1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Scottish Government on how the draft budget will affect education in Scotland, in particular spending in primary and secondary schools.

2. The NASUWT is the largest teachers’ union in the UK and the fastest growing teachers’ union in Scotland.

GENERAL COMMENTS

3. The NASUWT understands that the draft budget of the Scottish Government is in the context of the Westminster Government’s flawed economic strategy of ideologically driven cuts to funding.

4. However, 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.

5. While it should be viewed as a positive step forward that in this current Draft Budget, a proportion of spending will be funded by revenues from two taxes established by the Scottish Government to replace existing UK taxes, the draft budget nevertheless accepts that the proposal is ‘intended to be revenue neutral’ and will ‘generate the same level of revenues which we forecast the predecessor UK taxes would have generated in Scotland in 2015-16, had they continued to be charged here’; meaning simply a redistribution of the burden of taxation, rather than any increase. Furthermore, given that the block grant adjustment for the devolved taxes has yet to be agreed with the UK Government, it is possible that Scotland could end up financially worse off following these changes.

6. The Audit Scotland Report listed a number of councils’ strategies and approaches to reducing their education spending, which included employing fewer staff, changes to teacher terms and conditions, increasing classroom teaching time, seeking efficiencies in school transport and reducing training budgets. The Report further noted that ‘Council education services are likely to continue to face budgetary pressures and they need to be alert to the potential impact of increased workloads on remaining staff’.

7. The Scottish Government is facing a ticking time bomb on teacher workload. In the last year, there can be no doubt that the implementation of the new qualifications has driven up teacher workload and bureaucracy. Teacher workload has already escalated to an unsustainable degree, without further workforce reductions being factored in.

8. The NASUWT has welcomed the CfE Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy Report, which was published in November 2013, and its
recommendations, including:

- Education Scotland using the inspection process to challenge unnecessary bureaucracy in schools, reducing its own bureaucratic requirements and providing clearer advice and support to schools on CfE implementation;
- reducing verification procedures for new qualifications and supporting teachers and school leaders more effectively in qualification delivery; and
- streamlining local audit and accountability requirements to the most critical areas of CfE implementation.

9. The recommendations set out in the Report should have already begun to be addressed in current School Improvement Plans. However, there is no evidence that this has happened. A recent NASUWT survey found that 59.6 per cent of teachers were unaware of the Working Group’s existence. This Report could have fundamentally improved the working lives of teachers but insufficient priority has to date been given to its effective implementation. Reduced funding for education, resulting in fewer teaching staff, will compound an already unsustainable workload situation.

10. The NASUWT also considers the comment that ‘the Scottish Government expects every public body to deliver efficiency savings of at least 3 per cent per annum during the course of the current spending review’ to be unacceptable. Local authorities have been trimming the fat year on year and simply put there are no further efficiencies to be made; any future reduction in spending is a cut and to brand it an ‘efficiency saving’ merely supports the UK Coalition Government’s austerity measure agenda.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

QUESTION 1: Given the recent trends in local authorities’ spending on schools, what are likely to be the main pressures on education budgets in the financial year 2015-16? Will there be any impact on pupils and families, attainment, teacher numbers, the length and scheduling of the school week, teacher terms
and conditions, developing and strengthening links between schools, colleges and employers etc.?

11. The Scottish Government must acknowledge that short-term, swift and deep cuts will result in a long-term detriment to the education of children and young people. Education develops the knowledge and skills a country needs to build its way out of recession and it is therefore vital that it is funded appropriately.

12. A tidal wave of cuts has and continues to hit Scotland as austerity measures implemented by the Coalition Government filter down. Critical entitlements to additional support for pupils for example, are under continued threat. Taking Glasgow as one of many potential illustrations, almost £50 million of savings were sought by 2015 meaning there will be 1,000 more job loses on top of the 3,000 posts which have been shed since 2010. The local authority in Glasgow proposed to save £2.4 million through reducing the number of teaching staff specially trained to provide support for pupils with additional support needs. It is inevitable that children and young people, who currently have additional support needs, may in the future not have access to them and thousands of children could lose essential support.

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

14. One of the significant difficulties for the Scottish Government in assessing the national picture is the variations in funding priorities across each local authority, which stems from the removal of education ring-fencing. It is certainly likely to be the case that the current draft budget will negatively impact pupils and families, attainment and teacher numbers and put increased pressure via the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) and the Local Negotiating Committees for Teachers (LNCTs) on teacher terms and conditions as well as the length and scheduling of the school week. However, this picture may be varied across the country as each local authorities may choose a different area to cut
and pupils and teachers could be subject to a postcode lottery of education provision.

**QUESTION 2: How should schools, local authorities and the Scottish Government be preparing to deal with these spending pressures?**

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

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

17. The NASUWT also formally requests direct involvement in all workforce planning discussions and the development of future policies in this area as well as a commitment from the Scottish Government and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to continue to work with the teacher trade unions via the SNCT.
QUESTION 3: Will the allocation to be provided via the 2015-16 Draft Budget be sufficient to enable local authorities to provide a quality education; meet all their statutory obligations in relation to schools; and deliver the Scottish Government’s national educational priorities?

18. Scotland benefits from a world-renowned education system, and this is in no small part due to the commitment, dedication and hard work of the teaching profession who have repeatedly gone above and beyond to ensure pupils receive the best educational experience possible; their efforts over the past year in supporting the implementation of a new qualifications framework being one such example. As highlighted above, however, the current reliance on goodwill in the face of excessive workload is unsustainable and the Draft Budget does not in any way address this issue.

