EA's pre-recorded online courses and live online professional learning sessions were also observed.

3.3.6. ETI Evaluations

Professional Learning for Impact: Evaluation disseminations

Schools and EOTAS centres: An Evaluation of the Statementing Process

This work focused on assessing whether the current statementing process meets the needs of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in schools, with particular reference to the practicalities of the statementing process and the implementation of the statement. It included visits to schools and engagement with practitioners through focus groups. The visits to schools took place between 20 November and 8 December 2023, and included discussions with relevant staff with responsibility for SEN and parents/carers of children involved in the process. This was an opportunity to provide feedback on the current process, highlighting the strengths and also the challenges for all involved in progressing the statementing process to support those children with specific needs. There was no requirement to produce additional information or documentation specifically for the purposes of this visit.

Schools and EOTAS centres: Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework

In collaboration with schools and EOTAS centres, ETI is producing informative case studies to exemplify the excellent work which is taking place to support children and young people who have emotional health and wellbeing needs. It is hoped that these case studies will be useful to practitioners who are reflecting on their own practice in this area.

Digital Skills in the curriculum:

In 2022/23, DE commissioned ETI to evaluate the nature and quality of the digital skills curriculum and provision in primary and post-primary schools. In Term 3, inspectors engaged with school leaders and learners across a range of schools to explore how well the digital skills provision enables children and young people to become a digital maker, worker or citizen in a rapidly evolving technological world. Inspectors also engaged with initial teacher education providers and digital industry representatives regarding digital skills provision for career progression needs in these sectors. In the Autumn term, the inspectors involved in this evaluation work disseminated the findings to stakeholders and practitioners to inform policy development and stimulate insightful professional debate, to empower improvement in schools' digital skills provision.

Future Ready Digital Learning:

In 2022/23, ETI undertook an exploratory piece of work to evaluate the progress and emerging impact of the new teacher laptops on the education provision for children and young people. In the Autumn term, the inspectors involved disseminated the findings of this exploratory work to stakeholders and practitioners to empower further professional learning and development in this key aspect of provision within schools.

Engage II Programme Evaluation

This evaluation aims to ascertain the extent to which early years settings, schools, and EOTAS centres are providing effective intervention programmes through the Department of Education's Engage II Programme for those pupils whose learning has been impacted adversely by the COVID-19 pandemic. ETI will undertake a series of district visits to evaluate, through professional discussions and a sample of lesson observations, the quality of the additional support provided through the Programme.

Post-primary schools/Special schools/Further Education: A Review of the Entitlement Framework Policy

DE has commissioned ETI to provide policy advice in this area. The main objective of the review of the Entitlement Framework (EF) is to ascertain to what extent the aims and objectives of the EF, as set out in the 2010 document 'Delivering the Entitlement Framework by 2013' have been achieved, are still relevant and are working as intended. The ETI will be engaging with schools to harness the views of school leaders, practitioners and learners to inform this work.

Post-primary schools: An Evaluation of the Qualification Support Programme

DE has commissioned ETI to provide policy advice in this area. The main objective of this work is to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme in supporting young people to prepare for public examinations in the summer series 2023. District Inspectors will be engaging with practitioners, leaders and young people to hear their views on the planning and implementation of the Programme.

Post-primary schools: A review of large-size level 3 qualifications

DE has commissioned ETI to provide policy advice in this area. The main objective of this work is to review the provision of large-size level 3 qualifications in the context of the statutory requirement to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.

3.3.7 ETI/NITC/Employing Authority Agreed Documents

These documents below remain the current advice and information for schools.

Development of Inspection – What to Expect – June 2022

Development of Inspection consultation, Purpose of inspection, Empowering Improvement, Direction of travel, What else is changing -Next steps.

ETI School Inspections – What to Expect December 2022

Purpose of inspection, Documentation, what to expect from your District Inspector

ETI has no desire for schools to be creating or providing documentation for inspection purposes that is not required.

<https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/eti-school-inspections-what-to-expect.pdf>

3.3.8 Complaints Procedure

ETI published their document on Complaints about the ETI and their stage 1/2 and 3 complaint forms on their website in October 2022. NITC and ETI are in discussions in relation to the ETI Complaints procedure, including an independent element to the ETI complaints procedure, similar to that recently introduced in the Republic of Ireland.

3.4 DE/NI Assembly consultations:

The Department of Education issued three consultation documents in the Autumn Term:

- Consultation on the Integrated Education Act Action Plan
- Consultation on Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Consultation on Statutory Guidance on The Reduction and Management of Restrictive Practices in Educational Settings in Northern Ireland

INTO responded to the three consultations and published them on the INTO website following meeting of the INTO NI Education Subcommittee. Members were informed of the responses and encouraged to send individual or collective responses themselves.

A number of concerns were raised in response to each of the consultations. In particular that sufficient and appropriate resources are required to support and deliver any changes to the curriculum and education system in Northern Ireland.

Consultation on Statutory Guidance on The Reduction and Management of Restrictive Practices in Educational Settings in Northern Ireland

This consultation caused particular concern as it appeared to be centred on the premise of an individual child and the support that individual requires. Unfortunately, in schools today there are multiple children in every class with additional needs, sometime with multiple classroom assistants. This has very different implications for the teacher in the class in getting to understand the behaviour of each child and what they are communicating. The guidance does not take account of these situations or the fact that teachers require the input from support services to understand many behaviours and what these are communicating. The guidance does not offer any support or reference to class teachers in these situations.

As stated in the INTO response, the guidance is NOT clear on what supportive practices can be used and when. There is a lack of reality in the guidance, schools do not have the time or resources to 'develop their own training' as proposed in the guidance, nor would that be appropriate on these issues. The supportive practices suggested require a significant amount of resources and reduction in class sizes which are unlikely to be delivered in the foreseeable future.

It appears from the guidance that the responsibility and accountability will mainly lie with schools which are not equipped (financially or otherwise) to fulfil these responsibilities and accountabilities. Schools would need to be provided with sufficient finances and resources to be able to do so.

The aspirations which this guidance seeks to achieve are admirable, but they fall down on the practicalities and unfortunately therefore they are likely to remain just that - aspirational.

The INTO responses to all of these consultations are available on the INTO website.

3.5 Standardisation of Pre-School Education

The Department of Education commissioned RSM to perform a scoping study on the readiness of the pre-school sector to transition to full time funding (22.5 hours a week). The fieldwork stage of the study had been completed, and preliminary findings had been identified based on a mixed method approach, including:

- Desk research
- Stakeholder interviews
- Service manager interviews
- Pre-school survey

RSM arranged a series of **external stakeholder workshops** to test and/or to validate the findings and conclusions from their analysis to date with 6-8 PSEP stakeholders. INTO were invited to participate in the workshop. They presented their preliminary analysis of evidence and assessments in relation to transitioning to the extended PSEP standardised offer, training and qualification requirements for the PSEP workforce, and support models for PSEP settings.

INTO put forward the view that all Nursery places should be full-time and highlighted the difficulties for staff of the dual day system. INTO also voiced concerns over the qualifications and training available for pre-school education and the ratios of child to adult in the Nursery sector, with particular reference to SEN in the Early Years. The outcome of the study is awaited.

3.6 Curriculum and Assessment Directorate Engagement with NITC

The NITC are involved in meetings with the DE Curriculum and Assessment Directorate in relation to restructuring within Education Policy and Children's Services, Updates on RE, Remote Learning, CPR, digital skills, Curricular refresh and the review of Statutory Assessment.

RSE

The consultation on RSE was issued in October with a deadline of 24 November 2023. INTO's response to the consultation is detailed below and is available on the INTO website. Materials for schools are available on the CCEA website.

CPR/AED

Training for Trainers in Post primary commenced in January 2023, with 1 teacher from each school to be trained by the Ambulance Service. CPR training is mandatory for KS3 pupils.

Review of Statutory Assessment

Statutory Assessment was disapplied for 2023. DE are establishing an internal team for the review of statutory assessment.

Digital Skills

The Report on "A Fair Start" Use of Digital Devices 2022/23 - Examples of Effective Practice Phases 1 and 2 were published in August 2023. More than 6,000 Digital devices have been delivered to schools across NI to support children's learning in class and at home during phases 1 and 2, with a further 2,700 devices to be delivered during Phase 3.

172 schools were supported during phase 1 (Sep – Feb 2023), Phase 2.1 (Jan – Apr 2023 and Phase 2.2 (Apr – June 2023) with 2,089 iPad, 2138 Chromebooks and 2189 MS Surfaces.

Growing Up Online – Children's Online Activities, Harm and Safety in Northern Ireland – An Evidence Report

The Intern attended the launch of this major report into children's online safety, in Stranmillis on 21 September 2023. This was the largest survey/study conducted in NI to date, with 6500 responses from children across various demographics and educational settings, including Primary and Post-Primary, Mainstream pupils, pupils from the Special Education sector, pupils from the Roma community, Youth groups and LGBTQ+ young people. Parents and Teachers were also surveyed. The study focused on finding out what children do online, positive and negative experiences and looked at the harm and risks involved. The report published six key findings and conclusions mainly, the wide range of positive online experiences; the excessive amount of time spent online; parents' engagement with their children's online activities; negative online experiences, particularly the sexual victimisation of girls; the lack of awareness and confidence in being safe online and the need for greater regulation of social media companies.

The full report can be accessed on the SBNI website or click the link below:

<https://www.stran.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Growing-Up-Online-Final-Report-WEB-VERSION.pdf>

There will be subsequent reports, focusing on targeted groups, such as children with SEN and girls who've been victimised.

Northern Ireland Curriculum Refresh

A letter was sent from DE to all principals in October 2023 entitled NORTHERN IRELAND CURRICULUM REFRESH to advise schools that the Council for Curriculum and Assessment (CCEA) are planning to provide awareness raising sessions for primary school principals on the design principles of the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC).

