



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Education and Skills Committee

**Wednesday 24 May 2017**

**Session 5**



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**Wednesday 24 May 2017**

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**EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE**

**16<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2017, Session 5**

**CONVENER**

\*James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

\*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

\*Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP)

\*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

\*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

\*Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)

Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD)

\*Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

\*Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Alan Armstrong (Education Scotland)

Kathy Cameron (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)

Greg Dempster (Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland)

Ellen Doherty (General Teaching Council for Scotland)

Martin Fairbairn (Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council)

Ken Muir (General Teaching Council for Scotland)

Dr Morag Redford (Scottish Council of Deans of Education)

John Stodter (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland)

Jim Thewliss (School Leaders Scotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Roz Thomson

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)



## Scottish Parliament

### Education and Skills Committee

*Wednesday 24 May 2017*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]*

### Subordinate Legislation

**The Convener (James Dornan):** Good morning and welcome to the Education and Skills Committee's 16th meeting in 2017. I remind everyone present to turn mobile phones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

I am keen for the business of the meeting to go ahead as normal but, before we begin, I add the committee's support to the statements made by the Presiding Officer, the First Minister and other party leaders yesterday in the chamber about the terrorist act in Manchester. Given our role in dealing with children's future, it is appropriate for us to have a moment of reflection for those who were injured and those who lost their lives in that dreadful event.

*Members observed a short silence.*

#### **Academic Awards and Distinctions (University of the Highlands and Islands) (Scotland) Order of Council 2017 (SSI 2017/146)**

**The Convener:** We have received apologies from Tavish Scott, who is on a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visit.

The committee has one piece of negative subordinate legislation to consider. Does the committee have any comments to make on the order of council?

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I do not have comments on the instrument, but I think that the development is welcome. The issue and other related issues have been before the committee many times. I know that there has been a detailed process to get to this stage. It is good news, and the committee should note that.

**The Convener:** Does anyone else have comments?

**Members:** No.

## Workforce Planning (Schools)

10:02

**The Convener:** The second item of business is our third evidence session for the committee's inquiry into teacher workforce planning for Scotland's schools. We will hear from a selection of organisations that are on the teacher workforce planning advisory group. I welcome our first panel of witnesses, who are Alan Armstrong, strategic director with Education Scotland; Kathy Cameron, policy manager with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; Greg Dempster, general secretary of the Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland; Martin Fairbairn, chief operating officer and deputy chief executive of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council; Dr Morag Redford, chair of the Scottish Council of Deans of Education; John Stodter, a representative of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland; and Jim Thewliss, general secretary of School Leaders Scotland. Thank you all for agreeing to give evidence.

As is standard, I will kick off with the first question. How can we best link local workforce planning with the national setting of initial teacher education targets? Who would like to begin?

**John Stodter (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland):** I am happy to set the ball rolling. Last year, for the first time, more local information was used in a productive way to inform the process. One issue is the vacancies count. It has been increasing for a number of years, but there has never been a formal and robust way of putting a number on the vacancies, because of issues to do with interpreting what a vacancy is, deciding when a vacancy is long term or long standing and deciding at what point of the year the count should be done. COSLA carries out a survey, but we need to make that more robust and maybe even try to get to a state where we can put a number on the vacancies and add that into the considerations on the intake. At present, the information is used as background intelligence rather than something that is fundamental and central to the model.

Another issue is supply teachers. For a number of years, the ADES view on the advisory group has been that the number of supply teachers is being depleted. The committee has heard about the difficulties that that creates in relation to time in the school and pressure on teachers and headteachers.

We need a more rigorous and careful look at the supply pool and who is in it. There are different types of teachers with different attitudes to how much work they are prepared to do. Some

authorities have permanent supply pools, which might be refreshed every two years. If people go into full-time permanent posts in a school, because they have earned the right to do that, the pool has to be supplemented.

I put all that in the category of formalisation of the local intelligence. Instead of it just informing the model, we should try to bring it into the model by taking a more robust and rigorous look at those issues.

Full account needs to be taken of new demands. There are always new initiatives, such as those on science, technology, engineering and mathematics or on modern languages in primary school, pupil equity funding and attainment challenges—all those issues. There are always curriculum changes and developments and their effect is not always clear—curriculum for excellence, for example, has changed the pattern of subject choice in secondary schools and changed the nature of the curriculum.

We need a more detailed account of how those initiatives impact on schools—how they affect timetabling and what they mean for the number of teachers, the types of teachers and their subjects. In some areas, we could create more robust and informed local intelligence for the national planning model. That is the trick—we have a national planning model, but staffing is managed and delivered locally in each of the 32 authorities. The issue is how we marry those two things together.

**The Convener:** I will come back to that later. You said something about how to interpret a vacancy. Why is that difficult?

**John Stodter:** The system is so large that on any day when an authority is asked whether it has vacancies, it will say yes. Some vacancies are filled within a week, some are filled within a month and some may take longer. The difficulty is in defining exactly what a long-term vacancy is; I presume that such vacancies are the ones that we need new people to fill, rather than existing people. The issue is to do with the churn—it is a big system and there is a lot of movement. On any one day, the numbers of pupils and teachers will be different and the number of vacancies will change.

**The Convener:** Is any work being done to create a process that would make the task simpler? It seems to involve a complicated and murky method.

**John Stodter:** I would not say that the approach is murky, but it is certainly complex. Maybe Kathy Cameron from COSLA, who has been working on trying to get the data, can say more. It is a question of timing, as well—of when the work is actually done.

**Kathy Cameron (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities):** I agree with John Stodter that the exercise is complex. When we agreed with the Government that we would carry out the vacancy survey last year, it was agreed that it would be done when we were coming up to the teacher census, when the information is gathered from councils—that is towards the end of September. In order not to place too great a pressure on councils, it was decided that we would carry out that exercise at roughly the same time as the teacher census, so that councils were not required to gather information twice.

However, the process was complex. It took some time to gather all the information and I think, in retrospect, that some questions were probably not asked in quite the right way. As with everything, there is always scope for refinement and reflection. If we were to carry out that exercise again, we would have early conversations about it so that we asked the right questions.

**Liz Smith:** I want to be clear about something. Is there a definition of the vacancy rate that you accept as being adequate?

