

COVID-19 Recovery Committee
Pre-Budget Scrutiny
9 September 2022

1. The NASUWT welcomes the COVID-19 Recovery Committee pre-budget scrutiny as a means to influence the Scottish Government's thinking when preparing the 2023-24 budget, which is expected to be published in December 2022.
2. The NASUWT is the largest UK-wide teachers' union representing teachers and school leaders in all sectors of education.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The effects on society of the COVID-19 pandemic have been deep and wide-reaching, causing long-lasting issues that will undoubtedly be felt for many years. The NASUWT agrees that there is a real opportunity to achieve a fairer and more equal post-COVID Scotland. Recovery should be understood as a long-term process, given the pandemic's far-reaching impacts. It should also be viewed as an opportunity to tackle deep-rooted structural issues affecting children and young people, in all aspects of their lives, which have been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic.
4. The NASUWT recognises the profound impact the disruption from the pandemic has had on the educational progress and achievement of many

children and young people, as well as their emotional wellbeing. This is notwithstanding the commitment, dedication and professionalism demonstrated by teachers and school leaders in delivering high-quality learning during the lengthy crisis.

5. As part of a broader approach to deliver a continuous and sustainable recovery from the pandemic, the NASUWT stands firm in its view that substantially more investment is needed to provide increased capacity to meet the needs of children, young people and families. A long-term, sustainable and properly funded education recovery strategy which brings together the work of schools and other bodies is essential.
6. The residual negative impacts of the pandemic are being further compounded by the current cost of living crisis. Teachers are increasingly seeing the devastating effects of this on pupils. There can be little doubt that the cost of living crisis is further damaging pupils' education, learning and development.
7. The NASUWT has long campaigned for a long-term, sustainable and properly funded education recovery strategy. A comprehensive strategy that brings together the work of schools and other bodies is essential and must form the backbone of any Scottish budget.
8. An emergency response is now also needed to deliver extra help for children, schools and families to provide much more aid and assistance to mitigate the dire financial crisis that millions are facing this autumn and winter.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

COVID RECOVERY STRATEGY

Is there sufficient clarity and transparency surrounding the indicative spending plans in the Resource Spending Review associated with Covid recovery and the ongoing costs of the pandemic?

9. The Government's budgetary intentions are clear; however, the NASUWT is concerned both by a lack of research evidence sitting behind these decisions and by the ability of the planned spending commitments to be sufficient to support a comprehensive education recovery strategy.
10. Although the educational implications of the pandemic have been significant, it is clear that other important dimensions of children's lives have been affected. Recovery must be understood as a long-term process given the pandemic's far-reaching impacts. It should also be viewed as an opportunity to tackle deep-rooted structural issues affecting children and young people in all aspects of their lives that have been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. Other education systems, including those in the Netherlands and the United States, have developed bold and ambitious plans that reflect this reality. To be sustainable, recovery will also need to be manageable for those in the workforce with day-to-day responsibilities for children and young people. It will need to take into account the pressures they faced before the pandemic, the increased pressures they encountered during it, and the challenges they will need to take on as it recedes.
11. For these reasons, the NASUWT has consistently advocated for a holistic view of recovery, based on supporting children in all aspects of their lives, including, but not limited to, those relating to formal schooling. Schools will have a critical role in securing recovery, but they cannot be expected to contribute in isolation or without working in effective partnerships with other services for children and young people that are resourced adequately and supported appropriately.
12. It is also clear that the impact of the pandemic has not been experienced uniformly. While it is likely to be the case that every child has been adversely affected by the crisis, some will have been impacted on more profoundly than others, particularly those who were more vulnerable or more disadvantaged before the pandemic.