19. Unfortunately, some of national priorities on education referenced in the Draft Budget are quite vague, in particular those referencing Curriculum for Excellence. It is inevitable in the context of a 5 per cent reduction in education spending by councils between 2010/11 and 2012/13, that many national commitments will be placed under increasing pressure as the following examples illustrate.

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

21. The Scottish Government, further to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, have made additional funds available to increase the annual provision of 475 hours’ pre-school education for three- and four-year-olds to a minimum annual provision of 600 hours’ early learning and childcare for three- and four-year-olds and looked-after two-year-olds. There is a wealth of evidence which
demonstrates that investment in early years education and early intervention will pay dividends in the long term for children and young people’s outcomes, as well as saving costly interventions in later phases of education and adult life. While welcoming a preventative spending approach, Scottish children will nevertheless remain disadvantaged compared with their counterparts in England. In England, 42 per cent of two-year-olds benefit from free nursery education, compared with 15 per cent in Scotland from August 2014.

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

QUESTION 4: The Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework (NPF) “provides a strategic direction for policy making in the public sector, and provides a clear direction to move to outcomes-based policy making”. How has the NPF helped the Scottish Government and education authorities move towards ‘outcomes-based policy making’ in relation to schools?

23. While the NPF sets out a number of worthy strategic objectives and national outcomes, the national indicators can nevertheless be a blunt tool in assessing the success of the education system in Scotland. The NASUWT would be concerned if ‘improving levels of educational attainment’ and ‘increasing the proportion of schools receiving positive inspection reports’ were the only indicators that the Scottish Government were considering in education policy planning. To do so would move Scotland closer to the high stakes accountability model utilised in England and the NASUWT believes there is in fact consensus across all education stakeholders in Scotland that such a model should be avoided. The Union believes that open communication and dialogue along with a desire for consensual policy development is in fact the best way to move forward in relation to school policy making.
QUESTION 5: How do the Scottish Government and local authorities ensure that funding for schools is spent in a way that best delivers value for money?

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

25. More than half of all school children in the UK living in poverty are not receiving free school meals. In its 2007 election manifesto the Scottish National Party (SNP) pledged to deliver free meals for all P1 to P3 pupils. However it later introduced flexibility, suggesting that councils could prioritise free school meals for children in the 20 per cent most deprived areas. Due to the tough financial climate, much of the ground the Scottish Government gained in widening access to free meals has been lost. West Dunbartonshire Council, for example, scrapped universal free school meals from early primary provision. Therefore it is welcomed that there is a commitment in the Draft Budget to ‘implement our commitment to free school meals for all P1 to P3 children worth around £330 for each of around 170,000 children’.

26. Three quarters of teachers now report regularly experiencing children coming to school so hungry that they lack energy and are unable to concentrate. It is welcomed that the Scottish Government wishes to work with partners, including trade unions, to respond to tackling inequality. The NASUWT agrees that early intervention at local level is key to delivering improved outcomes for people and ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability by reducing demand on services.

27. Part of the challenge in addressing poverty and raising attainment is the hidden costs of education. The following areas present financial challenges for parents
and contribute to a two tier system for those who can afford the additional costs and those who can’t: the cost of school uniform, PE and educational equipment; lunchtime arrangements and the costs of food; the cost of educational visits and activities; the cost of extra-curricular activities; the cost of travel to and from school.

QUESTION 6: How are pupils’ parents, teachers and communities able to contribute to discussions on (i) the allocations that should be set out in the draft budget and (ii) how these allocations should be spent in schools?

28. Locally, teachers voices are able to be heard via LNCT and other local negotiating arrangements within each local authority. Unfortunately there remains insufficient accountability and transparency on a number of national commitments set out within the Draft Budget. It is unclear what the promised financial support for implementation of Curriculum for Excellence will mean in real terms to classroom teachers on the ground. The Draft Budget states it will ‘continue to support the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Scotland’s approach to learning and teaching. In particular, we will support the development by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) of new qualifications to reflect and support the CfE approach’ but this, as a commitment, is quite vague. Equally there is insufficient detail on what ‘continue our commitment to funding improvements in the quality of teaching an leadership in the teaching profession’ will mean to individual teachers; The NASUWT would wish for the Scottish Government to provide funding for all masters level learning and ensuring funding for continuing professional learning is maintained, but the wording is too woolly to infer either of these policy outcomes.

QUESTION 7: How will the Draft Budget advance the preventative spending agenda in relation to school spending?

29. Investment in early years is undoubtedly a key aspect of the preventative spending agenda. However, despite a commitment by the Scottish Government to provide ‘access to a nursery teacher for every nursery-age child’ and considerable evidence demonstrating the long-term impact of trained teachers in
pre-primary settings, many local authorities are diluting or dismantling their nursery provision. Local authorities have been undermining standards in nurseries by employing fewer teachers and more nursery nurses. In the six years to 2011 the number of teachers had fallen by 12 per cent to 1,500. Statistics from 2012 suggested that one in four nursery-age children in Scotland did not have access to a qualified teacher. The situation continues to deteriorate: Angus Council announced it intended to transfer all its nursery teachers to primary classrooms to save £119,000 in 2014-15. The loss of experienced, qualified nursery teachers deprives children of expert support at a crucial stage in their development. Greater priority needs to be given to increasing, or at least maintaining, qualified teachers in nursery.

Chris Keates

**General Secretary**

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