**John Stodter:** One of the issues is how we interpret vacancies. When we ask how many vacancies there are and for how long the posts have been vacant, there are different interpretations of what a genuine vacancy is and what a post that is just about to be filled is. There is still some work to be done on getting a definition so that we can ensure that the data is absolutely robust and consistent.

**Liz Smith:** When vacancy rates across different local authorities are published, do they use different definitions and measures?

**John Stodter:** Councils have never been asked to say in specific, hard detail how many vacancies they have at a point in time, unlike the approach to the pupil census. It took many years for the pupil census approach to be so firm and robust that there was little possibility of misinterpretation. The same process will have to be gone through for vacancies.

The vacancy survey was done for the first time last year, as part of the exercise to establish what the vacancy rate was. ADES had been pushing for that, to make sure that we have that bit right before we embark on planning for the new teachers.

**Liz Smith:** Are you saying that, when we are given vacancy rate statistics, they are not accurate?

**John Stodter:** I do not know whether they are accurate. That depends on who filled in the form and how they interpreted what a vacancy is. When many different people are putting in data, the issue

is how to make sure that their answers are robust and reliable. The point at which they fill in the form is also important.

**The Convener:** Johann Lamont has a question on this, but we should not get hung up on this one issue. It is clear that work still needs to be done on it.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow) (Lab):** A school that has a computer science teacher vacancy could decide that it will not find somebody, so that stops being a vacancy, because the school stops providing the course. To what extent are local authorities or schools managing out vacancies by redesigning their staffing? That must have an impact on recruitment for teacher training.

Anecdotally, my sense is that, when we lose specialist teachers in primary schools and in secondary schools, the range of staff that a school has narrows. Is that captured anywhere? Has your group looked at that issue?

**John Stodter:** It is not captured anywhere. I am sure that there will be examples in secondary schools—Jim Thewliss might want to pick up on that—where the headteacher has to plan in the knowledge that they might not be able to get a teacher for a certain subject if a teacher leaves, for instance. There will be examples of that, but I do not think that there is data on it.

**Johann Lamont:** We know that certain schools will not offer certain advanced highers and so on, but I presume that there are core subjects that all secondary schools have to offer.

**John Stodter:** Yes.

**Johann Lamont:** Do you have a role in ensuring that the diversity of specialist teachers in primary and secondary schools is helped by your workforce planning? Otherwise, the process is feeding off itself—a school cannot get somebody, so it stops running the course and does not look for a teacher, and so teachers are not trained in the subject.

**Jim Thewliss (School Leaders Scotland):** There are two parts to the answer. The first comes back to Liz Smith's point about what vacancies are. The vacancies change from day to day, whenever a survey is conducted. What is a vacancy today might be filled tomorrow. A further vacancy might arise tomorrow because of circumstances that a school knew about or because of circumstances that are outwith its control. We get useful information through the survey that is conducted, but that survey is only accurate for the day on which it was conducted.

Do schools remove subjects from the curriculum because no teacher is available? The answer is yes and no. The decision is not entirely down to whether a teacher is available; there are other

reasons. However, to answer Johann Lamont's question, within the complex pattern that has been discussed, it is safe to say that the curriculum will have been adjusted in some schools and that some schools will have come to an arrangement with a school down the road to share the teaching of a subject because they could not get a teacher when the curriculum needed to be delivered.

That is particularly pertinent when a teacher disappears or moves out of a school for whatever reason during a term, when students are part way through a course. In that case, a school has to start thinking about engaging with the school down the road or a local university to deliver that aspect of the course.

**Liz Smith:** My question is not unrelated to the issue that has been raised. Last week, when we heard from Laurence Findlay of Moray Council, we had an interesting discussion about whether councils should be more active in looking for local people who could become teachers rather than hoping that people would like to become teachers and go through the usual process. I am interested in your views on that.

On a related point, do you think that the formula that we are using to plan the workforce is the correct one, or should we make further adjustments to it?

10:15

**Greg Dempster (Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland):** That relates to the first point that the convener made about local information and to the point that Laurence Findlay made last week about ensuring that the training places are where the gaps are. That is important, and I am not sure that it has been totally cracked yet. As an advisory group, we have pushed for a reallocation of places, but it cannot be done in one fell swoop. It has to be done gradually, because the universities need to respond and have enough people in place to train the teachers.

**Martin Fairbairn (Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council):** The information that we have on the current methodology and where the model is working and not working shows that there are two challenges—in rural areas that are outside the main urban centres and in specific subject areas. John Stodter touched on things that we have been doing over the past couple of years, such as engaging with local authority intelligence in relation to specific subject areas and rural pressures. That is the way to go, but I caution care if that is to be taken into account through an arithmetic modelling approach. Many of the issues are down to specific circumstances. Some of the initiatives that we have begun to

undertake will address those things, rather than trying to come up with a perfect model that will provide exactly the right number of teachers in, say, five years' time.

**Liz Smith:** That is an interesting point. Are you suggesting that we are too tied to a fairly rigorous arithmetical model and that we should open that up a bit?

**Jim Thewliss:** The point is well made. We have to be careful and consider the journey that we have come on with the model. The model is much more sophisticated than it was—it is an arithmetical model because that is what such models are, but it is informed by research and is becoming increasingly more informed by local research. There is still some way for us to go on that journey, because we need better information on the back of more expansive research.

If we were to look at the age profile of teachers—we did that in the past, but that was a fairly blunt approach, because the landscape and pension arrangements changed—we would start to consider a different way of identifying where the gaps might arise in four or five years' time. A more sophisticated modelling landscape might better inform the long-term view of the number of people who we should bring into the profession and start to inform, in advance, areas where there might be a shortage later.

The longer-term view from a sophisticated planning model enables us to get more detailed information and means that local and geographical issues can be addressed to an extent. However, something needs to underlie that to identify specific challenges, such as those that exist in relation to teacher numbers in north-east rural Scotland and particular curricular areas in the demand model.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** My line of questioning follows on from that. Fundamentally, you are tackling a supply and demand issue: supply of teaching professionals compared with the need for them in the schools. Are those two elements modelled separately? I am slightly concerned that you are talking about vacancies, because vacancies are the delta between those two sets.