CCEA will lead on a programme of work that will begin with face-to-face awareness raising sessions for primary school principals to define the process. The sessions are planned for early 2024 (January-May 2024). They will run from 0930 – 1230 and be held regionally in mainly Education Authority venues. These awareness raising sessions will be followed by teacher professional learning in the 2024/25 school year. The key stage (KS) 1 and 2 session will be for the Curriculum Leader in your school and the foundation stage (FS) session will be for the FS co-ordinator or the teacher with responsibility.

The post-primary refresh is expected to start in autumn 2025 and further information will issue in due course.

3.7 'Testing Times' Report -Northern Ireland Post-Primary School Transfer without Tests in 2021'

The 'Testing Times' Report-Northern Ireland Post-Primary School Transfer without Tests in 2021' by Prof. Noel Purdy, Dr Glenda Walsh, Dr Karen Orr, Dr Annemarie Millar and Dr Mark Ballentine was published in April 2023. The report examines some of the lessons that can be learnt from the 'non-testing' year of post-primary transfer in Northern Ireland (for admission into post-primary schools in September 2021), when transfer tests were postponed and eventually cancelled as a result of Covid-19 public health concerns. In particular, the report explores the range of admissions criteria adopted by grammar schools, assessing the impact of these on the social and demographic background of pupils accepted into grammar and non-grammar schools in September 2021.



Key Findings

Grammar schools exercised their freedom to set their own admissions criteria in the non-testing year, prioritising having an older sibling already at the school; having already registered for the AQE/GL tests in that year; being the eldest/first/only child in the family; having a sibling who was previously enrolled at the school; and attending a listed feeder primary school.

Additional information provided to parents alongside the admissions criteria frequently highlighted grammar schools' commitment to academic selection as the principal method of entry to their school, and their intention to revert to academic selection in subsequent years. A majority also referred to fees payable.

Analysis of the (non-testing) 2021-22-year 8 grammar and non-grammar school cohorts compared to the previous year 2020-21 showed very minimal differences in terms of gender, newcomer children, level of deprivation, distance travelled to school, and the percentage of the cohort with Free School Meal Entitlement and Special Educational Needs (including with statements). Figures for ethnicity and children in care were too low to allow a comparison to be made. System-level attainment data for the cohort were not available.

While there was little change in the demographic composition of the year 8 cohort transferring to post-primary schools in 2021-22, the data reveal very stark differences (consistent over the past four years, including the non-testing year) in the pupil cohorts entering year 8 in grammar schools when compared to non-grammar schools. Using the 2021-22 year 8 cohort by way of example, these differences relate to:

- Free School Meals (grammar: 15.8% vs non-grammar: 39%)
- Special Educational Needs (grammar: 5.6% vs non-grammar: 25.2%)
- Newcomer children (grammar: 1.1% vs non-grammar: 5.8%).
- Level of Deprivation (grammar school intakes are skewed towards the higher (less deprived) MDM deciles and non-grammar school intakes are skewed towards the lower (more deprived) MDM deciles, though important differences were noted by school management type).

The findings of this study raise fundamental questions regarding the future of a selective education system which is characterised by such consistently stark differences in the demographic background of those pupils in year 8 transferring to grammar and non-grammar schools in Northern Ireland. It is our sincere hope that fresh data will help unlock the current policy paralysis and encourage

evidence-based discussion among all interested parties (politicians, policymakers, school leaders, parents and children) around the future of post-primary transfer in Northern Ireland.

3.8 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

In May 2023 the department of Education issued a press release following the publication of the *2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)* stating that 'An international survey of pupil achievement in reading shows that young people aged 9 -10 in Northern Ireland are amongst the best readers in the world.'

Data from the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) reveals that children from Northern Ireland significantly outperformed those in 52 of the 56 participating countries. Only young people in Singapore and the Republic of Ireland performed better than local pupils in the major international study.

The PIRLS study was carried out for the Department of Education by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

PIRLS 2021 is the fifth in the series of comparative international surveys on reading achievement and has been administered on a five-yearly cycle since 2001. Northern Ireland participated for the third time in 2021 having previously participated in 2016 and 2011.

3.9 Examinations

INTO engaged in a series of meetings with CCEA throughout 2023 and were represented at these by Annmarie Conway, CEC District 2 Representative and Kevin Daly, Trade Union Official.

3.9.1 Statutory Assessment

The Review of Assessment at Key Stages 1,2 and 3, was not undertaken during the Workforce Review as a result of lack of capacity. The long standing INTO boycott of these assessments remains in place pending the completion of any review and agreeable outcome. The statutory requirement for these assessments was disapplied since 2020/21. Any review will be DE led. CCEA report having undertaken preparatory work in anticipation.

The Independent Review of Education (IRE) has made recommendations around assessment and qualifications but at the time of writing there is no information available on how, if at all, these might be taken forward or how the IRE will impact on the outworking of the long-anticipated review of Key Stage Assessment.

Linked to this is the ongoing development and piloting of Computer Adaptive Testing. This is still under development with trials in the Irish Medium Sector expected to take place in early 2024.

3.9.2 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

While broadly welcomed by INTO, RSE remains a potential issue for schools in terms of introduction to the curriculum, workload and training issues. Materials for use in schools are available on the CCEA website and training is being rolled out across the system. The issue remains a potentially controversial one with some faith communities and lobby groups making their views known on issues such as reproductive rights being included in the curriculum.

3.9.3 The teaching of CPR in schools

This has been introduced over the last two academic years with a second phase of training having been rolled out by the NI Ambulance Service and EA.

3.9.4 Examinations Post Pandemic

Adaptations and mitigations in examinations and external qualifications which were in place as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic have been reduced and will be removed entirely for 2024 awards.

CCEA have been tasked with developing guidance to schools on 'Centre Resilience' in the event of further disruption to schooling in circumstances similar to the pandemic period. This guidance will reflect that which is already in place in England and Wales. Consultation is anticipated in early 2024 with an estimated launch date for guidance of September 2024. INTO have raised concerns around potential workload implications and the need to mitigate against this and will respond formally during the consultation phase.

3.9.5 Increased Examinations Fees

CCEA have raised entrance fees for their qualifications by 9.7% in 2023/24. This is the first increase since 2010.

3.9.6 Other issues raised by INTO with CCEA throughout the year

Accessibility of examinations in terms of use of language which, in places has become culturally outdated.

Bureaucratic burden on teachers/ schools of delivering qualifications.

Equity of access to qualifications in the Irish Medium Sector.

Possibility of face-to-face training being increased to mitigate against a potential 'digital divide' in provision to rural schools.

The implications, challenges and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in relation to examinations/ qualifications and the potential impact of this on schools and teachers.

INTO have sought further engagement with CCEA in 2024 to keep these and other matters under consideration and discussion.

3.10 INTO National Education Conference 2023

The 2023 Consultative Conference on Education took place on 17 and 18 November in the Tullamore Court Hotel. The theme of the conference was '*Play and Creativity*' and there were almost 400 delegates in attendance.

INTO President Dorothy McGinley and Education Committee Chair, Aidan Gaughran formally opened the conference. This was followed by a presentation on the findings of a research project, carried out by the Education Committee, on '*Playful Pedagogies in Irish Schools*'.

Discussion groups on related topics, including the role of digital technology, the value of free play and the importance of professional development around Play and Creativity, were facilitated. The opening Keynote address was delivered by Aideen Howard, Director of the Ark Cultural Centre for Children on the *'The Art of Growing Up'*. The INTO President, Dorothy McGinley and the General Secretary, John Boyle launched the 11th edition of the Irish Teachers' Journal.

On Saturday 18 November, delegates had the opportunity to attend two workshops from the following six on offer:

- NCCA; *Play and Playful Pedagogies in the Redeveloped Primary Curriculum*
- *Fighting Words, Maths Madness; Creativity and Mathematics*
- Global Village, *Play and Creativity in Education : A Global Citizenship Education Lens*
- Liz Weir, *Poetry Ireland; Storytelling and Language Enrichment*
- *Samba Drumming*; The Ark Cultural Centre for Children
- *Visual Arts*; The Ark Cultural Centre for Children

Back by popular demand from the Education Conference in 2022, Liz Weir was asked to return to this year's conference. Again, her two workshops had standing room only and received excellent feedback from delegate evaluations.

The INTO Bursary winners were presented with their awards by General Secretary John Boyle, including one to Darragh McCloskey, from St Colmille's Primary School in Claudy, with the research title for his Master's Dissertation, *'The Flipped Classroom Model of Teaching Mathematics; to a Primary Seven Class'*.

Dr Glenda Walsh from Stranmillis University, delivered the closing keynote address on *'A Pedagogy of Play: Exploring the Power of Playful Teaching and Learning in Practice'*. The keynote speeches and other public sessions are available to all INTO members via the INTO website.

3.11 National Education Committee

The Education Committee conducted its work by considering relevant education topics, responding to consultations and reviews, conducting research and preparing for the annual Consultative Conference on Education. Nuala O'Donnell, INTO Senior Official, along with Lisa Magennis, District 1 and Caolan Byrne, District 2 represent INTO members in the north on the INTO National Education Committee.

The following topics were discussed during the year:

- Children's Mental Health – Pilot Programme
- New Primary Mathematics Curriculum
- Inspections/Whole School Evaluations
- Initial Teacher Education Policy
- Assessment of Educational Need (AON) Process
- Special Education – The Review of SET Allocations and the School Inclusion Model
- Exemptions from Irish – Appeals
- Education Conference
- Education and Training Inspectorate NI – Evaluation of the Preventative Curriculum and the Development of Inspection Visits to Schools and Organisations
- Teacher Supply
- Wellbeing - Research Teacher Workload
- Future of STEM

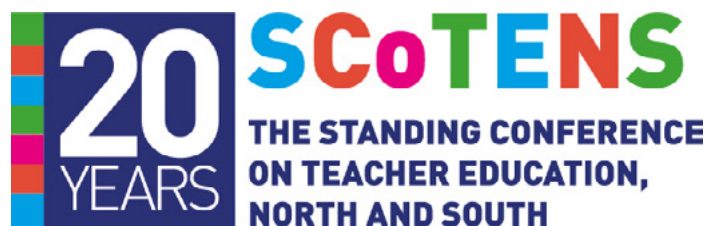
3.12 SCoTENS

SCoTENS is a network of 34 colleges of education, university education departments, teaching councils, curriculum councils, education trade unions and education centres on the island of Ireland with a responsibility for and interest in teacher education. SCoTENS was established in 2003 to create a safe space for teacher educators – North and South– to come together and discuss issues of common interest and explore ways of co-operating closely together. Since October 2022 Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official INTO joined the SCoTENS committee to represent the Teacher Unions in the North.

