

## Report of the SNCT Support Group 23 November 2021

A meeting of the SNCT Support Group took place on 23 November 2021. The SNCT Support Group meets as required between meetings of the SNCT. The meeting was chaired by Des Morris, Joint Chair, SNCT Teachers' Side. The main actions items are noted below for the full SNCT.

### 1. Monitoring of the number of Lead Teachers.

The Teachers' Panel requested that information regarding the number of Lead Teachers employed in Scotland be provided by Scottish Government for the next meeting of the SNCT Support Group scheduled for 22 March 2022.

### 2. Recruitment of Supply Teachers.

Scottish Government reported that it was currently monitoring this issue. In addition, Councils would be asked to provide additional information regarding the numbers of additional teachers they had recruited to assist with education recovery. This information was requested to be provided by the end of November 2021. The meeting also noted that there were on-going issues with the recruitment on supply teachers particularly in rural area.

At this point in the Agenda, the SNCT Support Group considered the terms of the following resolution from the Teachers' Panel.

*"This AGM demands that Local Authorities and the Scottish Government end the abuse of supply teachers and lecturers through precarious employment and "zero hours" arrangements and instructs Council to campaign for an end to zero hours contracts and precarious employment practices for teachers and lecturers. This campaign should include calling on SNCT to introduce minimum periods of engagement for temporary teachers and pools of supply teachers employed on permanent contracts with progression routes to placement in designated posts."*

The COSLA and Scottish Government indicated that it was not within the remit of the SNCT to direct Councils on how they should recruit their employees. They reinforced the position that appointment procedures and particulars of employment had been devolved to the 32 LNCTs.

### **3. The National Pay and Leave Specification.**

COSLA agreed to confirm membership on the technical Working Group during w/c 29 November.

### **4. Supply Teachers Portal – Update**

The Group was provided with an update on the work on a new portal for the recruitment of all teachers. COSLA agreed to share the relevant weblinks of providers with the constituent organisations following the meeting. The SNCT Support Group agreed to keep this matter on the agenda. COSLA agreed to invite the new providers to make a presentation at the 22 March meeting of the SNCT Support Group.

### **5. Scottish Government Manifesto commitments reduction in class contact time.**

The Chair referred to the minute of the minute of the previous meeting held on 14 September 2021 which outlined the following.

*7.2 Following discussion, COSLA and Scottish Government agreed to meet to discuss this item and to bring a scoping paper to the next SNCT Support Group meeting in November.*

Scottish Government and COSLA stated that the scoping paper was not yet prepared. It was requested that COSLA undertake an “audit of need” which would require further discussions between COSLA and ADES HR. It was noted that some of the work could not begin until January 2022, following the publication of the Summary statistics for schools in Scotland in December 2021.

Scottish Government and COSLA provided assurances that a scoping paper would be available for the next meeting of the Support Group in March.

The Teachers’ Panel indicated that this issue was a priority and expressed the wish for it be implemented as soon as possible.

### **6. Motions from the Teachers’ Panel.**

The SNCT Support Group considered the following motions submitted by the Teachers’ Panel of the SNCT.

#### **6.1 Reductions to class sizes and class contact time**

*“The Teachers’ Panel calls on the SNCT:*

*(a) to seek agreement at the SNCT for a nine-year plan for phased, incremental reductions to class sizes and class contact time with the goal of achieving the aims of the 20:20 Campaign by August of 2030;*

*(b) to secure agreement for such a plan at the SNCT to be in place by the end of September of 2022.”*

Scottish Government intimated that much work was being undertaken regarding funding and resource to achieve the manifesto commitment of a maximum 21 hours class contact time per week. Scottish Government also indicated that it could not commit to any proposals or initiatives which took place over a longer period than the term of the current Scottish Parliament.

COSLA stated that additional work required to be undertaken in terms of the school estate and future demographic projections. The meeting noted the position of COSLA and Scottish Government that the situation would vary across Councils and between the primary and secondary sectors.

## 6.2 Two additional annual in-service days

*“The Teachers’ Panel calls on the SNCT to seek agreement from the Scottish Government for the granting for schools in all sectors of two additional annual in-service days from the academic session 2021-22 onwards.”*

The meeting was informed that any permanent reduction in the pupil year would require a legislative change. In addition, this change would have to be balanced within the current context of education recovery which would make the change more challenging. For both reasons, neither COSLA nor the Scottish Government could agree to this proposal at this time.

## 6.3 Long COVID

*“The Teachers’ Panel calls on the SNCT to consider the sickness absence entitlement of teachers in Scottish schools in relation to Long COVID.”*

The meeting noted that on 30 September 2021, the SNCT agreed Circular SNCT/21/84 COVID-19 and Long COVID. This agreement provides for up to 12 weeks of special leave for absences due to acute COVID-19 and/or Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19

The meeting noted that work on sickness absence entitlement and long COVID continues to be processed through the SNCT and the SNCT Support Group. The meeting agreed that the SNCT Joint Secretaries should discuss this matter early in January/February 2022 in advance of the potential extension on 1 March 2022.

## 7. Increased management time for promoted staff.

Representatives from the Teachers’ Panel intimated they wished to discuss increasing management time for promoted staff. In response, COSLA and Scottish Government indicated that it was not within the remit of the SNCT to discuss this item. Further, both pointed out that there was no level of detail regarding management time in the SNCT Handbook. The Teachers’ Panel representatives agreed to have further discussions this time at a meeting of the Teachers’ Panel.

**8. Definition changes and reductions in ASN class sizes with reference to Part 2 Appendix 2.9 of the SNCT Handbook.**

Representatives from the Teachers' Panel intimated they wished to seek improvements in the language and definitions used regarding ASN class sizes in Part 2 Appendix 2.9 of the SNCT Handbook. The views expressed were that the language used was out of date and imprecise. In addition, many children and young people had multiple special needs and it was not always clear which one was being used to determine the size of classes.

The meeting agreed to reflect on this issue and return to this item for further discussion at a future meeting.

**9. WTAs and conditions of service of Home Economics Teachers.**

The meeting considered a letter from a group representing Home Economics Teachers. The letter highlighted the lack of qualified HE teachers available to fill posts and the increased workload on HE teachers arising from cuts to HE support staff. COSLA and Scottish Government responded that workload issues should be resolved at local level either through the LNCTs or at school level with specific reference to individual school working time agreements.

**10. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

10.1 The meeting agreed that the next scheduled meeting of the SNCT Support Group would be held on Tuesday 22 March 2022 pm via videoconference.

10.2 The meeting also noted that the next scheduled meeting of the full SNCT would be held on Wednesday 23 February 2022 at 2.00 pm either via videoconference or in Verity House, COSLA.

Yours sincerely

Simon Cameron (Employers' Side)  
Louise Wilson (Teachers' Panel)  
Stephanie Walsh (Scottish Government)

**Joint Secretaries**