13. The budget must recognise and seek to address the demonstrable disparities in experience and outcomes that particular groups of pupils have faced during the pandemic, including those that relate to race, socio-economic status and geographical location. It must give practical effect to provisions set out in equalities legislation, particularly the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and the specific duties and responsibilities this establishes in respect of those with protected characteristics.
14. Recovery and the accompanying budget will also need to reflect the aims and objectives of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including those set out in Article 12 of the Convention on ensuring that appropriate weight is given to children's views in matters that affect them, especially since the introduction of the Convention into domestic law. Articles 28 and 29 of the UNCRC provide the right to education, and more generally to the rights of children to have their wellbeing promoted in all respects, as the preamble to the Charter confirms. In a context where the UNCRC is incorporated into domestic legislation, these become legal requirements on the Scottish Government. If the Scottish Government is genuinely committed to the rights framework established by the UNCRC, its budgeting must address the full range of issues outlined herein.
15. Given the significant scale of the recovery challenge and the need for it to be impactful, it will be essential that it is subjected to an ongoing system-level evaluation, such that it makes a difference for children and supports the workforce.

To what extent is the Covid Recovery Strategy reflected in the Resource Spending Review and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)?

16. While the Resource Spending Review and MTFS documents are useful in setting out priority areas for the Scottish Government, articulating future policy intent and tracking spending in a broad sense, they sadly fall short of linking intended policy outcomes to the realisation of rights. Coherence across such wide budgetary and policy briefs will be challenging to

achieve; however, a condensed overview providing the reader with a clear journey through evidence, intended outcome, budgetary spend and follow-up accountability framework would be a significant improvement.

17. In joining up those dots, it must be remembered that the Equality Act 2010 and the PSED place significant legal responsibilities on all public bodies, including the Government, when carrying out their functions. Legislation requires such bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The NASUWT is concerned that the budgetary documentation will not support the Government to meet the aims of the PSED: listing spending priorities under equalities headings falls significantly short of articulating impact.
18. The Scottish Government should be meeting its responsibilities under the PSED by collecting and using evidence when developing policies. When undertaking national consultation processes, the papers should explain the evidence, issues and potential adverse impact, as well as how they plan to mitigate any adverse impact. Respondents to the consultation should be invited to comment on this information, as well as any gaps in the evidence base. Unfortunately, in almost all cases, public authorities ask equality impact questions and passively expect others to identify the issues and the evidence.
19. The Union is calling on the Scottish Government to do more than just espouse equality, instead seeking out the voices of those with protected characteristics as a priority: this will require more targeted action than can be achieved through a standard national consultation process.

What are your thoughts on the level of detail provided on the provisional spending allocations for Covid recovery contained in the Resource Spending Review and MTFs?

20. There remains a fundamental problem with the current approach to recovery in that, by and large, what the Government was planning to do anyway just turns out to be what is needed for education recovery. While there are some potentially helpful additional programmes and ideas, these seem at best to be bolt-ons to a pre-pandemic policy framework.
21. Any effective recovery strategy needs to be based on a clear assessment of the full implications of the pandemic and how these should be addressed: without a coherent audit of the impact of the pandemic, it is not clear how an effective strategy will ever be put in place.
22. Certainly, the pandemic has had differential impacts on different groups in society: this requires to be acknowledged meaningfully. There is still nothing here, for example, on how the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Black children and young people will be addressed. This is profoundly unsatisfactory. In this context, passing references to equalities are jarring and there needs to be more about the harms to specific groups, with the Government engaging and connecting with pupils and communities who are affected to avoid a done-to approach.
23. Most importantly, a recovery strategy without significant additional financial investment associated would show limited ambition. Equally, without an effective assessment of the scale of the challenge, there is no way of knowing whether the amount of resource invested is sufficient. The education recovery strategies in the U.S. and the Netherlands are far more ambitious in terms of the amounts of money being put into their systems. This invites obvious questions about the sufficiency of the Scottish Government's plans.
24. Greater recognition needs to be given to supporting the workforce. The Government must recognise the extraordinary and unsustainable pressures that teachers and school leaders have faced. The principle needs to be explicit here that education recovery strategies must be developed and implemented in ways that ensure that they are sustainable for the workforce. While the OECD review recommendation about

reductions in teaching time might be helpful in some respects, the overall level of burden faced by teachers going into the pandemic was unsustainable and has worsened during the crisis. Teachers need to know the tangible steps the Scottish Government propose to take to address this issue.