The 20th annual SCoTENS conference was held on Thursday 19 and Friday 20 October in the Lough Erne Resort in Fermanagh. In this special year, the 20th anniversary of the establishment of SCoTENS, the conference was a celebratory one, and inputs followed a slightly different format than those at previous conferences. The conference was designed to facilitate conversation, creativity and connection. Each day saw keynote inputs by three speakers who have enthralled participants at previous conferences, and there was an opportunity to engage with them in a plenary discussion. The theme was Celebrating 20 years of SCoTENS: Hopes, Dreams and Possibilities for Teacher Education

Over 100 delegates attended this year's conference and were welcomed by Dr Maria Campbell, St Angela's College Sligo. Dr Mark Browne, Permanent Secretary, Department of Education Northern Ireland provided the opening remarks.

There were two outstanding keynote addresses by Prof Teresa Cremin, Co-Director, Literacy and Social Justice Centre, The Open University and by Prof Ian Menter, Emeritus Professor of Teacher Education, University of Oxford. The new Round Table Conversation segment allowed for a series of parallel conversations in the main conference room. In total we had 13 tables with two contributors, one facilitator, and several delegates at each of them. Contributors at each table presented separately on their chosen topic, while the facilitator encouraged delegates to respond to what they had heard, offer feedback, or pose questions to the two contributors. The format was designed to facilitate speakers and delegates in reflecting on the last twenty years, celebrating all that has been achieved in teacher education, and looking to the future with hope. This format proved very successful with delegates expressing how much they liked the new format. The conference proceedings, including the Keynote addresses can be accessed via the SCoTENS website, <https://scotens.org/conferences/>



Section 4:

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)

Introduction

The INTO is an affiliated member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions which is based in Dublin and like the INTO, has a northern section, located in Belfast. In the north, it is led by an Assistant General Secretary Mr Gerry Murphy. Mr Owen Reidy is General Secretary of ICTU.

The current President of ICTU is Mr Justin McCamphill, the Regional Officer of the NASUWT who was elected following the 2023 ICTU BDC in July.

The NIC-ICTU is currently chaired by Mr Paddy Mackle of the UCU. The NIC of ICTU has a number of subcommittees, in areas such as Global Solidarity, Disability, Human Rights, Health and Education, dedicated to working on advancing the ICTU's trade union and social-economic policies on which are a number of INTO nominees. Elections are held every two years to the NIC-ICTU and currently INTO is represented on this body by the Northern Secretary, Mark McTaggart.

4.1 Congress Officers

Paddy Mackle	UCU (Chair)
Jacqui White	UTU (Vice Chairperson)
Gerry Murphy	ICTU (Assistant General Secretary)
INTO Representative	Mark McTaggart (INTO Northern Secretary)
	this is in an observer capacity until the next NIC-ICTU BDC in November 2024

4.2 Key Issues:

Economy

The local economy continues to suffer with a cost-of-living crisis having arisen on foot of the war in Ukraine and the political turmoil caused by Conservative party infighting. The war gave rise to severe price rises in the costs to households and industry of energy initially and further then on food prices. This uncertainty and a particularly disastrous budget during the short-lived Truss premiership cause a loss of confidence across the financial markets both in the UK and globally in the British economy. These factors coupled with the continuing Brexit and Protocol fallout and the lingering negative consequences on supply changes of the Covid-19 pandemic have combined to bring about a cost-of-living crisis not experienced since the 1980s. The impact on working people has seen a dramatic and sustained rise in industrial unrest, which has manifested in ongoing strike action across the public sector, in both the private and public sectors.

This combination of factors comes on top of the established structural issues already impairing economic growth and stability, further drastically inhibiting the economy in the north. The NIC-ICTU continues to be active in seeking to represent the interests of workers effectively in these circumstances and to contribute to various initiatives and efforts to resuscitate the economy in the north. This task is made infinitely more difficult because the NI Executive and Stormont have been collapsed due to the DUP standing down its First Minister, Mr Paul Givan, MLA in February of 2022. They have taken this step in a protest against the implementation of the NI Protocol/Windsor Framework, a trade agreement arising from the decision by the British Government to leave the EU following the Brexit Referendum of 2016.

INTO Northern Secretary, Mark McTaggart has contributed to the ongoing work of the NIC-ICTU led by Assistant General Secretary, Gerry Murphy around engaging with all the local political parties, to promote trade union policies and support initiatives to assist in protecting workers rights in the post Brexit era. The NIC-ICTU campaign, entitled "Workers Demand Better" aimed at encouraging our politicians to get back to work at Stormont and the putting in place of meaningful protections for workers in the face of the unprecedented cost of living crisis currently being visited upon society has continued throughout 2023. This overarching campaign is aimed at providing a context and routeway in the face of the cost-of-living crisis which encompasses all the multitude of campaigns underway in the community and voluntary sectors as well as the affiliated trade unions.

**Northern Ireland Committee
Irish Congress of Trade Unions**



The NIC-ICTU continues to meet on a monthly basis and engages in meetings with various political parties, the Northern Ireland Office [NIO], The Northern Ireland Civil Service [NICS], the NI Executive Forum and other arms-length bodies. The NIC-ICTU's major policy document ["No Going Back"] remains the policy document underpinning NIC-ICTU's approach to this work and provides an alternative pathway to the public discourse on the shape of a post pandemic economy. In this year, while the NIC-ICTU's focus initially remained on seeking to ensure that the commitments on trade union rights, included in the political settlement [New Decade New Approach] which saw the re-instatement of Stormont and the Executive in 2019, were pursued, the union movements response to the cost-of-living crisis continues to dominate the agenda.

The collapse of the Executive and the Assembly and Stormont has contributed to this continuing deficit. The NIC-ICTU continues to see this as a priority area for engagement with the NIO the NICS and the representative organisations for industry and business. This remains a central priority if the NI economy is to recover from Brexit and the hangover from the Covid-19 pandemic and develop into the future.

The out workings of Brexit and in particular the ongoing Protocol/Windsor Framework difficulties are adding to the political and economic uncertainties. It is clear there is an imperative on the part of all parties to the Protocol/Windsor Framework to employ the various mechanisms it encompasses to mitigate the obvious and expected consequences of Brexit. The unwillingness of the DUP and a swathe of public opinion in the loyalist community to countenance any attempt to make the Protocol work are exacerbating the other issues arising from the war in Ukraine and the economic uncertainty at play in the British economy.

The economy in the north has a large retail sector that continues to experience a downturn as a consequence of Brexit along with the Covid-19 pandemic hangover and now the cost -of-living



crisis. Workers in this sector, already the victims of low wages and poor hours, are continuing to experience increased employment instability. The outdated and negative economic doctrine of austerity which underpins the approach of the Conservative government in London is further badly affecting these workers. ICTU's policy document "No Going Back" provides a detailed and considered alternative economic strategy and it remains the trade unions go to text in providing arguments to challenge the current status quo. This policy manifesto is regularly updated to reflect the ongoing changes in our economic circumstances with a view to it remaining the trade union blueprint for a better future for all.

There was an expectation following the New Decade New Approach Deal of 2019 that additional funds were to be made available to support public services. This expectation remains to be met due in large part to the pandemic and also because the Executive failed to produce even a draft economic strategy. This stinging austerity budget imposed by the Secretary of State, Mr Chris Heaton-Harris in November 2022 and April 2023 has continued to drive a series of campaigns in the areas of health and social care and education to challenge the continued cuts being experienced to services and employment in these areas. The pairing back of jobs across both public and private sectors and the erosion of services is calling into question the viability of services and the ability of working people to access them.

The NI economy remains in very serious trouble having regressed to 2008 levels prior to the pandemic and the fear is we are storing up an employment crisis and further economic problems. NIC-ICTU will continue to challenge the decision makers to bring forward more progressive policy solutions that place workers and societies needs ahead of the demands of an economic elite.

Brexit

The leaving of the European Union by the United Kingdom Government on January 31st, 2020, against the democratic will of the people of Northern Ireland remains a matter of deep concern for NIC-ICTU. In recent times the ill-informed political agitation by sections of the pro Brexit minority in the north fuelled by the British government's attempts to renege on its treaty commitments with the EU, regarding the application of the NI Protocol has further exacerbated an already complex situation. It is NIC-ICTU's view that all the parties to the protocol need to find a solution

that allows the situation to de-escalate in order that stability can be returned to the economic and social spheres for the good of everyone. The positive opportunities the Protocol presents have not been fully seized upon or even promoted and this must become a priority as soon as the ongoing negotiations between the EU and the British government are concluded. Those negotiations, under the latest British, Prime Minister, Mr R Sunak, appear at the time of writing to be moving in a positive direction finally but as yet remain some way from a solution that will be acceptable to unionism and the Brexiteers of the Conservative party.

NIC-ICTU remains deeply concerned that much of current EU law will cease to be enforceable in the post Brexit era and that Stormont may not exploit the devolved authority it has regarding workers' rights that would allow it to maintain these rights in line with EU developments in this area. The Retained EU Law [Revocation and Reform] Bill [Bill 156] currently before Westminster presents a very real threat to workers and others in NI should we be faced with a prolonged period of direct rule. The majority of EU legislation has now been transposed to UK law, there does however remain the possibility that key rights and obligations, derived from EU directives, will be removed in future with the passing of the EU Retained Law Bill. NIC-ICTU remains strongly of the view that Brexit must not be used as a pretext to dismantle hard won rights and protections or to drive down employment standards generally. The NIC-ICTU with the support of our trade union comrades across the island will continue to campaign and lobby to prevent these potentially negative consequences happening.