**John Stodter:** We have a national planning model. It looks at the data—the number of teachers that we already have, the number of people who are qualifying to become teachers and the gap that is projected in any particular year—at national level. Added to that are refinements such as leaver rates, returners and all the other issues that affect the populations of students who are qualifying and of teachers in the system, in a year. There is also an attempt to come up with a number that is either a surplus or a deficit—in

recent years, it has been a deficit—which informs the intake for universities.

However, on what is actually happening on the ground, local authorities manage and determine staffing levels in schools using different methods. The various local authorities have different staffing formulas, which makes the situation complicated: we have a national approach, but different ways of staffing schools locally.

**Daniel Johnson:** In your answer, you outlined the modelling for supply of teachers, and you hinted that the demand side is down to local authorities. What method do you use to model that demand?

**John Stodter:** We look back at previous years and are able to see what happens to the profession in terms of the stay-on rate, the retention rate, the leaver rate and the returner rate in authorities. We can also look at the age profile. We model for the future by looking at a three-year or five-year rolling average from the past. It is a bit like looking at stocks and shares; we are trying to predict the future based on behaviour in the past. However, no statistical model can account for the behaviour of individuals or of employers.

**Daniel Johnson:** I totally understand the point about individuals, but you can also talk to local authorities to find out their plans. To what extent do you get information from local authorities not just about their past three years, but about what they plan to do in the next three years?

**John Stodter:** That information is what the partners provide to COSLA and ADES. As I said at the start of my contribution, that is local intelligence. One of the issues for us is how we take that local intelligence and make it more robust. However, it would be difficult for any local authority to predict how many teachers it will require in three years.

**Daniel Johnson:** Why?

**Dr Morag Redford (Scottish Council of Deans of Education):** That is the challenge in looking at the situation as a demand and supply system. In providing teacher education programmes, universities would not normally plan annually, but that is how the system responds, using in particular the one-year PGDE—professional graduate diploma in education—to raise and lower the number of teachers entering the workforce at the end of the year. The university planning cycle does not easily align with local authority planning cycles, which is one of the issues that the new advisory working group will need to tackle.

**Daniel Johnson:** Forgive me, but you are confusing supply with demand. I totally accept that modelling supply is difficult because it is about



individual choices—you do not know whether people will leave the profession and so on. However, demand is based on two things: one is the number of children we want to teach and the other is how we want to teach them—which subjects and in what class sizes. Those should be relatively predictable because we know in advance how many children we want to teach because there is a five-year lead-in time before they reach primary school. Is that not a more straightforward thing to model?

**John Stodter:** We still have the same variables. For example, teachers who want to retire very often do not tell the local authority until two months beforehand—

**Daniel Johnson:** That is on the supply side; I am talking about the demand side.

**The Convener:** Daniel—please let John Stodter answer.

**John Stodter:** That is a demand. If that teacher leaves, the authority has a demand for a teacher. That is difficult to predict precisely. Also, at least a couple of local authorities have threshold models of staffing, so that having nought to 15 pupils would mean having so many teachers and having 15 to 20 pupils would mean having so many more teachers. One pupil either side of that threshold means one teacher more or less than the original figure. If we multiply that across big numbers, we need to get the teacher figure wrong by only one or two to have a difficulty. We could ask authorities to do that—they could do that—but there would be a question about whether it would be more accurate than doing it at national level.

**Daniel Johnson:** So local authorities—

**The Convener:** This is your final question, Daniel.

**Daniel Johnson:** Are local authorities not modelling their future demand in that way? Is it separate from the supply?

**John Stodter:** They are not asked to do it as part of the teacher workforce planning group.

**Daniel Johnson:** Do you think that they should do that?

**John Stodter:** That might be one of the issues, and it is for the group to consider. It is one of the factors that might formalise local intelligence and bring it more into the mainstream of the model.

**The Convener:** I should mention, before we move on to the next questions, that my colleague Ruth Maguire and I met a number of teachers last week. Ruth will ask some questions—we agreed to ask the questions that they put to us. A question that seems pertinent in the context of this discussion was asked by one teacher, supported

by many others: why are schools still run by education authorities?

**John Stodter:** I do not want to flippant, but that is perhaps a political question, rather than a question for us.

**The Convener:** You must have an opinion on whether it is a good thing, whether you think it is the best way to deal with things, or whatever.

**John Stodter:** ADES would not give an opinion on the politics of that.

**The Convener:** What about John Stodter's view?

**John Stodter:** I am not here as John Stodter; I am here to represent ADES.

ADES's view, in any look at the governance structure, would be that we should ensure that all the functions that are required to be carried out at whatever appropriate level are carried out. In the 1996 local government reorganisation, that was the view that we took. Our job was to ensure that, whatever the politics and the structures were, all the functions that protect children and ensure high quality education are ticked in accordance with a functional analysis of how the system works.

**Kathy Cameron:** It will not come as any surprise that COSLA believes that schools should remain under education authority control, for the simple reason that there are so many other complex areas in schools, and the pupils that they work with require other services to form part of that engagement—for example social care, housing and, I suppose, economic growth, which can govern how a community changes and the educational requirements that result. From that perspective, I agree with John Stodter that it is a political question. That is the view that COSLA holds.

**The Convener:** I remind the panel and everybody else that I was asking a question that I had been asked to ask.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** Considering our subject-specific problems in recruitment, do you have any thoughts on what targeted efforts could be made in the professional sectors from which you could draw people with skills? Typically, we discuss the STEM—science, technology, engineering and maths—subjects in that regard. The technical department in my old school was at one point significantly staffed by engineers who had taken early retirement and were teaching for the last decade of their careers. Could more work be done on that targeted approach to recruitment in the subjects in which there are acute shortages?

**John Stodter:** The grow-your-own approach in Moray has been referred to. That actually started

in Aberdeenshire, and involved the University of Aberdeen. The University of the Highlands and Islands has been considering a much more local approach. We have people who live and work in the areas concerned: can we convert them into teachers? The committee will know that that has recently been done in Aberdeen with the oil industry—with limited success.

Much more needs to be done, and can be done, to assess the resources that we already have. In my experience, there is always a temptation to consider resources that we do not have, so it is important to see whether we can convert our existing teachers, staff or employees. Many employees in councils work with children already. If they have a degree, can they convert to teaching?