25. All aspects of social policy that affect children's lives, in the health sector and beyond, have a part to play in recovery. This is why a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the pandemic on children is required, so the role of these services in securing recovery can be understood and supported effectively. It is still not clear to teachers how services beyond the school will be supported and resourced to make their contribution to education recovery in conjunction with schools, and, indeed, our members are not reporting the arrival of any additionality to support recovery in their schools and classrooms.

The Covid Recovery Strategy states its aim to make progress towards a “wellbeing economy”. What do you understand “wellbeing economy” to mean, and is there any link with this and the allocations for Covid recovery in the Resource Spending Review?

26. The wellbeing of pupils and teachers cannot be written off as collateral damage from the pandemic, but must be put at the heart of our schools', local authorities' and Government's agenda. The pandemic has strained us all, but teachers and their students have been tested with unimaginable pressures over the last two years. Whilst the country stayed home, teachers braved the frontline of the COVID pandemic to deliver education for our children and young people. But soldiering on against the odds is not a sustainable model that encourages healthy workplace practices, nor does it support teachers to perform at their best. As a result, we are witnessing high prevalence of burnout amongst the school workforce.

27. To achieve the Government's ambitions for a world-class education system, political leaders must make our schools a world-class workplace. That starts by embedding the promotion of good wellbeing and mental

health into the foundations of our school system. Wellbeing and mental health must no longer be an afterthought.

28. The Scottish Government has pledged to develop tools to support local authorities to integrate a wellbeing economy approach into its work. While a welcome commitment, tangible action is needed as a matter of urgency.
29. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, excessive workload and poor wellbeing were cited by teachers and school leaders as among their main concerns about the quality of their working lives. Not only have many of the causes of these concerns remained relevant during the pandemic, they have been exacerbated by the extraordinary pressures that COVID-19 has placed on schools and the staff who work in them. The need to adapt quickly to rapidly changing circumstances, while facing the same range of challenges that COVID-19 brought to every other member of society, has placed unprecedented demands on the UK's teachers and school leaders.
30. Schools have, of course, now reopened their doors to all pupils, but will be operating in ways that have the potential to place even greater pressure on the workforce. Ensuring that in such circumstances children and young people can continue to receive their entitlement to a high-quality education will require schools to implement approaches to the management of the workforce that not only address long-standing drivers of excessive workload and poor wellbeing, but also recognise the scale of the challenges the workforce has faced, and will continue to face, as the COVID-19 situation develops.
31. Teachers and headteachers are very clear about the national education contexts within which they work and how they view teacher wellbeing issues. In the NASUWT Wellbeing at Work Survey 2021, which ran from mid-December 2021 to early January 2022, very few teachers view national support for the wellbeing of the profession as positive, whilst school-level issues were also highlighted as being of concern:

- 81% disagree/strongly disagree that government policies support schools to respond to mental health and wellbeing issues that affect teachers, with only 4% agreeing/strongly agreeing;
- 57% disagree/strongly disagree that their school/college gives the same consideration and support to mental health as physical health, including in the management of staff absence;
- 53% disagree/strongly disagree that government policies are focused on tackling the stigma around mental health, with only 12% agreeing/strongly agreeing;
- almost half of teachers (47%) responding strongly disagreed with the statement 'My country's inspectorate regime takes teacher mental health and wellbeing into account when assessing schools', with a further 29% disagreeing, and only 2% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

32. The NASUWT has identified five key universal principles of workforce-related practice to ensure that schools can become and remain COVID-resilient, and a greater focus on these principles within spending plans would provide a stronger platform for recovery and create more tangible links across wellbeing and recovery.

(1) Allow teachers and school leaders to focus on teaching and leading teaching and learning:

Schools are expected to support pupils' reintegration by identifying their learning needs and providing learning experiences that will address these needs and secure their continued progress and attainment. In order to secure this objective, teachers and school leaders must be allowed to focus their attention and efforts on activities related to their core responsibilities for teaching and leading teaching and learning.