The implications for employment and the labour market generally remain unclear and are dependent on the form of the trading relationship that finally emerges between the UK and the EU. The Irish government provides one of a number of conduits for the trade unions to have their views on Brexit and the Protocol heard. Meetings continue with the political parties north and south to this end by the leadership of the ICTU on a regular basis. The NI Protocol also allows for direct input from the trade union movement to the Joint Committee established to monitor the Protocol and NIC-ICTU will use this mechanism as appropriate.

The unity NIC-ICTU established in the run up to Brexit with the business, agriculture, voluntary and community sectors to protect workers and their families from the inevitable economic fall-out and to seek to exploit any opportunities that may arise is something NIC-ICTU has been working hard to maintain. To this end the ICTU north and south will continue to develop and adapt our policy positions, which in addition to describing the shortcomings of Brexit and the uncertainty arising from the Protocol, outline practical proposals both for the short and longer terms to enable the necessary protections for workers and their families to be maintained and continue to be allowed to evolve in line with EU policy developments in these areas. Additionally, NIC-ICTU has been advocating for the opportunities of the Protocol to be highlighted and the ambiguities clarified.

The continued hard work of NIC-ICTU with the business, agricultural and community sectors to make sure that the Irish Government, the current NI Secretary of State, the local political parties and civic society generally are all fully aware of the challenges and opportunities the aftermath of Brexit and the application of the Protocol possess is ongoing. INTO has been central to these interactions and will continue to support the efforts of the trade union movement in attempting to protect our society from the negative effects of Brexit now that it is a reality. One way in which this can be achieved is to see the proposals in 'No Going Back' concerning the public finances and taxation policy mainstreamed and eventually implemented by the Executive and the government in Dublin. The other significant steps NIC-ICTU can take is to continue lobbying the politicians and parties in NI to fully exploit the flexibilities incorporated in the Protocol to minimise the impact on the economy of Brexit and take advantage of the privileged trading position the Protocol provides NI industry and trade. INTO will continue to be central to ICTU's efforts to achieve these objectives

which will continue to be a feature of ICTU's approach for the years ahead.

INTO plays a full part on the various sub committees of the NIC-ICTU. INTO is represented on the Education Trade Union Group [ETUG] by the Northern Chairperson of INTO's Northern Committee, Caoimhin Mac Colaim and the Assistant Northern Secretary, Marie O'Shea. This group has dealt with a range of issues affecting the education sector and is currently leading the fight back against the latest round of cuts to the education budget arising from the Heaton-Harris budget. It is made up of trade unions representing all the workers employed in the education sector.



ICTU's Equality and Human Rights programme is ensuring that these issues remain central to workers, despite the official neglect by government of the Bill of Rights and a Shared Future.

INTO Representation on ICTU Committees

[these committees are currently being re-constituted and INTO personnel may be subject to change in the near future]

ICTU Women's Committee	Marie O'Shea, Siobhán McElhinney
ICTU Health and Safety Committee	Paul Groogan
ICTU Global Solidarity Committee	Kevin Daly, Dorothy McGinley
Youth Committee	Rachel Poland

NIC-ICTU is once again willing to work in co-operation with Belfast Trades Council, in 2024 to ensure the May Day celebrations continues as a family friendly event and is located in a weeklong programme of events.

4.3 Training

Senior Official, Nuala O'Donnell, continues to work closely with the ICTU Officials in Belfast, on the improved INTO Trade Union Representative training and additional courses designed to promote trade union effectiveness and address professional and other issues. The numbers of members taking part in courses continues to grow and credit is due to Nuala O'Donnell and the ICTU staff in Belfast in ensuring the courses on offer are relevant and topical. Further courses, the majority of which come with accreditation, continue to come on stream for members.

INTO training opportunities continue to be organised and run by the Northern Office under the direction of Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official, Paul Donnelly and Helen Mawhinney. Attendance at these accredited courses is being hampered by the overall lack of financing across the education system in the past year and in particular the lack of temporary teachers available to provide cover for members attending the courses. There has been an increased level of internal INTO co-operation north and south in this year and members are attending courses in significant numbers on matters of a professional nature and related to health issues of interest and concern, whether the member is located north or south.



SECTION 5:

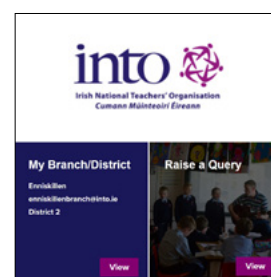
INTERNAL

5.1 QUERY MANAGEMENT

Northern Office receives telephone queries from members from 9am to 5pm (Monday to Thursday) and until 4pm on a Friday, with an answering machine service available between 1pm to 2pm each day and at weekends. In addition, officials, through the mail and email systems, receive queries and requests for advice and support from members.

General queries relating to issues concerning membership, training courses, the supply of information leaflets and seminars are dealt with separately by administrative staff. Queries are also received by the Northern Office through emails to the infoni@into.ie email address.

Members can now submit queries through the portal on the INTO website. Members need to be registered on the portal to use this facility, they then click on 'Raise a Query' and complete the details of their query in the box provided. Once submitted this will automatically update the query section on the INTO database and the members' own record and the query will be allocated to an official to respond to.



Active cases continue to be managed by officials in the Northern Office. These may relate to individual members or indeed in some cases the entire membership of a school. Each case is different and the level of complexity and professional skills to manage these is demanding on time and resources. The officials aim to ensure that members are advised of developments relating to cases and are apprised of the opportunities / developments at each stage. In addition, Northern Committee and CEC members are apprised of developments pertaining to casework in their area.

Members receive advice on a range of professional and employee relations issues, including representation at grievance, disciplinary, bullying or harassment investigations and in preparing and taking industrial tribunal cases. With the increasing cost of legal cases, guidance has been produced by INTO to assist members who are considering referring their case for legal support and advice. Support for legal cases is the subject of consideration by a *Prima Facie* Committee. The *Prima Facie* committee has expressed the view that generally more effort at a local level should be pursued to resolve disputes before they become legal issues.

Where appropriate, and after consideration by a *Prima Facie* Committee, consideration may be given to potential legal support to progress cases. This however would only be considered where all other industrial relations or negotiation avenues have either failed or been exhausted. Members who engage their own legal representatives do so at their own cost. In addition, a failure to disclose the use of independent legal advisors to INTO may have an influence or impact on the decision of INTO to support a case for referral to our own legal advisors.

INTO relies on a rota of officials to respond to members' queries. Kevin Daly was returned to his INTO Official role in April 2023 from the NITC Staff Side Lead in the Nine Reviews flowing from the 2017 - 19 pay deal. He rejoins Paul Groogan, Tommy McGlone, and Nuala O'Donnell. Paul Boyd has been

retained as cover for triaging cases in the event of officials' absences. Marie O'Shea was appointed Assistant Northern Secretary in May 2023. She assumed responsibility for the management of the query and casework load in Northern Office.

5.2 REPRESENTATION

Members continue to be supported to pursue legitimate grievances and in response to all disciplinary and contractual matters, through the agreed procedures.

Representations, while made more challenging during lockdown have, where possible continued either by virtual meeting, or using social distancing protocols.

In assisting individuals to resolve grievances INTO has supported members through mediation, conciliation and arbitration stages of the agreed procedures. INTO continues to recommend to our members that mediation and conciliation should be undertaken by independent practitioners, selected from the LRA (Labour Relations Agency).

5.3 MEDIATION

There has been considerable emphasis on the use of mediation to resolve personal difficulties in schools. Where appropriate, INTO has encouraged members to engage in such a process.

INTO has concerns about the independence of Employing Authority mediators, selected from panels but has agreed with CCMS (Catholic Maintained Schools) that the teacher will be advised of an available internal mediation service. The choice of mediator rests solely with the claimant. INTO supports the use of independent mediators from the LRA.

5.4 CONCILIATION

Members continue to avail of the use of conciliation services provided by the LRA, as part of the agreed procedures.

5.5 ARBITRATION

Members are supported to an independent appeal panel where other mechanisms have failed to resolve the grievances. Members have been supported to this stage on:

- Grievances
- Redundancy / Dismissal
- Bullying / Harassment
- Disciplinary matters

In 2023 INTO brought a number of cases to Independent Appeal. Due to the backlog caused by the Covid pandemic, cases have in several instances been delayed. INTO continues to pursue more cases than any other teaching union and has a significant high level of success at these appeals. INTO remains concerned that there is a significant delay in implementing arbitration decisions which can lead to further frustrations by the member and potentially create further claims. Cases were presented to Independent Appeal Hearings in respect of redundancy appeals, grievances, bullying and harassment claims and unfair dismissal issues.

5.6 INDUSTRIAL TRIBUNALS

INTO continues to support members taking cases to industrial tribunals following a positive recommendation by a *Prima Facie* committee and a supportive legal opinion. Representation of members is provided by a Senior Official and the relevant Northern Committee member. In all cases legal assistance is sought.

5.7 EQUALITY

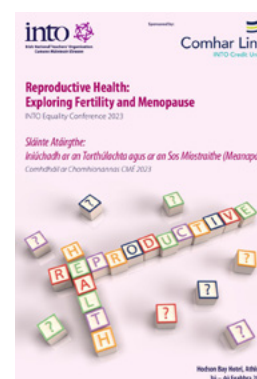
INTO prioritises equality of opportunity and responds to equality consultations from a variety of education providers. INTO has worked with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and other statutory agencies to promote equality of opportunity.

Regular Reports of on-going equality matters are presented to the Northern Committee and the INTO Equality Committee. INTO is represented by Susan McMullan and Grainne McAleer on the INTO National Equality Committee, along with Senior Official, Tommy McGlone.