There is a wider job to be done about a recruitment programme. The Scottish Government has already embarked upon a recruitment programme for teachers. The big issue is that we need to make the job more attractive in every way if we are really to tackle the problems: the shortfalls are significant in technology, home economics, computing and religious and moral education. Physical education is another area in which schools are struggling. We need to focus on those shortage areas.

It is almost impossible to model how many teachers are needed for individual subjects. The point that Johann Lamont raised is an issue. It is a circular thing: you cannot get the teachers, therefore you do not offer the subject, therefore it becomes less popular. It is important that that does not happen in physical education, home economics and technology, and that those subjects continue to be run. I reinforce the point that Jim Thewliss made that a number of schools operate in consortium with each other within an authority so that there is a strategic view of timetabling secondary school subjects. If there is a real difficulty, efforts can be made to fill the gap in whatever way is possible.

10:30

**Jim Thewliss:** In long-term planning, the current and topical issue is teacher supply. Over time, teacher supply has varied and changed for no other reason than the shift in the economy. You have picked a real live issue for schools and for the panel as a group, and there are two aspects to it.

You might well hear from the General Teaching Council for Scotland in the next evidence session about the specific targeted approaches that are currently being taken to obviate the problems that members have identified. In the longer term, however, perhaps teachers are in the best position

to influence people and make them see teaching as a worthwhile profession to pursue. We are very aware of the important task, in the developing the young workforce strategy, to show that teaching is a realistic and worthwhile option for people to consider as a future career. There is a long-termism part and a short-termism part: we have to look at the specific things that we can do now, but we must also, within the model that we are trying to promote and develop, ensure that the supply part looks at the demand part in a much more positive way.

**Alan Armstrong (Education Scotland):** The pathway is also important for attracting people into the profession. We must allow individuals to move from industry or a second career to a third career in teaching at different points in their career pathway and at any age. You will be able to discuss later some of the creative work that the GTCS has been looking at to ease the arrangements for that. The new routes into the profession that the universities are providing in response should also help in the longer term.

**Dr Redford:** The universities have had quite a lot of success in recruiting to the new programmes, although to start with, the oil industry programme in Aberdeen was not as successful as we thought it would be. A lot of local work is going on, particularly in the University of the Highlands and Islands, which is working directly with local authorities and recruiting locally. Our experience is that, within the national system, there is a need not only to look at local information and local need but to recognise that in how national planning is done.

**Johann Lamont:** I have a couple of questions about creating incentives for people to enter teaching later in life. I do not know whether there are figures for this but, back in the day, a person started teaching when they were 22 and, if they were lucky, took early retirement at 55 or whatever. However, as in all working lives, people are now doing different things. What incentives can you build into teaching to encourage people to take the risk of coming out of a job to go into teaching at a later stage? One suggestion is that we should, given the shortage in STEM teachers, provide pay incentives. Do you have a view on provision of pay incentives for teachers in certain subjects?

Also, have you considered ensuring that people who have a lot of experience in industry do not enter teaching at the same level as those who have just graduated, but do so at a higher point on the pay scale? Is that something that COSLA and the profession would contemplate?

**Kathy Cameron:** Those are decisions for local authorities. Some incentives—I suppose that they are called golden hellos—are offered to people in

return for their remaining in the teaching profession for a minimum number of years. However, all incentives must be looked at in the context of the agreed pay and conditions package for teachers.

Incentives are offered locally if the council can support them. Obviously, if there is a need or pressure in relation to particular subjects—for example, STEM subjects—the focus will be on those. Incentives are already offered in some areas. Not all are direct pay incentives; there is support for housing, for example, which is not a direct pay incentive but a form of payment in kind.

**Johann Lamont:** Are there no conversations about having a differentiated pay scale that would persuade people to give up a well-paid job in industry to come into teaching and not be expected to be on the same salary as a person who is 22 and has just come out of university? Are we looking at that as a means of drawing on the experience of people who are at later stages in their careers? I do not think that local authorities should compete with one another, but if they are competing with sectors that pay relatively well, are they willing to pay the extra money to get STEM subject teachers into our schools?

**Greg Dempster:** There is already a bit in the terms and conditions that allows teachers to be paid higher up on the scale based on their experience, but I do not know how much it is used.

**Kathy Cameron:** From the examples that I have seen, I would say that that differentiation is about the quality of the learning and the continuing professional development that the individual has undertaken to demonstrate that they meet the required standard. Individual councils will look at that for each person who applies for a post. Greg Dempster is correct that there is provision in the scale for that differentiation, but there is sometimes confusion around where people can start on the scale and what they think they are entitled to. However, there are methods in the current system to allow differentiation.

**The Convener:** It therefore appears that it is possible to have differentiation, but it does not happen. Is that the broad answer?

**John Stodter:** I do not think that we are saying that differentiation does not happen. The point is that we do not know the extent—which is also the case in relation to other issues—to which differentiation is used. However, there is some discretion to apply differentiation. If the Educational Institute of Scotland was here, it might say that there is an obvious answer to the question of how to attract people with higher salaries into teaching. However, local authorities are limited in the extent to which they can make the pay and conditions scheme for teachers

attractive to people in technical and science industries. As Kathy Cameron said, some local authorities have tried general incentives to attract people into teaching, but the bottom line is that not enough people apply for the teaching jobs. We could therefore maximise the discretion and power that we have, but we would still have a shortfall. However, I am expecting that position to improve over the next few years, given the work that the teacher workforce planning advisory group has done. We should not forget that for most teaching degrees there is a four-year lag between turning on the tap and the water coming out the other end.

**Gillian Martin (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP):** I have a supplementary question based on the discussion so far. Remuneration is not the only incentive for people, because more and more people want to work part time. Offering flexibility in their working life might attract people who maybe do not want to apply for full-time posts. I get the impression that, traditionally, people who wanted that flexibility went into supply teaching, but they are not doing that so much now. Could recruitment advertising emphasise the fact that people can have the stability of a contract that offers flexible working?

**Greg Dempster:** There are vast numbers of primary teachers on job-share or part-week contracts—it is not uncommon at all; it is very common. One of the complexities for workforce planning is getting a handle on the impact of that. If we have planned on the basis that a certain proportion of teachers will come out of training and fill full-time posts, but quite a number of them end up on job-share or part-time contracts—for whatever personal reasons dictate that choice—our numbers can be quite a way out, especially if there is a transition in behaviours over time.

