

Update on SNCT Working Groups 28 February 2007

Conditions of Service Working Group

The working group has produced, with the assistance of the technical sub-group, an updated version of the SNCT Handbook which contains The National Scheme of Salaries and Conditions of Service for Teachers and Associated Professionals. The remit of the group was to bring together the provisions of the previous Scheme ('Yellow Book') and SNCT Circulars and to make minor amendments to improve accessibility and to meet the requirements of changes in legislation. The purpose of this process was not to renegotiate terms and conditions.

There are two main issues that have not been possible to resolve. The first is the issue of conservation following a second job sizing which occurs during an existing period of cash conservation. The second is the definition/list of 'practical classes'. The practical class issue will be reconsidered by the Conditions of Service Working Group as part of its future work.

The draft SNCT Handbook will be considered in full under Item 4 of the agenda and is presented to the SNCT for approval. Following approval, powers will be required for the Group to finalise the draft and powers will be required for the Joint Chairs to issue the Handbook prior to the summer in advance of the proposed implementation date of 1 August 2007.

On other matters, the technical group dealing with Educational Psychologists, Quality Improvement Officers and Education Support Officers is scheduled to meet on the 29 March.

A new technical group has been established to look at career breaks and sabbaticals. The first meeting took place on the 15 February to establish the remit of the group and undertake an initial exploration of the subject. It was agreed that local authorities would be surveyed in relation to existing career break/sabbatical schemes that were in place for other local authority employees. The group is due to meet again on the 28 March.

Support Staff Working Group

The Working Group met on 17 January 2007. Responses from 4 councils to the Joint Chairs' request for further information on implementation of Annex E were considered. The group recommended to the Joint Chairs that the 3 councils who had so far failed to respond should be visited.

A draft 'Good Practice Guide' on the deployment and management of support staff was considered and further work has been done by members of the group following the meeting. The Working Group meets on the 15 March 2007 to finalise this guidance and the SNCT is asked to give powers to the Joint Secretaries to allow the guidance to be issued as soon as practicable when agreement is reached by the Working Group.

LNCT Review Working Group

The group met twice during February to advance discussion on the Code of Practice on Collegiality. A final draft has been agreed and is now submitted to SNCT for approval.

The group has also considered the evidence gathered in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of working time agreements. The Joint Secretaries have received responses from 19 LNCTs in relation to a short questionnaire issued on the subject of Working Time Agreements. The evidence to date suggests that almost all establishments reached agreement within the permitted timescale, and very few required informal advice from LNCTs. Only one establishment has required formal LNCT intervention.

A further request was made of LNCTs to provide the Joint Secretaries with information about whether the criteria set out in parts 3 and 5 of Annex C of the Agreement have been met. This pertained to the establishment of clear monitoring procedures at local level and a joint evaluation of working arrangements at a local level to assess the wider cultural climate in schools. The deadline for returns was the 20 January 2007. To date, only 15 LNCTs have responded and as such the Joint Secretaries have issued a reminder note asking for returns from those LNCTs that have yet to respond. The new deadline is 22 March 2007.

The information submitted by LNCTs to date suggests that considerable work has been undertaken towards meeting the criteria set out in parts 3 and 5, but that this is very much still a work in progress. The Working Group agreed there was insufficient evidence that the criteria in Annex C had been met.