Equality Conference 2023 (Athlone)

The Equality committee host a conference once every three years. The Committee will prepare a number of discussion documents to be presented at the conference which delegates will discuss in discussion groups. Members of the EQC facilitate the discussion groups and act as rapporteurs and following the conference they will also report back to the general membership through the publication of an article/s in the INTO InTouch.

The theme of the 2023 conference was Reproductive Health: Exploring Fertility and Menopause.



5.8 BULLYING / HARASSMENT

Members continue to report increasing cases of bullying/harassment in schools. This remains of serious concern. Members who wish to raise formal complaints against other members of staff or who are accused of bullying behaviour are supported. INTO also raises concerns that in a number of cases involving only INTO members at a school, employers have a view that the responsibility for resolving disputes can be ceded to INTO.

It remains of concern to INTO that despite the workload agreement the issue of excessive workload remains a significant feature of members calls to the Northern Office. The reprioritisation of individual teacher time budgets through the 2018/19 pay settlement should alleviate many of the issues, INTO will continue to monitor the issue.

5.9 VIOLENCE AT WORK

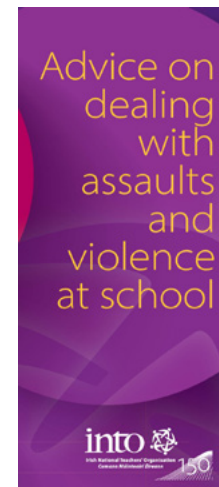
INTO is concerned at the rising number of assaults and battery upon teachers by pupils, parents and other adults involved in schools. INTO raises individual issues with schools and has supported teachers who are the victims of violence.

INTO has also raised the issue of violence in schools through a range of articles in Printout, local press and appearances on local television and radio. Members who are the victims of assaults remain a

priority for INTO. The importance of appropriate risk assessments is a factor and is also a frequent topic of calls to the Northern Office.

The All-Ireland dimension of the issue has been highlighted, and an advice leaflet has been developed and published for INTO members who are a victim of assault, which can be adapted to satisfy the needs in each jurisdiction. The leaflet, 'Advice on Dealing with Assaults and Violence at School,' was published in September 2017, and is available from Northern Office and on the INTO website.

INTO encourage all members to report these incidents and have them formally recorded at school and through the EA reporting portal.



5.10 RISK ASSESSMENT

The need to develop the practice of a risk assessment process, as part of good management practice, has been highlighted by INTO and remains a priority. Where possible INTO will support members and school leaders in accessing appropriate Risk Assessments in key areas.

5.11 ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINES IN SCHOOLS

This guidance is available on the INTO website and reaffirms that teachers cannot be directed to administer medicines to pupils. The move towards mainstream schooling of children with specific medical needs has also highlighted the importance of support for teachers who are faced with children who have complex medical requirements.

5.12 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES

INTO is concerned at the lack of strategic structures for the negotiation of health and safety issues, relating to teachers in Northern Ireland. INTO has been successful in agreeing that the overseeing body for implementing the Teacher Health and Wellbeing report (THAW) will now be designated as a Health and Safety Committee, responsible to the Teachers Negotiating Committee (TNC). Progress on this remains paused as we await an implementation plan from the workforce review reports.

INTO members have the right to appoint their own safety representatives in every workplace regardless of how small or large the membership is.

Health and safety reps are legally entitled to investigate health and safety concerns and have paid time off. INTO supports our safety reps through INTO H&S training courses and seminars run throughout the year. These courses can be found in the [Trade Union Training](#) section of our website.

5.13 RECRUITMENT

5.13.1 STUDENTS

INTO, UTU and NEU jointly attended St. Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College, University of Ulster and Queen's University freshers' fairs which were held in the colleges. To enable a quicker registration process, students register by using a QR code and completing an online form.

INTO attended the Stranmillis & St Mary's Teacher Recruitment Fairs.

488 students were recruited since 1 September 2023. The overall student membership figure on 31 December 2023 was 1203.

INTO have met with St. Mary's Students' Union on several occasions and are working closely together to plan for upcoming webinars and seminars to support our student members in 2023/24.

INTO continued to support student members via annual sponsorship of student handbooks, the Graduate event for St Mary's and the pantomime in Stranmillis. Sponsorship of the Ladies GAA teams in both St. Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College, continued along with sponsorship of the Men's GAA Team in Stranmillis University College and sponsorship of tops for the St Mary's Students' Union Executive.

5.13.2 Early Career Teachers (ECTs)

INTO initiated an online recruitment process for ECTs inviting them to join as full members by using young INTO member testimonies and a video message from current members explaining what their membership means to them. Final year student teachers were contacted in July and again in October.

On INTO's website, there is a section specifically for ECTs. They can access advice that is pertinent to them including an updated College to Classroom handbook.

At Stranmillis University College the Vere Foster medal was awarded to Rachel Devenney.

At St Mary's University College, Clodagh Davis was selected to receive the Vere Foster medal, due to circumstances beyond our control both the Vere Foster and the John Cull Medal, sponsored by Newry Branch are yet to be awarded for 2023. INTO are working with St Mary's University College to make arrangements for these presentations.

5.13.3 INTO Seminar for Early Career Teachers

A very successful INTO seminar for newly qualified teachers was held in the Malone Hotel on Wednesday 16 August 2023 to celebrate their graduation to ECT status and assist the new teachers in preparing for their first year in teaching.

The seminar was delivered by an INTO all female team, Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official, Rachel Poland, Northern Committee and INTO Intern 2021/22 and the new INTO Intern for 2023/24, Lisa Magennis. The all-day seminar included practical information and tips on Induction/EPD, Contracts and Pay scales, as well as why they should join a union and why that union should be INTO! The teachers were very interested to learn about Directed Time Budgets, as this was something they had never heard of before.

The networking opportunity that was provided with School Leaders from across NI proved very popular, with some of the teachers making useful connections for future supply working. A huge thank you to Paddy McAlister, Northern Committee and BFC, Siobhan McTaggart, primary school Principal, Mark Murtagh, primary Vice principal and Micheál Mac Giolla Ghunna, post primary IME Principal. These INTO school leaders gave of their time, during their much-needed summer holidays, to encourage and support the new teachers, giving them tips and advice on presenting

themselves for supply work and conducting themselves in schools. All of which was greatly appreciated by the attendees.

The teachers also gained useful tips on surviving the staffroom and managing their classroom, which they appreciated, with Classroom management and Induction/EPD scoring highest in the evaluations as areas for further training. Some of the areas they asked for further training on were Parent teacher meetings, IEPs, Head of Department and Autism.

After lunch there was a session on NISTR delivered by Karen Mawhinney and Samantha Adair from EA who gave very practical tips and advice to the new teachers

5.13.4 Membership

All INTO school representatives were circulated with recruitment materials in April and August. Despite fewer jobs for ECTs the INTO membership is continuing to grow. The membership figure at the end of December 2023 was 7197.

Members no longer need to apply in hard copy via post as there is now a quick and easy online application system. Work is also under way to enhance the online application process for members in schools or institutions who are not paid directly by DE. Once registered members can also update their details via their account on the website and access the members' only content on the website.



**10 reasons
to be part of the
into** 

5.13.5 Appointment of the Intern

The position of Intern was advertised on 5 May 2023. Lisa Magennis was successful in her application and was seconded from her teaching post for the school year 2023/24 to work in INTO Northern Office.

As INTO Intern, Lisa has worked closely with the officials throughout the year, answering members' queries and dealing with members' cases. In addition, as an elected member of the INTO national Education Committee Lisa has focused on Education issues, terms and conditions, recruitment, and increasing participation between all members at school, branch, and district level.

In her role as intern Lisa has attended the INTO National Principals and Deputy Principal's Conference and hopes to attend at least one PDC and EQC meeting before the end of her year.

5.13.6 Youth Committee

INTO Youth Committee consists of members throughout District 1 and District 2 across a range of sectors.

The committee is facilitated by Rachel Poland and John Kelly (Northern Committee Representatives). The overall aim of the Youth Committee is to increase participation of younger teachers within the union.

5.14 INTO Training

5.14.1 School Representative Training

Twenty- new INTO School Representatives attended the one-day Induction course, in Belfast in September 2023 and went back into their schools armed with the information on how to carry out this important union role updated on how to deal with issues as they arrive in their schools. Ten experienced reps attended the two-day training in January 2023 to further upskill themselves in dealing with member issues.

5.14.2 Training for School Leaders

22 school leaders successfully completed a new accredited course for school leaders on 'Building Good Staff Relations' after attending a 6-week course covering topics such as Effective communication, Managing difficult situations, Handling grievances and disciplinaries and Mediation/LRA. Their NOCN Level 2 certificates were presented at the District Fora meetings for Principals and Vice-principals.

16 INTO school leaders enrolled for the course this year which will continue in 2024.

5.14.3 Financial Planning

Platinum Financial delivered five webinars and one seminar for INTO and UTU members in 2022. IN total 266 INTO members attended these pre-retirement and mid-career financial planning webinars/seminars, the most popular of these being the McCloud update webinar with 77 members attending. Platinum Financial continue to provide this very important service to INTO members to enable them to consider and plan for their financial futures.

5.14.4 Webinars

The series of webinars for INTO members continued in 2023, with seven webinars delivered by INTO Officials, in conjunction with NEU and UTU with a total of 111 members attending. The webinar themes were varied and covered: Stress at Work, Dealing with Difficult Situations, Menopause and the Workplace, Workload and Time Budgets and Teaching Allowances and workload. The Shared Parental Leave webinar postponed from 2022 took place in March 2023. All the webinars are recorded, and the PowerPoint presentations and the recordings are available for members to view on the INTO website, www.into.ie/ni.