**John Stodter:** That is a really important point. It is a growing feature of the workforce and it adds to the complexities. Some authorities are quite worried about those numbers significantly increasing and about the difficulties that that causes for schools in managing twice the number of personnel that had to be managed before. The national figures show those numbers increasing and local reports indicate that such working is becoming more and more popular. The workforce is changing and the nature of mobility in the workforce is changing: there is less capacity for people to move these days, and they are much less willing to move. You heard some of that from the students themselves when they were talking about where they expected their placements or jobs to be. The demographic is changing.

**Dr Redford:** A lot of the people who are coming into the PGDE programmes would be defined as career changers—the average age of entry to PGDE programmes is now 25. We were

discussing varying the conditions for people going into work, and most entrants to the one-year programmes will have considerable work experience in a variety of areas and would expect that to be considered in relation to any measures that were being introduced.

**Liz Smith:** I seek clarification on what Dr Redford has just said. Do we have reliable statistics on the number of teachers who are coming in from different routes, including from industry or those who come in with bursary support from elsewhere?

**Dr Redford:** You would have to ask the universities, which collect that information annually in the Higher Education Statistics Agency statistics.

**Clare Haughey (Rutherglen) (SNP):** I want to pick up on the point that Gillian Martin made about flexibility. John Stodter said that we need to make teaching more attractive, and Ken Muir has said that flexible training is crucial in attracting new people into teaching, but some of the evidence that the committee has heard runs counter to that. Panel members have talked about flexible contracts, job sharing and so on, but we have heard evidence about a lack of flexible working and job-share opportunities, and we have heard comments that teaching is less flexible than other professions. I am keen to hear the panel's comments on those issues.

**Greg Dempster:** As I said earlier, there are vast numbers of job shares and part-time contracts among teaching staff who are members of the AHDS—headteachers, deputies and principal teachers in primaries, nurseries and special schools. That is particularly so in the primary schools; it is less so for headteachers. I am not sure whether that is the evidence that you heard. There are very few instances of headteachers job sharing.

**Clare Haughey:** Is there a reason for that?

**Greg Dempster:** I know a fair number of headteachers who have requested reduced hours or job sharing who have been turned down. I can relate that only to the fact that local authorities struggle to recruit headteachers and so would struggle to cover the other parts of the job.

**Clare Haughey:** Do any of the other witnesses want to comment on that, particularly with regard to headteachers?

**Jim Thewliss:** Greg Dempster and I come from different sectors and have a different perspective on life, but we have a similar view on how the flexibility of the workforce has developed and expanded over the past 15 to 20 years. I cannot think of a secondary headteacher who is involved in a job-share partnership, but below that level—at

ever other level in secondary education, from deputies down through the whole system—there will be job shares.

10:45

**Clare Haughey:** That runs counter to some of the evidence that the committee has heard. Particularly given the concern about the number of people who apply for headteacher posts, I am keen to explore the rationale for saying, "If you work part time, we're not interested in you."

**Greg Dempster:** There is a lot in there; it is a big question. There is already an issue with the supply of headteachers. Headteachers are visible to the rest of the teacher community, who are the recruitment pool for the next group of headteachers, and those people are seeing headteachers working long hours, reductions in budgets and staffing—both management time and management posts—so the job is probably becoming less appealing.

It would be difficult for a local authority to say yes to a job share, because it would not be able to fill the gaps, so I can see the issue from both sides.

**John Stodter:** ADES did a report for the Government on the recruitment and selection of headteachers—there is a reference to it in your papers, I think. As part of that, we interviewed a lot of deputies and headteachers and we did not come across any evidence that people were not applying because posts were not flexible. The reasons were more the ones that Greg Dempster talked about—the demands of the job; the accountability to children, parents, the authority and the Government; and sometimes the stress of not having enough cover to allow management time to do the job. It was really to do with the stresses and strains of the job and, sometimes, the lack of support.

Some people said that they found the job quite lonely given the lack of support that exists, including mentorship and that side of things, and they referred to budgets and support staff and so on around the school. They saw the job as difficult and demanding, and some of the deputy headteachers said that there was not a huge incentive to become a headteacher, given the demands of the job. Personally, I think that that is particularly the case for women: they look at the job and think that it is a step too far. Given all the demands and stresses, they think, "Why would I put myself and my family up for that stress?"

**Clare Haughey:** I have to say that I find that quite an extraordinary statement, Mr Stodter—it singles out females as looking at jobs in a particular way.

**John Stodter:** What I meant to say was that men sometimes just see it as a competition and take it as a challenge. From my experience of speaking to all those people, I think that women sometimes take a more whole-life approach and think that it is not worth the struggle given the additional stress and anxiety. That is a personal view. Sometimes, men take those decisions without necessarily considering the full implications and see it as a—

**The Convener:** Let us move on from that.

**Clare Haughey:** Yes, I think that we will move on from that, although I am keen to know why the door seems to be closed to part-time working and job shares. If local authorities do not advertise the posts as being flexible, how do they know that there is no demand among depute headteachers for part-time or job-share headteacher posts?

**Greg Dempster:** We know that there is demand, because people ask for it. I know of and have spoken to many members who have asked their local authority for exactly that but have not been enabled to do it.

**Clare Haughey:** So it is the local authorities that are closing the door on that option.

**Greg Dempster:** That is my understanding.

In the first evidence session in your inquiry, you heard Isabel Marshall describe her reasons for deciding to leave the profession. In the first quarter of this year, 17 of our members stepped down from headship or left the profession, and that was all in response to workload issues. In the same period—the first quarter—last year, only five members did that, and none of them talked about workload as being the key driver; there were other issues. Those are just the cases that went to my area officers, supporting people who made that decision.

**Clare Haughey:** Can I ask very briefly about the other end of the profession?

**The Convener:** It must be very brief.

**Clare Haughey:** We heard about the probation year being inflexible, too. How could it be made more attractive through part-time working and job sharing, particularly for the people coming through with PGDE qualifications?

**Dr Redford:** You would need to ask the General Teaching Council, but there is an option just now. When students graduate, they can choose to go into the induction year programme and take a one-year post with a local authority, through which they are supported, or they can choose to meet the standard for full registration through a flexible route, which entails working a set number of days in schools. There is not a support system with the flexible route, because it is not connected to the

structures that a local authority has to support teachers on the induction year programme.