In order to ensure that teachers and school leaders are not encumbered by tasks and duties that do not make effective use of their professional knowledge, expertise and understanding, schools must identify those responsibilities and activities that do not add direct value to pupil achievement. These tasks should be allocated to other members of the workforce better placed to undertake them, or discontinued entirely.

The Scottish Government has also committed to reduce class contact time for Scottish teachers and greater urgency needs to be applied to the implementation of this manifesto commitment.

No school can expect to meet the educational needs of its pupils if it fails to permit its qualified teachers to concentrate on what they do best - teach.

(2) Support teachers and school leaders in the face of unprecedented pressures

Ensuring that teachers and school leaders can meet the learning needs of pupils requires the creation and maintenance of a genuinely supportive working environment. Securing such an environment includes not only providing a workplace that is COVID-secure but also allowing teachers to make effective and appropriate use of their professional judgement and discretion, free from bullying or other adverse management practices.

The management of teachers and school leaders must, where necessary, be refocused on the contribution it can make to supporting teachers to exercise their professionalism.

(3) Focus on teacher and school leader wellbeing

Teacher and school leader wellbeing and mental health, as well as being important concerns in their own right, have always been central to securing an effective, motivated and resilient workforce, capable of

meeting the challenges associated with providing worthwhile and engaging learning opportunities for children and young people.

(4) Attack the drivers of excessive and unnecessary workload

In addition to removing from teachers and school leaders those tasks that do not reflect their role as qualified teachers, it is important that professional activities are organised in such a way that they avoid excessive and unnecessary workload burdens.

(5) Teachers' and school leaders' pay and contractual entitlements

Teachers and school leaders have a range of contractual entitlements (e.g. contractual hours, contact time, planning and preparation time, leadership and management time) that can support the achievement of manageable workloads and their right to a work/life balance and which should not be encroached upon.

These entitlements are more important than ever in ensuring that schools are as well placed as possible to meet the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Current plans to offer Scotland's teachers a significant real-terms pay cut for a second successive year are simply unacceptable and, with no apparent change in approach from employers' body COSLA and the Scottish Government, NASUWT members in Scotland are preparing to ballot for industrial action.

The Equality and Fairer Scotland Statement show evidence where the impact of Covid has not been felt equally across Scottish society. Do the Resource Spending Review and MTFS provide sufficient detail as to how the Scottish Government will provide funding to address the inequalities associated with the impact of Covid throughout the recovery period?

33. The NASUWT advocated that the Scottish Government should adopt the following key principles to underpin its school funding system. The funding system for all state-funded schools should:

- i. provide equality of opportunity and equitable access for all learners, including through the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum, and contribute to raising educational standards for all pupils and narrow the achievement gap;
- ii. ensure that all schools are funded on the same basis, which should not result in anomalies between schools where their needs and circumstances and the expectations upon them are the same;
- iii. reflect the additional costs related to pupil deprivation, socio-economic circumstances, school location and setting;
- iv. ensure the provision of, and access to, high-quality education and related support services for children and young people, including vulnerable children;
- v. provide equality of entitlement for all learners to be taught by qualified teachers and for the recruitment, retention and development of a world-class workforce in every school or setting as critical components in delivering better outcomes for all children, and that these entitlements must not be based on parents' ability to pay;
- vi. be clear and transparent so that school budgets are based upon clearly identified and agreed sets of expectations about what work schools should do and the performance expectations that will apply to them;
- vii. be fit for purpose, taking account of local circumstances and needs and the expectations on schools and local authorities, while promoting public and professional confidence in the system;
- viii. be sufficient in ensuring that the global amount available for the funding of schools takes full account of education priorities and needs and promotes fairness, equity, inclusion and social cohesion;
- ix. ensure that changes to the funding for schools do not result in detriment to colleges or early years provisions, which are also essential in providing education for school-aged pupils;
- x. be responsive to changing needs and circumstances;
- xi. be predicated on consultation and democratic involvement at national, local and institutional levels, including full recognition of school workforce trade unions;

- xii. promote stability for schools and enable schools to plan and organise their priorities in the longer term, and help to minimise turbulence;
- xiii. support the best use of resources, through arrangements for strategic planning of local provision, institutional collaboration, economies of scale and the pooling of resources to meet locally identified educational needs; and
- xiv. ensure that schools in receipt of state funding should not be able to make a profit and that they demonstrate the provision of good value for money.