5.14.5 Regional Officer Training

On Thurs 30 November & Friday 1 December 27 INTO Branch and District Officers from across the North attended Regional Officer training in Monaghan. There was a high level of engagement from the officers in attendance who received training and updating on the use of IT and the INTO database for branch and district purposes, along with branch and district finances. Thursday evening was a lively session with branch and district officers taking part in discussions with the Northern Secretary, General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary on current issues, consultation and communication with members and participation in Northern Conference and Congress.

On Friday the officers participated in further discussions on recruitment, retention and participation of members, and were trained on preparing motions for conference/congress, and communications and social media.

5.15 INTO / NEU / UTU

5.15.1 INTO/ NEU / UTU Board

Representatives

INTO

John Boyle
Caoimhin MacColaim
Siobhan McElhinney
Marie O'Shea
Mark McTaggart

UTU

Stephen McCord
Lynelle Fenton
Alison Steen
Louise Creelman
Rebekka Gilpin

NEU

Mark Langhammer
Alastair Donaghy
Ian McGonigle

The INTO / NEU / UTU relationship continues to develop. The Board has decided to prioritise integration at CEC/NC level. A range of events is organised, including retirement courses, an annual Leadership Conference, and general benefits for members.

5.15.2 Partnership Agreement

The partnership, established in June 2011, with the Ulster Teachers' Union (UTU), National Education Union, (NEU) and the Educational Institute of Scotland, (EIS), continues to develop. The four unions are working together in partnership, to the benefit of teachers in their respective countries.

5.15.3 Joint Training

INTO, NEU and UTU Officials met on a number of occasions during the year to plan and agree a joint programme of training for members, school representatives and Health and Safety Representatives from the three unions. Some courses were delivered in person by the union officials and others were delivered virtually in interactive webinars. Further detail of these is contained in the Training section above.

5.15.4 Annual Leadership Conference

There were three joint leadership conferences planned for in 2023, in February, June and November. The February conference was deferred, due to ongoing Industrial Action.

In June an online webinar was held which covered topics such as Industrial Action, Directed Time Budgets, Education Sector Cuts, and EdIS/EA One update.

In November there was another online joint leadership webinar for school leaders with the leadership teams of all the partner unions from INTO, NEU and INTO who answered questions from school leaders on current issues and potential Industrial Action.

The graphic features a laptop displaying a 'WEBINAR' screen with logos for INTO, NEU, and UTU. To the right, the text provides the following details:

- INTO/UTU/NEU JOINT INFORMATION WEBINAR FOR SCHOOL LEADER MEMBERS**
- Wednesday, 14 June
- 9.30 - 11.30 pm
- Agenda:
 - Industrial Action
 - Time Budgets
 - Education Sector Cuts
 - EdIS/EAOne Update
- Register using link in post
- Web: into.ie | Twitter: @INTO_NI | Facebook: Into NI

Matters addressed included: Industrial Action Update, EA One Feedback - Time Cards and New Initiatives and SEN Issues.

Whilst INTO and the other partner unions welcome the increased numbers who can participate on the online events the joint board are keen to have more face-to-face events planned for school leaders in 2024.

5.16.5 Membership Plus

All members received their new Membership Plus cards in August 2022. The Membership Plus card entitles members to over 600 offers and discounts on many different products and services. Members can use the search facility on the membership plus website to look for a specific offer, or to look up offers by category or area, with more offers being added all the time. An app was developed, which enables members to search for offers on the go.

5.16 National Committees

The two representatives on the INTO National PDC from the North of Ireland, Henry Duffin District 1, and Brian McGrath (replaced by Mark Murtagh in December 2023) District 2, attended six meetings of the PDC during 2023, along with Mark McTaggart, Assistant Northern Secretary (replaced by Marie O'Shea in May 2023).

The two representatives on the INTO National Education Committee from the North of Ireland, Lisa Magennis District 1 and Dermot Gallagher District 2 (replaced by Caolan Byrne after Congress 2023) attended meetings of the EDC during 2023 along with Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official.

The two representatives on the INTO National Equality Committee from the North of Ireland, Susan McMullan District 1, and Grainne McAleer District 2, attended six meetings of the EQC during 2023 along with Tommy McGlone, Senior Official.

5.17 Communication

The INTO website is undergoing a review at present to identify any changes to improve provision to members. Members will be informed of any changes. Members can navigate the website on a wide range of web browsers, mobiles and tablets and once logged in are able to:

1. Check and update their member record (My INTO page).
2. Register for INTO courses and events (Events – Seminars & Workshops).
3. Update preferences for communication from the INTO (My Contact Methods).
4. Access all the INTO information and services in the members' portal (information Area).
5. Through members' portal, log in and email in their query which will be registered with Northern Office and an official will respond within 48 hours.

With the current Industrial Action on Pay, the website has been and continues to be invaluable in the provision of important facts and guidance to members with constant updates on the Industrial Action page and regularly updated FAQs. For members to get the full use of the website you need to be registered on the database. If you are not registered on the database with up-to-date details, then you will have limited access to the website. For access email infoni@into.ie.

A Communication team was established in Northern Office and proceeded to survey members on communication. The results of the survey indicated that members preferred receiving information via email from INTO.

The NI Facebook account Irish National Teachers' Organisation NI and the 'X' (formally Twitter) account NI_INTO have also been providing members with facts and up-to-date guidance on Industrial Action and relevant issues. Members are encouraged to follow the accounts for daily posts and up-to-date news.

GDPR

Following Brexit, the UK is no longer regulated domestically by the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which governs processing of personal data from individuals inside the EU. Instead, the UK now has its own version known as the UK-GDPR (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation). The new UK-GDPR took effect on January 31, 2020, and it is almost word for word completely identical to the EU's GDPR.

Following on from this all members should note that from now on there will be a notice displayed regarding the use of photographs and videos at all INTO events. Any member who does not wish to give permission for the use of their image will be asked to inform INTO staff at the event.

5.18 Annual Vere Foster Lecture

The 11th Annual Vere Foster Lecture took place on the evening of Friday, January 13th, 2023, in the Malone Hotel in Belfast. Frank Connolly renowned investigative journalist, author and current Director of Communications for Irelands largest trade union, SIPTU, gave the lecture. Entitled "What would an All-Island Education System look like? What are the first steps to it?"

5.19 Annual INTO Art Competition

The 2023 winner of the INTO Art Competition was Brendan McArdle.

The competition entries were displayed in Northern Office and in Printout.

NORTHERN CONFERENCE 2023

RESOLUTIONS PASSED/REMITTED

RESOLUTION 1

Conference:

- (i) Commends the INTO membership for their continued support of the ongoing industrial action in support of fair pay for teachers.
- (ii) Further commends the NITC for engaging in co-ordinated action.
- (iii) Instructs Northern Committee to continue to campaign, in concert with our sister unions, to achieve a salary uplift which reflects the true value of the teaching workforce and meets the needs of members.

Actions:

- **Pay claim 2023/24 submitted- still no firm offer forthcoming**
- **Northern Committee Industrial Action subcommittee met to discuss ongoing ASoS and strike action mandate given by membership. This is discussed at monthly Northern Committee meetings.**
- **INTO Chairs and participates in NITC Industrial Action Committee.**
- **Joint union Action Short of Strike (ASOS) escalated in January 2023, April 2023 for all members and specific actions for school leaders added October 23- Annual Census and November 23 – Reconstitution of Board of Governors.**
- **Co-ordinated NITC Strike Action called for February, April and November 2023.**
- **Co-ordinated NITC social media posts highlighting industrial action and issues for teachers.**
- **Campaign moved toward language of pay parity with other jurisdictions to reflect significant pay differential which has opened up between North and colleagues in England, Scotland and Wales.**

RESOLUTION 2

Conference notes with concern the recently announced cuts to the Northern Ireland education budget affecting services and the continued underfunding of Education.

Conference:

- (i) Demands that EA and DE cease its efforts to bring about further efficiencies across the system until the Stormont Executive and Assembly are restored to provide a proper level of public scrutiny for education funding.
- (ii) Instructs Northern Committee to work with the other education unions to organise a co-ordinated campaign to resist any further cuts across the education system.
- (iii) Calls on Northern Committee to work, through the NITC, to engage with political parties in an effort to increase the portion of the block grant which is given to Education.

Actions:

- (i) - **Letter to DE/EA re funding**
- **Interviews/Comments/Articles to media as funding cuts are announced.**
- **Highlighted on social media posts.**
- **Digital email campaign to local MLAs and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland**
- (ii) - **Standing item on Joint Board agenda.**
- **Standing item on ETUG agenda.**
- **INTO contribute to press commentary from ICTU on matters relating to education**
- (iii)- **Standing item on NITC agenda.**
- **NITC delegations to meet political parties at Stormont – October 2023**

RESOLUTION 3

Conference notes with concern the increased workload placed on SENCOs in schools as a direct result of proposed changes to the SEN Framework.

Conference calls on Northern Committee, working through NITC, to campaign for a continuation of additional funding into the academic year 2024/25, with a view to further extension, to enable SENCOs to complete the preparatory work these changes will necessitate.

Actions:

- **Standing item for NITC Agenda.**
- **Issues raised through INTO engagement at EA CYPS and Trade Union Engagement Forum meetings.**

RESOLUTION 4

Conference notes the draft inspection arrangements for inspections in schools moving forward.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work with NITC and the ETI to ensure that:

- (i) Any final agreed arrangements build on the progress that has been made.
- (ii) Include an agreed outline of the documents required by ETI prior to an inspection.
- (iii) An agreed independent appeals process is devised that allows schools to challenge the outcome of an inspection where it feels the outcome is unreflective of the school performance.

Actions:

- **Standing item for NITC Agenda.**
- **Progress on this area has been significantly impacted with ongoing Action Short of Strike.**
- **INTO continue to contribute within the ETI working group of NITC.**

RESOLUTION 5

Conference notes with concern that the UK has one of the largest Pupil to Teacher Ratios (PTRs), in Primary Education amongst the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries (OECD; Education at a Glance 2022).