The universities do not really have any further information on that. Students leave us and go into the induction year programme. We do joint work with local authorities during induction year, because it is part of the teaching qualification. The qualification is not just about what students do in the university setting, but about the induction year in local authorities and completing the standard for full registration.

I suppose that nationally we could explore offering other routes to complete the standard for full registration.

**The Convener:** You can ask the next panel the same question, Clare. Johann, do you want to come in?

**Johann Lamont:** My question is on how difficult we are making it for people to become teachers. We have said that there are people out there who have great experience and could be good teachers, but they are not 22, they have not just come out of university and they might not be in a position to do placements that take 90 minutes to get to; they might not even want to lose a salary for a year in order to train. What work have you done on making the induction year of teacher education more flexible?

It feels just like it was when I was at Jordanhill. Students do stuff at university now rather than college, but there is pressure around having placements in a particular place, and there is no flexibility about a student's income or their caring responsibilities. The system still presumes that a student is 22 years old and has family support that allows them to focus and to go out on placements. What work has been done to consider how to factor in people's caring responsibilities, or whatever, into placements? How could you change the induction year? Could someone train as a teacher while keeping their job, by doing it part time, flexibly or remotely?

**Dr Redford:** There are two routes by which someone can do that. The University of Aberdeen runs its distance learning initial teacher education—DLITE—programme with authorities in the north and east, particularly Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council and Highland Council. Through it, local authority employees are supported to career change and complete the programme over 18 months, I think. It is a structured, part-time, taught programme.

Last year, the University of Dundee introduced a similar programme in response to local authority requests. It is working with Perth and Kinross Council and Angus Council. Both Aberdeen and Dundee universities are going to expand those programmes to offer them across the country.

The University of the West of Scotland runs a programme with Dumfries and Galloway Council. I do not have full information on that, but it involves staff being released for a year.

Over the past year, my university, UHI, has worked closely with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The comhairle has supported its employees and other people who are committed to living on the islands to complete a one-year PGDE programme. The authority chose to offer financial support. You heard from one of our students, who has agreed to work with the authority in their induction year—and, I think, for one year beyond that—once they have successfully completed the PGDE year.

There are a range of new routes into teaching, including condensed, telescoped programmes, that will bring new teachers into the workforce on a faster route. In total, there are 11 different programmes, or 13 if we include the new programme that the committee heard about at the University of Edinburgh and the oil-based programme in Aberdeen. The universities would be particularly keen to evaluate the success of those routes, to learn from that and then to look at what is referred to as the traditional model.

**Johann Lamont:** The question of placements came up a lot in the evidence that we got from people who are in initial teacher education. We heard that placements can become a burden and a block. The issue is not so much being in a school with staff, although there are questions about the consistency of mentoring because of the pressure on staff; the issue is simply that people are not given lots of notice of a placement, or placements are not suitable because certain issues are not factored in—perhaps the person cannot drive or has caring responsibilities and has to get their children to school. Do you evaluate your students' concerns about that? Is that then fed into the process? To me, it does not feel like it would be difficult to take into account the pressures that students are under in deciding on placements. Has that issue come up?

**Dr Redford:** Jim Thewliss wants to answer that.

**Jim Thewliss:** Certainly, last year, we were not particularly clever in how we engaged with students and the placement experience, which is perhaps what Johann Lamont is hinting at. We have moved towards a system in which schools cannot opt out of having a placement; it is now assumed that they will opt in. That takes away the process in the university of checking which schools will accept people on placement. It is now accepted that schools will take people on placement unless there are pre-identified special circumstances—for example, if the principal teacher of a biology department has been absent for a period, we might not want to put a student in there. That should change the emphasis and

introduce into the system the greater flexibility that Johann Lamont is looking for. It should give the ability to match a student who cannot drive with a school in their local area rather than just pick a school from the list, because there will now be many more schools on the list than there ever were before.

**Johann Lamont:** If we are actively trying to encourage people who already have a working life and who have families to go into teaching, because we recognise that there is a shortage, why make it difficult for them by offering them placements that they cannot manage because they are older and have family responsibilities?

**Jim Thewliss:** The new approach factors in the individual difficulty experienced by a student, whether they are a 22-year-old or a 41-year-old. It gives the university a significantly greater degree of flexibility and an ability to match the particular demands, requirements and circumstances of students with the schools that are available.

**Dr Redford:** For the past year, universities and local authorities have been working closely with the GTCS, which manages the student placement system, and a number of refinements have been made, including that key one about more schools being automatically available for placements. It is actually quite rare for students to be asked to travel a considerable distance.

It is really important that the committee knows that the universities work closely with students on placements, listening to them and responding to the issues that they raise, as we do in respect of other aspects of the programmes that they follow.

**Johann Lamont:** The issue is significant and was definitely a theme in the evidence that we heard. The witnesses felt that their circumstances are not factored in, which creates unnecessary stress in what is a stressful time anyway.

Previously, schools had to opt in, but now they have to opt out. What factors are taken into account in that? Why might schools opt out?

**Jim Thewliss:** There would be specific, identified factors in a school or, in the secondary sector, in individual departments within a school.

11:00

**Ross Thomson (North East Scotland) (Con):** I want to return to the issue of mobility, particularly in the north-east, which is the region that I represent and where, as you know, there are chronic shortages in teachers. We have heard from trainee teachers that there is a tendency to gravitate towards the central belt and take positions there.

We have heard about the local incentives—you mentioned some of them, such as golden hellos and help with rent and housing—but when I asked the question last week, Laurence Findlay from Moray Council said that he would favour a national scheme with some local flexibility, purely because of the risk of local authorities trying to outbid each other. What do you think the risk is around competition between local authorities? What sort of national scheme could be beneficial and what that would look like?

**Greg Dempster:** Before my colleagues jump in, I want to say something about the risk. There is a real need to ensure that people are trained in the right places. Previously there has been a structural unemployment problem in the teaching workforce: people in the central belt have not had jobs and were not willing to travel, while there were not enough people in the north-east, Highland or Dumfries and Galloway. The situation has worsened because there are supply issues all around the country at the moment.