34. The Union believes it is helpful to identify a set of key principles and intended outcomes against which budget decisions can be assessed and benchmarked to ensure they are helping to progressively realise human rights and address inequality.

COVID-19 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

To what extent is the Strategic Framework reflected in the Resource Spending Review and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)?

35. The broad framing of the strategic framework and the uniform approach to societal mitigations makes it difficult to plan for and reflect the needs of schools within spending and resource reviews. The NASUWT has been engaging with Scottish Government to find out what the Government has done over the summer and what it plans to do to protect teachers and pupils this coming year and, in particular, to reduce the risk of another winter of COVID disruption and illness in schools.

36. With scientists predicting a further significant wave of infection in the coming term, the NASUWT has been urging the Scottish Government to take the following preventative measures:

- Provide additional funding and direction to schools to improve ventilation

National oversight of a programme of maintenance should be provided to assess and improve natural ventilation: all windows should be able to be

opened and air vents be cleared. Other forms of ventilation should also be considered, where necessary. A study in Italy overseen by the Hume foundation in March this year found that efficient mechanical ventilation systems can reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in schools by more than 80%. Research also indicates that keeping CO² levels below 1000 parts per million helps cognitive functioning, which is obviously vital in any learning environment.

- Provide HEPA air filtration devices to all schools

This is an immediate and necessary measure required while schools improve their ventilation. Feedback from our members continues to indicate that the availability of CO² monitors is patchy and there remains considerable variability in terms of their training and use. HEPA filters are a long-used and proven technology removing all types of airborne particles and have been proven to remove aerosols containing COVID-19 particles from the air. For example, a study undertaken at a hospital in Cambridgeshire earlier this year demonstrated that virus levels in the air of a ward treating COVID-19 patients were reduced to undetectable levels when HEPA filters were employed.

- Commit additional funding for schools to cover supply costs for teaching and support staff absences

All measures must be taken to minimise the impact on teaching and learning. Supply cover has been a major additional expense over the last two years and local authorities/schools need to be reassured that they will receive additional funding for this, if needed.

- Make lateral flow tests available for free to all staff and pupils in education settings

Rapid identification of someone having the virus remains a key measure in helping to reduce transmission and wider disruption to learning, so we would like to see the return of free lateral flows tests for staff and pupils.

- Issue clear public health guidance for education settings

While we welcome the continued broad messaging from the Scottish Government around COVID, some specific public health advice targeted at schools/colleges on what they should be doing to minimise the chance of infection would be useful.

- Run a broader public health messaging campaign on vaccination

While there is an understandable focus on booster vaccinations for the clinically vulnerable and older age groups, we feel that this messaging should be widened to include others, particularly given the very low rates of childhood vaccination.

- Re-emphasise the need for COVID risk assessments

In our experience, employers need reminding about the importance of risk assessments so a renewed focus on these, especially for clinically vulnerable workers and pregnant staff, would be welcomed.

- Reinstate SNCT Arrangements for COVID-19 Absences

SNCT Circular 22/89, which outlined that COVID-19 absence would be treated as paid special leave (up to a maximum of ten days) was dropped by the employers' side of the SNCT on 1 July without the promised review of it. We have been seeking Scottish Government support for its immediate reinstatement.

- Provide Meaningful Wellbeing Support to Staff

Teacher and school leader wellbeing and mental health have suffered immeasurably as a result of the pandemic. As well as being important concerns in their own right, these have always been central to securing an effective, motivated and resilient workforce, capable of meeting the challenges associated with providing worthwhile and engaging learning opportunities for children and young people. A wide-ranging programme of wellbeing support needs to be developed which has the capacity to reach all staff who require it.