Conference deplores the fact that Primary PTRs in the North of Ireland exceed the OECD average, according to the UK Government's Education and Training Statistics.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to engage with NITC to:

- (i) Initiate a media campaign to highlight the many potential damaging effects that larger Pupil to Teacher Ratios can have on Primary classes.
- (ii) Lobby the Department of Education to review Pupil to Teacher Ratios, with a view to inform, influence and/or enact policy change that will minimise and limit PTRs, bringing it more in line with other OECD countries.

Actions:

- **Standing item for NITC Agenda.**
- **Progress on this area has been significantly impacted with the lack of the Assembly and an executive minister for the Department of Education.**

RESOLUTION 6

Conference understands the need to support those fleeing from global conflicts, including from the war in Ukraine, and recognises the importance of integrating refugee children into our schools and communities.

Conference calls upon Northern Committee, through NITC, to request additional funding from DE to ensure that schools are adequately resourced and supported financially in catering for the needs of refugee children.

Actions:

- **Letter from NITC was sent to the Department of Education re: funding in this area.**
- **Progress on this area has been significantly impacted with the lack of the Assembly and an executive minister for the Department of Education.**

RESOLUTION 7

Conference notes with concern the workload implications associated with PLPs (Personal Learning Plans) in their current format.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC to:

- (i) Campaign for a thorough and robust evaluation of the PLP trial process with Phase 1 Schools.
- (ii) Communicate with DE and reaffirm the need for the outcomes of an evaluation to be used to adapt the current format of the trial PLP and inform future training.

Actions:

- **Standing item for NITC Agenda.**
- **Matters raised at NITC engagements with EA Services.**
- **INTO contribute to discussions and raise concerns in the SEN Implementation Group.**
- **NC Subcommittee – SEN met to discuss the SEN end-to-end review with view to completing survey from EA.**
- **INTO are still waiting for end-to-end review to be published which includes SEN transformation information.**
- **Progress on this area has been significantly impacted with the ongoing industrial action and ASoS.**
- **Training from the EA was stalled, and monies redirected to other areas.**

RESOLUTION 8

Conference notes that current arrangements for teachers, including principals and vice-principals, to formally raise concerns about or with their Boards of Governors, are limited to Annex III Bullying and/or Harassment by a Third Party Other than an Employee (TNC 2011/4) of the Procedure to Combat Bullying and Harassment of Teachers including Principals and Vice-principals (TNC 2009/11).

Conference calls on Northern Committee to seek to negotiate through the appropriate mechanisms:

- (i) A fit for purpose grievance procedure for teachers and school leaders which is not related to bullying and harassment; and
- (ii) Provision for an independent appeal.

Actions:

- **This matter was referred to the Joint Secretaries Forum (JSF) through the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) for a re-write. This is an ongoing piece of work.**

RESOLUTION 9

Conference notes the effort from INTO in leading the development and implementation of the Directed Time Budgets in schools. Conference deplores the evidence that some schools and school principals have either not given staff their individual DTBs or have given them without consultation with individual teachers.

Conference demands that NC, through the NITC if necessary:

- (i) Lobbies the Department of Education and EA to make DTBs in school a statutory requirement, which should be in place before the beginning of each academic year.
- (ii) Supports members in completing directed time at a time and place of their choosing if and when DTBs are not in place and have not been agreed with individual teachers.

Actions:

- **NITC letter sent to DE/EA re Directed Time Budgets (DTBs).**
- **Agenda item for NITC – included in ASoS actions.**
- **NITC Agreed a position re non completion of DTBs.**
- **In the absence of a time budget being issued by 30 September 2023 INTO will advise members to raise a grievance with their principal. A template will be provided.**
- **Template letter created and available from INTO.**
- **In the meantime, members have been advised to stay within their contact times (23.5 hrs for post primary and 25hrs for primary) and 32.4 hrs directed time.**
- **NITC Social media posts issued relating the DTBs.**
- **Joint union training webinars on DTBs, June and September 23.**

RESOLUTION 10

Conference acknowledges the lack of substitute teachers currently available across all areas and the implications that this lack of availability has for releasing staff to attend professional development and to provide adequate school cover.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work with the other stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations of the working group of the review of substitute and temporary teachers are implemented in full.

Actions:

- **NITC sent a letter to DE/EA/CCMS regarding the need to set up the Implementation Group to move on the completed Review areas.**
- **Progress on this matter has been significantly impacted from the reluctance on management side to engage on this piece of work.**

RESOLUTION 11**Conference:**

- a. Welcomes the recent publication of the CCEA Advance Information for Summer 2023 Examinations.
- b. Notes the requirement as outlined in the Education Authority's 'School Age Mothers Programme – Regional Guidance for Schools' document for schools to provide: 'Exam concessions if the young woman is expecting her baby close to exam dates.'
- c. Further notes that neither EA or CCEA have provided any clear guidance on what these exam concessions could be, nor have they been considered in any Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) documents relating to Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.
- d. Calls on Northern Committee, through the NITC, to engage with the relevant examination bodies and other relevant agencies to provide a clear path for schools in the management of this issue for school age mothers that this creates.

Actions:

- **INTO is involved through NITC with ongoing engagement with CCEA.**
- **INTO attended and contributed to the British and Irish Group of Teacher Unions (BIGTU) seminar on assessment.**
- **Minimum threshold set for concessions at 25% for the incoming year. Need to push to retain at 25% permanently.**

RESOLUTION 12

Conference notes the ESRI report 'A North South Comparison of Education and Training Systems: Lessons for Policy', published in April 2022.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work with the CEC to establish an all-Ireland working group to;

- (i) Explore how an all-island approach to education can improve teaching and educational services across the entire island.
- (ii) Use the findings to formulate a policy paper on the issue outlining the positive aspects.
- (iii) Work through the North South Ministerial Council to implement positive aspects of an all-island approach to Education.

Actions:

- **Joint NC/CEC meeting was held on 8th May 2023**
- **Standing agenda item for CEC**
- **Motion at Congress 2023 on this issue.**
- **Ongoing INTO work on research of this area.**
- **INTO delegates attended the ICTU 25th Anniversary Belfast Good Friday Agreement event in December 23.**

RESOLUTION 13

Conference calls on Northern Committee to:

- (i) Initiate a review into how INTO communicates with members through social media to ensure that INTO guidance is disseminated to our members promptly.
- (ii) Form a social media team with sole responsibility for promoting the INTO's agenda and objectives.
- (iii) Use all media platforms to promote INTO's message.

Actions:

- **INTO continue to monitor and review engagement on social media and website. Information is presented to Northern Committee at monthly meetings.**
- **Northern Office Staff were identified to be involved in communications and participate in weekly meetings with colleagues in Head Office.**
- **There is an ongoing review and adjustment of the INTO NI website.**
- **Regular updates of info are added, and**

information archived.

- **With the support from the Dublin Office Communications Team, Training for INTO staff has been given on:**
 - **Social media platforms**
 - **Website updating**
 - **Dotdigital newsletters**
 - **Use of Canva**
- **The call for the use of all media platforms has proven to be unimplementable by Northern Committee as per the instruction of the resolution.**
- **Decisions on the corporate use of media to communicate INTO related information is a matter for head office. Not all media platforms are considered appropriate for this purpose.**

RESOLUTION 14

Conference condemns the ongoing plans to forcibly displace more than 500 school-aged Palestinian children by demolishing their schools in the Masafer Yatta area in the Southern West Bank.

Actions:

- **Letter from INTO to the Irish Foreign Minister on this matter.**
- **INTO President at round table talks, SIPTU Global activists.**
- **Northern Secretary at ICTU meeting with Palestine Deputy Foreign Minister, Dr Amal Jadou and Senator Frances Black**
- **Branches encouraged to attend marches and demonstrations.**
- **Highlight at Trade Union Friends of Palestine meetings**
- **INTO across the island now has a recognised Palestine Ambassadors Group to work on issues relating to the ongoing occupation and apartheid under which Palestinians exist.**
- **This Ambassadors group secured a further letter to the Irish Foreign Minister calling for an end to the war against Gaza and official INTO participation in approved solidarity events across the island of Ireland.**

RESOLUTION 15

Conference notes with concern the wish of the UK government to raise the state pension age (SPA) to 68 by the mid to late 2030s.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC and with other relevant bodies to fight against raising the pension to 68 before 2046 as originally planned.

Actions:

- **This is relevant to NIC-ICTU. INTO are represented directly on that body by the Northern Secretary.**
- **Agenda item for NITC.**
- **Ongoing discussions at Pension Board meetings.**
- **INTO continue to have representation on the NITPS Pension Board and Scheme Advisory Board. INTO position on pension age has been and will continue to be relayed through these bodies.**

RESOLUTION 16

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC to initiate a review of the processes and procedures for the teacher Phased Retirement scheme so that:

- (i) A more consistent approach across all schools can be agreed and applied.
- (ii) Members are provided with the most up-to-date information on circumstances in which Phased Retirement can be sought and granted.

Actions:

- **INTO representatives on the Pension Board and Pension Advisory Board continue to raise this in those forums to ensure that information provided directly by DE is relevant, up to date and accessible to members.**
- **Retirement Planning webinars – Platinum – Phased retirement.**
- **Agenda for NITC.**
- **TNC discussions.**

RESOLUTION 17

Conference notes with concern the lack of support and care afforded to teachers who experience miscarriage prior to 24 weeks of pregnancy through the current teachers' maternity scheme.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work through the NITC and JWP to address special status for leave for teachers in relation to miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy, through the maternity scheme.

Actions:

- **This is ongoing work for the Teachers' Negotiating Committee and JWP.**
- **This has been delayed due to ongoing industrial action and funding issues within education.**

RESOLUTION 18

Conference notes with grave concern the intention of the Secretary of State to make cuts of approximately £400m in Education between now and April 2024.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work, through NITC, to campaign and impress upon all stakeholders for a continuation of the funding that has been made available to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our education system.