The evidence that you were given by both panels of witnesses was that the students were not willing to travel—they spoke about going somewhere that they were familiar with. The local knowledge about the demand for teachers in a particular area should feed into how many training places are available in each university.

**John Stodter:** We are likely to end up with a national model, in terms of both the teacher workforce planning and the individual initiatives, supplemented by local partnerships, such as the consortium in the north-east in which a group of local authorities and universities try to fill particular needs for their particular areas. That is how it is likely to pan out.

It is worth reinforcing Greg Dempster's point. The figures suggest that if we trained all the people in the places where there is demand and we were able to match that structurally and geographically, we would have much less difficulty.

There are a lot of demands on schools in meeting the demand for places. A school in the centre of Glasgow could get several requests from one university that might cover the four-year course, and from other universities, all at the same time. It is quite difficult to meet the demand for places in general and it is a particular challenge for schools and universities to meet everyone's individual needs in terms of where they want those places.

When I worked in Aberdeen, I found that the university tended to gravitate towards the city and the centre of the city, as opposed to Aberdeenshire and Moray, because it was more convenient and there were cost implications in

sending students and tutors all the way out to the far-flung places.

A number of factors are at play in how we structure the system so that we train people in the places where they are likely to end up. The research shows that most student teachers end up in the areas in which they trained.

**Martin Fairbairn:** There is some evidence in Scotland that financial incentives have had the effect of encouraging people who do not originally come from rural areas to move into a rural area. However, there is evidence from down south that that is not effective because although people might move into an area and take the money for the initial period, the retention rate—if they are not originally from that area—can be pretty poor.

John Stodter is right to say that we need to start further back in the process and encourage people in an area to think about a teaching career. That is a more sustainable approach. In other words, it is not necessarily just about money; it is also about a more sophisticated way of thinking on how to tackle some of those issues.

**Ross Thomson:** Of course. Thank you.

I would like to pick up on one of Dr Redford's earlier answers, about the scheme in Aberdeen that helps those who have been made redundant from the oil and gas industry into teaching. I presume that that is the transition training fund—is that right?

**Dr Redford:** Yes.

**Ross Thomson:** You said that the scheme had not been a success, and you are right that, in particular, the numbers of those who have gone into the teaching profession have been really low. Why do you think that is and what do you think could have been—or could be—done differently?

**Dr Redford:** I do not have detailed information, but I understand that some of the people who came into the scheme perhaps did not have a full understanding of what they were about to undertake in schools. Their initial experience in schools was not the career that they thought they were going into. I think that those are the main reasons why some people began the programme and then dropped out. John Stodter might have more information. No—he is shaking his head. I am sorry.

**Ross Thomson:** That is okay.

The number of registered supply teachers has fallen across the north of Scotland. In Aberdeen city there has been a 30 per cent drop in the number, with older teachers making up the majority of supply teachers. What is putting people off? Is it changes in the curriculum, or the greater workload, which we have spoken about already,

particularly in relation to headteachers? Why are we seeing such a fall in the number of supply teachers, particularly when we need people in the classrooms, given the level of vacancies?

**Martin Fairbairn:** I would argue that, through the various bits of work that we are doing in the advisory group, we are getting more accurate over time in predicting the national picture—the total requirement for teaching versus the total number of teachers who are available. Some of you may remember that seven or eight years ago we had an opposite problem, which we have already touched on. Arguably, we had too many teachers and there was a huge concern about jobs.

Rather perversely, because the prediction has become more accurate, there will naturally be fewer people available for the part of the market—if we can call it that—that is at the edges, which includes supply teaching. There are other aspects of supply teaching on which I am not so well qualified to comment—other colleagues can come in on them—but the general point is that as we get more precise about the predictions, things will become much tighter round the edges.

**John Stodter:** The ADES view has always been that we need at least 10 per cent more than the planned workforce in order to have enough teachers to cover the day in February when everybody gets flu. Of course, that is a tricky act to pull off, because we then have teachers on the supply list who would much rather be doing more work—more regular or guaranteed work, or full-time work. Hence, a number of authorities have permanent supply pools that they refresh every two years.

I think that the lack of supply teachers is a symptom of the fact that there are fewer people available for work as teachers. That pool went down in the same way that the supply of teachers went down. When supply jobs come up, they are perhaps being filled in part from the group of staff that you talked about who have retired and are happy to do a day or two per week, but also from another group who are looking for full-time employment. Traditionally, 20 years ago, supply teaching was the route into full-time employment for many teachers. Many people started that way in order to get their foot in the door—to get some experience and a reputation before getting a full-time job.

There is a huge balancing act to be done. If the Government gets the number slightly over, there will be lots of complaints, as there were eight or nine years ago, about teachers being unemployed and being trained for unemployment—you can hear the headlines. I remember Michael Russell answering that question on a radio phone-in programme. However, if we get it wrong the other way and authorities cannot staff their schools, it is

difficult for them to fulfil their statutory obligations to provide education. It is a very fine balancing act and I find it amazing how close the Government manages to get the figures. It is a tricky one.

**Jim Thewliss:** I have two points to make—John Stodter just talked about one of them—about the make-up of the supply pool 10 to 15 years ago. John has described well how young people came out of initial teacher education and found themselves without a job but in the supply pool, where they fulfilled a function for schools but also gained experience that would perhaps lead them into a job. Moving forward to a point when there was an increasing teacher shortage, those people were gradually incorporated and assimilated into the system. The other part of the supply pool make-up was folk who had retired but felt that they still had something to offer to the profession. They did that by entering the supply pool and supporting schools in that way. Again, moving forward from 10 or 15 years ago, the demography is now such that those people no longer feel able to do that.

In another period of teacher shortages, the soak up into the system has diminished the supply pool in terms of graduates coming in, and people who have returned to teaching and entered the supply pool have suddenly become incorporated in the system. However, the older members of the supply pool have decided that life holds things for them other than being a teacher every day. Hence we are in the cyclical situation that we are in just now.

**Ross Thomson:** We have touched on the flexibility of the GTCS criteria. Do you agree that there should be more flexibility to allow highly skilled individuals—who may have some experience of teaching abroad, in languages, or through youth work—to enter teaching? Do you believe that a Teach First-style system would be one option for providing that flexibility?