37. Given what has been learnt about the level of educational disruption and illness this virus can still cause, and with education staff having among the highest rates of Long COVID (according to the ONS), in our view there is no reason why the Government cannot enact these helpful measures. The Scottish Government should look to set out their plans immediately to protect learning and health this academic session

What should be prioritised for funding in the Scottish Government's COVID-19 Strategic Framework?

38. Schools and the staff who work in them must be at the heart of any effective recovery strategy. This strategy will require a focus on the workforce to ensure that it is as well placed as possible to support children's learning and development. Such a strategy will need to encompass the following elements:

- a. action to tackle excessive and unnecessary workload;
- b. allowing for teachers and school leaders to concentrate on teaching and learning;
- c. maintaining of adequate teacher supply and employment;
- d. securing the right of every child to be taught by a qualified, professionally developed teacher;
- e. supporting leaders to support the workforce;
- f. deployment of supply teachers;
- g. innovation and research;
- h. proportionate assessment, qualifications and accountability.

39. More detailed information on the NASUWT policy position on recovery can be accessed here: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/health-safety/coronavirus-guidance/full-reopening-of-schools/full-reopening-of-schools-england/education-recovery-package/education-recovery-position-statement.html>

40. Two examples of potential legislation which would support recovery are set out below, looking specifically at action to address class sizes and poverty.

Class Sizes

41. Studies indicate that limiting class size can have a powerful impact on pupils' educational experiences. The Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) project in Tennessee and the Class Size and Pupil-Adult Ratio (CSPAR) study in the UK supported the view that class size has positive implications for pupils' learning. This impact was particularly evident for younger pupils, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with relatively lower levels of prior attainment. Other studies have pointed to the benefits for the development of pupils' non-cognitive skills (such as persistence and engagement) of smaller class sizes.

42. Evidence suggests that smaller class sizes not only have positive benefits for all pupils, but are also associated with particularly positive outcomes for Black pupils and those for whom English is an additional language.

43. Literature reviews of teachers' reported experience confirm that reductions in class size can positively impact on teacher workload and stress levels. Evidence from other jurisdictions further suggests that reductions in class size can help address concerns relating to teacher recruitment and retention.

Poverty

44. Before the pandemic, levels of child poverty in the UK had reached entirely unacceptable levels. Evidence confirms that in 2019/20 a total of 4.3 million children were living in poverty in the UK, with children of lone-parent or large families and Black children among those most at risk of living in the most economically disadvantaged households. Across this period, three quarters of children in poverty lived in homes where at least one adult was in employment.

45. Given that economic disadvantage is the characteristic that has the most significant impact on pupils' learning, development, wellbeing and life chances, it is profoundly concerning that the pandemic has compounded the financial pressures on many households.
46. A study of families on low incomes undertaken by the Child Poverty Action Group in November 2020 found that nearly nine in ten families had experienced a significant deterioration in their living standards since before the pandemic. The same study found that almost six in ten families were experiencing difficulties covering the cost of three or more essentials, including food, utilities, rent, travel or child-related costs. These concerns are compounded by evidence that the economic prospects for many economically disadvantaged households are likely to deteriorate further in the absence of meaningful action to address these risks.
47. An approach based on the continuation of previous policy in this area will serve only to hinder rather than support the development of a recovery programme that addresses the needs of the most vulnerable children in society. As one example, the ability of all children to access universal free school meals would have a positive impact on addressing the food insecurity that many households with children continue to face. The Government should work with schools to implement these strategies to support pupils from the most disadvantaged families.

What level of funding should the Scottish Government be allocating to future pandemic preparedness and long-term resilience?

48. Education is a human right and a public good. Quality public education for all must be an unequivocal goal of the Government. That goal, in our view, can only be assured where the Government takes an active role in ensuring equality and equity, setting clear expectations of what the system should provide by way of entitlements for all learners.
49. High-quality public education respects and values teachers and the organisations that represent them, and creates the conditions in which teachers and other education professionals are able to work together

collectively on matters affecting them and their students. Public education is not only about education for democracy, but must also operate democratically.