Actions:

- **Ongoing Agenda item for NITC discussions.**
- **Cuts have significantly increased.**
- **INTO addressed many of these concerns within body of text for email campaign on INTO website.**
- **Ongoing suspension of the assembly and further cuts to education funding since Northern Conference 2023 have stymied progress.**

RESOLUTION 19

Conference notes with concern that the available provision of Educational Psychologists to schools is not fit for purpose.

Conference calls on Northern Committee, to work through NITC, to demand from the Department of Education that sufficient investment is made to provide schools with adequate access to and provision of support from Educational Psychologists.

Actions:

- **Efforts to secure adequate funding for SEN and education generally are ongoing through NITC engagement with management side.**
- **Ongoing suspension of the assembly and further cuts to education funding since Northern Conference 2023 have stymied progress.**
- **INTO addressed many of these concerns within body of text for email campaign on INTO website.**

RESOLUTION 20

Conference notes with concern the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill for England and Wales which is currently being supported by the Conservative Government through Parliament.

Conference notes the attempt to curtail legitimate industrial action, workers' protection and trade union rights in these neighbouring jurisdictions.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work with ICTU and TUC to:

- Offer solidarity and support to trade unions in these jurisdictions who are seeking to oppose the progress of this bill.
- Inform through union magazines and social media links the damaging effects this bill will inflict on legitimate trade union business in England and Wales.

Actions:

- **Ongoing agenda item for ICTU/TUC, INTO is represented on ICTU by the General Secretary and on NIC-ICTU by the Northern Secretary.**
- **INTO supported May Day rallies in Belfast and Derry.**

RESOLUTION 21

Conference notes the work by INTO and others in progressing the nine areas which were agreed as part of the 2020 pay settlement.

Conference further notes that the funding available for progressing these is due to run out by April 2023.

Conference demands the Northern Committee, through the NITC:

- Work to ensure that where necessary additional funding and resources are made available to complete the 9 reviews.
- Negotiate with the employing authority to ensure that sufficient funding and resourcing is secured and made available to implement the outworking of these reviews by April 2028.

Actions:

- **Ongoing agenda item for NITC and Joint Board.**
- **NITC sent letter to DE about the establishment of the Workforce Review Project Implementation Team. No progress has been made to see this established.**
- **Talks at Joint Secretaries Forum resulting in agreement to scope out cost neutral recommendations initially. There is reluctance from management side to move on this matter.**

RESOLUTION 22

Conference is increasingly concerned at the impact on teachers facing allegations of abuse.

Conference calls on Northern Committee, through NITC, to work with the appropriate authorities including the Department of Justice to:

- (i) Ensure that any delays in the process at investigation stage are negated.
- (ii) Research the impact of delays in the process on teacher health & wellbeing, financial cost.
- (iii) Develop a return-to-work support process for teachers after the investigation has been resolved.

Actions:

- **NITC letter sent to Department of Justice and Department of Education.**
- **The ongoing absence of an assembly and executive ministers have significantly impacted on any progress in this area.**
- **The matter continues to be raised with management side during talks at Joint Secretaries Forum.**

REMITTED TO NORTHERN COMMITTEE

MOTION 16

Conference recognises the workload issues and potential stress associated with the position of all principals and teaching principals. Conference recognises that principal release days are often offered to principals in schools, where budgetary means allow.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to lobby the Department of Education to ensure principal release days are availed of by all principals and that the money can only be used for principal release.

Down Branch

Actions:

- **NITC sent letter to DE about the establishment of the Workforce Review Project Implementation Team. No progress has been made to see this established.**
- **Talks at Joint Secretaries Forum resulting in agreement to scope out cost neutral recommendations initially. There is reluctance from management side to move on this matter.**

Appendices

Appendix 1: Action Short of Strike 2023: Teachers' Actions

Members will:

Rigorously comply with the '**Jordanstown Agreement**' to include:

- **Limit** total hours worked to 32.4 per week.
- **Limit** teaching to 25 hours (Primary & Special) and 23.5 (Post Primary) (or pro-rata if Part-Time)
- Outside of teaching hours, complete non-contact Directed Time (outside of the school's normal pupil learning day) at a time and place of their choosing.
- **Do not** provide cover (including composite classes) outside the 1987/88 Regulations. (Morning and School bus duties should be seen as Health and Safety issues and are therefore exempt from action). (See at Note 2 below)
- **Refuse** to accept direction to attend more than one formal school meeting outside of the normal school day (of no more than one hour duration) per academic year.
- **Refuse** to meet with or report to parents on an ad-hoc basis in person, online or by telephone, outside pupil sessions except when fulfilling a teacher's contractual obligation, or in exceptional circumstances pertaining to legitimate safeguarding and child protection issues.
- **Refuse** to attend meetings/events held outside of the outside of the school's normal Pupil learning day. (Including open, prize and parents' evenings)
- **Refuse** to be directed to undertake unremunerated (new or existing) school duties or activities.
- **Refuse** to be directed to undertake unremunerated (new or existing) extra-curricular voluntary activities (See Note 3 below)
- **Do not** participate in training or implementing, any work relating to Phase 2 of SEND Implementation and PLPs (until such time as feedback has been published with regard to the workload associated with this area from Phase 1 schools).
- **Boycott**, or continue to boycott Key-Stage, cross curricular Assessment arrangements.
- **Do not** submit planners or lessons plans.
- **Do not** conduct requisition of materials or teaching supplies unless specifically allocated appropriate time within the Directed Time Budget.
- **Do not** engage in tasks other than those set out in the Directed Time Budget.
- **Do not** engage in new initiatives
- **Do not** engage with classroom observation outside of PRSD or EPD.
- **Refuse** to conduct routine administrative or clerical tasks
- **Do not** complete any part of the School Development Plan
- **Do not** co-operate with Governors' meetings after 5:00pm
- **Do not** provide lunchtime supervision (without a separate/secondary remunerated contract)
- **Do not** engage with ETI Inspections
- **Do not** engage in planning or delivering remote learning, unless included in their Directed Time-Budget
- **Do not** cooperate with 'book-scoops'
- **Refuse** to respond to emails, texts, messages, calls etc. outside working hours. Set limits!
- **Do not** engage in scribing activities.
- **Do not** attend employer-led training (except in respect of legitimate safeguarding)
- **Do not** attend Area Learning Community (ALC) or Pathways into Partnership meetings or activities
- **Boycott** Consultations (responses or meetings)

Note 1 In general, members should, at both system and school level, take due cognisance of any educational or care plan for the young persons in their charge who have special educational needs and ensure they are not negatively impacted as a consequence of this industrial action.

Note 2 The term 'cover' refers to any occasion where the Teacher normally responsible for teaching the class is absent and a teaching colleague is required to teach the class. Cover therefore is included within the teaching limit of 25 hours in any week in a primary school or special school and 23.5 hours in any week in a secondary school, as specified under the 1987 Regulations (Schedule 3, Regulation 5, Paragraph 9).

Note 3 Unremunerated and voluntary/extra-curricular activities

- i) "Unremunerated" duties include any duty which you undertake for which you are not paid the 'going rate'. This includes duties that do, should or used to, attract remuneration by way of a Teaching Allowance.
- ii) "Voluntary" activities include extra-curricular work with school teams, music/drama productions and clubs. These voluntary activities have always been 'voluntary' but in some cases (and within particular school cultures) are often presented as obligatory. Where any activities have been imposed on a member, then the Action (short of strike action) instructions enable members to withdraw with adequate notice from these activities. The withdrawal of voluntary engagement in activities outside of school sessions has always been the prerogative of the volunteering teacher. Members are free to relinquish these duties or activities and any time (preferably with adequate notice). Where members have made a professional judgement and have volunteered freely to provide extra support for certain pupils outside school sessions, these can continue.

Principals' Actions: Principal members

- **Boycott** data provision outside of Annual census or monthly returns (Appendix 2 List).
- **Do not** write Annual Board of Governor Reports.
- **Do not** engage with or enact any process associated with redundancy procedures within schools that are as a direct consequence of budgetary constraints, other than category one redundancies.
- **Do not** forward Governors Minutes to employers.
- **Limit** financial plans to one per year only and limit SDP to one year.
- **Do not** facilitate any school visits by School Development Services (SDS), except for legitimate safeguarding issues or Formal Intervention.
- **Boycott** engagement with School Improvement Professionals (SIPs).
- **Refuse** to provide information to employers re: staff participating in lawful industrial action.
- **Refuse** to facilitate any activity in relation to the reconstitution of the Boards of Governors.

Principal members should, at both system and school level, take due cognisance of any educational or care plan for the young persons in their charge who have special educational needs and ensure they are not negatively impacted as a consequence of this industrial action.

Appendix 2: Leadership Members – Current Action Short of Strike: Appendix 1 (further to Action Point 28)

Principal members are not to provide information or data to the employing authorities relating to staff or pupils outside of the Annual Census and monthly return.

Refuse to provide information, data or financial planning to employers and or other bodies whether directly or indirectly and refuse to provide data which is available elsewhere.

You should refuse any request from the employers related to:

- TSN
- Engage III Planner
- SEND Funding Audit
- Healthy Happy Minds MMRs
- CCEA Adaptive Assessments
- TIS
- 3-year financial plan
- NI School Omnibus Survey
- PISA
- EDIS
- Attendance verification for EA transport parental payment
- Mandatory return on teaching vacancies • Teacher Validation Exercise
- School Meals Uptake data collection
- Resource provision staffing 22-23
- EWO audits
- EA Anti-bullying Reaching Out Surveys
- EA Language consultations
- Survey of school leavers
- CCEA Principal Forum • Government Land and Property Asset Register Validation
- Annual Schools Stock take & Capital Assets Verification
- Extended School Annual Report
- Support Staff Survey
- Digital devices plan
- Holidays & closures notifications
- Assessment Data
- Consultations

You should refuse to provide any other form of data or information that can be obtained from elsewhere or that has been provided previously.

Any data submitted should be in the form of a paper copy.





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