50. Quality public education for all relies upon the Government ensuring that access to education is not determined on the basis of ability to pay.
51. Public education does not exist and cannot be provided in isolation from other parts of the public sector. Quality public services, entitlements and social protections for children, young people and families are, in our view, central to meeting the challenge of quality public education. The Government must attend to this challenge in the round by investing in quality public services. Savage attacks on the public sector, cuts to the welfare state, the removal of social protections and the privatisation of public services is likely to impact on public education because of its reliance on the wider public sector.
52. The contention of the NASUWT is that the Government must address the quality of public services through additional investment if it is to secure quality public education for the benefit of all children and young people.
53. For a significant number of years, the NASUWT has raised concerns regarding the funding of education. For example, in 2014, the NASUWT wrote to the Government to state:

'Through a number of significant omissions and policy decisions by the Scottish Government, education in Scotland has been placed in an increasingly fragile position over a number of years because: (a) the education budget has not been ring-fenced, leaving individual authorities able to divert key resources from schools and providing limited accountability in relation to the overall education budget; (b) there is no real enforcement mechanism between central and local government in circumstances where an individual council signs up to an agreement and then reneges on these commitments after the funds have been handed over; and (c) an enforced council tax freeze for the eight consecutive years limits local authority options in raising additional revenue.'

The NASUWT believes that these issues remain to be resolved.

54. NASUWT members have reported a funding crisis in schools with the following extremely detrimental consequences:

- pupils are being asked to buy materials and books for their courses, or to print resources for the courses they are taking at home;
- limitations on training courses for which there is a charge;
- multi-level teaching and class sizes continue to increase;
- limitations on off-campus places for children and young people with the most challenging behaviours;
- special school provision in many local authorities has been stripped out;
- children and young people in mainstream settings are failing to receive the support they need, and discipline standards are plummeting in classes affected, which impacts on all pupils in these classes;
- large capital purchases in schools, together with the replacement of obsolete or broken equipment in departments such as science, are not being funded;
- some local authorities employ third-party service providers (e.g. for IT), presumably on the cheapest tender, whose level of performance is unacceptable
- timetabled senior classes are being cancelled due to 'uneconomic numbers'.

55. Teachers also report that many local authorities are prevented from delivering their statutory duty to ensure equity irrespective of socio-economic disadvantage due to funding. Despite the policy intention underpinning the Scottish Attainment Challenge, there remains no question that many pupils can only pursue senior courses of study because their families can afford to pay for textbooks and resources.

56. Public services provide a vital social infrastructure, which means that investment in them benefits the whole of society. In addition to the

improvements in services which result from a high level of investment, there are benefits to the wider economy of higher employment and wage levels in schools and other key services; higher consumer spending would tend to be focused on Scotland's businesses.

57. The education system, together with other key public services, has been affected, through the Barnett formula, by the Westminster-driven austerity policy since 2010. The success of Scottish Government initiatives will be directly related to the replacement of austerity and cuts by a national programme of investment in the education system. The Union remains in favour of ring-fencing to protect education funding, the absence of which undermines many of the commitments given centrally.

58. The Scottish Government is able to raise money in Scotland through devolved taxes, and, indeed, changes to the Scottish Income Tax have resulted in significant sums of money for public services. There is a lack of clarity around the budgetary powers held by the Scottish Government and its use as a political football is a barrier to engagement for many communities. An open and transparent national conversation around both the ability and potential impact of reform of local council taxes or the use of new wealth taxes is urgently required. Devolved taxes have the potential to fund the social infrastructure needed, tackling child poverty and creating a fairer and more equal society.

59. The NASUWT understands the extent to which investment in the economy is not entirely within the remit of the Government. However, investment in key public services which have been devolved to the Government is a policy option which the Government can and should adopt, while devolved taxation powers give the Government the opportunity for a programme of investment in public services, including the school system and the schools workforce.

60. The NASUWT would be happy to meet with the Committee to discuss all of these issues in more detail.

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