**Dr Redford:** Universities do not believe that the Teach First structure that has been used in England and Wales offers the same depth of learning or the same opportunities to establish a professional identity and develop skills. Teach First employees are based in schools and have, in recent years, completed a postgraduate certificate on a part-time basis while teaching. The council of deans feels quite strongly that the model that we have developed in Scotland—particularly the one-year PGDE qualification, which combines half the time spent in university, establishing the learning and professional reflective skills that someone needs to be able to respond to different teaching situations, with half the time spent in schools, working with experienced practitioners—is a stronger way to develop the workforce. It is also a way in which to bring people into the teaching workforce and retain them there. The statistics



show that the number of people who are retained after completing the Teach First programme is much lower.

The Teach First programme developed originally from Teach America and other programmes in other countries. It is about the development of management and entrepreneurial skills, and the focus in the programme that has been established in England—and which has been stopped in Wales—is very much about providing some community experience and people then leaving the teaching workforce. Universities believe that, at the moment, our national challenge is to bring people into the teaching workforce and retain them there. There was an advert in *The Guardian* last week, in which PricewaterhouseCoopers was looking for graduates who had completed two years with Teach First and who wanted to go on to a career in business. The council of deans is focused on working with our partners across education in Scotland to bring people into teaching as a longer-term career.

11:15

**Martin Fairbairn:** I have a suggestion, convener. Morag Redford has touched on a piece of evidence with regard to Teach First, and having looked at the committee's deliberations, I do not think that much work has been done on other countries or jurisdictions. The other day, a colleague passed me an interesting little booklet from the Higher Education Policy Institute. It is a research study that looks at the past 20 or so years with regard to the development of teacher education and training in England. Although I do not think that some of the developments in England sit very well with the Scottish approach, there is a lot in the booklet that it is helpful to reflect on, if for no other reason than it might help us to avoid doing the wrong thing. It covers Teach First in part, and I can send the committee a link to it, if that would help; it certainly contains evidence that is helpful.

**The Convener:** Do you have a booklet on education in, say, Barbados?

**Martin Fairbairn:** I will see if I can find something.

**Gillian Martin:** With regard to retention, I note that, for a lot of the teachers who have given evidence to the committee—perhaps the one who was mentioned who said that they were leaving—many of the issues are about bureaucracy and workload. In conversations with a lot of teachers, I have noticed that although Education Scotland, for example, might have made some moves to get rid of bureaucracy or have a less onerous inspection regime they do not seem to be filtering down to

teacher level. What is the logjam? Might there be too much of an expectation from headteachers on their teachers to carry out practices in a certain way, or might it be the expectations that directors of education have of their teaching cohort?

**Alan Armstrong:** Perhaps I can start from an Education Scotland perspective. You are right in as much as teacher shortages featured in the workload review that we carried out, but the prime emphasis of that review was on curriculum planning, assessment and reporting. Of course, teachers, headteachers and local authorities took the opportunity to raise the issue of teacher shortages and, as we have heard, expectations on headteachers with regard to other duties, all of which leads to less time for leadership or preparing for learning and teaching.

Since we wrote that report, the Deputy First Minister has written to all local authorities to stress the importance of taking action. We have followed that through with our area lead officers and have been collecting good practice, which can now be found on the website, that can be used to tackle some of the issues that get in the road every day with regard to teaching. An example of that is tracking and monitoring where young people are and preparing reports for parents, which can take a lot of time. We now have some good examples of good practice in that respect from different local authorities, which are sharing them and have put them on our national improvement hub. I am beginning to see the local authorities responding by taking our report very seriously and collecting good practice that all the partners in the local authority, including the professional organisations, have agreed reduces workload. Some of those moves are filtering down to teacher level.

**Gillian Martin:** Some witnesses have told us that although inspections now are less about people going round with clipboards and making judgments and more about encouraging good practice and working with schools to make improvements, people in many schools are still finding the preparations for and lead-up to inspections very stressful because of the expectations that have been put on them by the local authority or those running the school.

**Jim Thewliss:** If you are relating retention—certainly headteacher retention—to inspections, I would say that that tends to be more of an issue following rather than before an inspection. However, that is another matter.

**Gillian Martin:** Can you expand on that?

**Jim Thewliss:** I would prefer not to. It was more of a flippant comment.

As I think you have hinted at, the inspection regime has changed quite remarkably over the past five years. When I think about the first

inspection that I went through as a headteacher 15 years ago, I can see that the process is not what it was. The inspection is very much an exercise in sharing; it is an exercise in understanding. Challenges will be made to the school, but support will also be offered. The regime is much, much more flexible and responsive now than it ever was. I would struggle to find a link between the inspection process and teacher retention.

**Gillian Martin:** There was one example of workload—I suppose that I was using that as an example of one of the areas in which you are trying to get rid of the unnecessary workload at the top level but it is not filtering down. That was one example that was highlighted.

**Greg Dempster:** I would have the same concerns as Jim Thewliss about making that link, in the sense that it is a sample model. Inspectors are coming through the door of a primary school only about every 11 or 12 years, so it is not a big on-going issue for schools. However, the lead-up to inspection is a stressful experience, as you would expect, and it creates a lot of additional work as schools try to present themselves in the best possible light at all levels.

The inspectorate has been doing try-outs of short-notice inspections—for example, giving two days' notice. As an association, we very much welcome that approach. We have had feedback from members about that for a long time and have been presenting that option to Education Scotland as a potential direction to take.

There were some difficulties around the try-outs. The inspectorate is trying to overcome those difficulties, and I hope that we will see more of the short-notice inspections in the not-too-distant future because we would welcome that approach, particularly for primary schools. There may be different issues in very large establishments and some secondaries.

Our members have told us their top seven workload issues. The first is the reduction and removal of class cover—headteachers in primary schools are spending a vast amount of time covering classes because there is a shortage of teachers. Secondly, they would like more management time or protected management time, or a larger management team, because in a number of authorities there has been a reduction in the number of hours of management time or the number of personnel on a management team.

I think that you had some information previously about the number of joint headships that were cropping up around the country—

**Gillian Martin:** Does the local authority make that decision about the structure?

**Greg Dempster:** Yes, and it is different in each authority. It is not until we get—

**The Convener:** Could you be brief, please?

**Greg Dempster:** It is not until we get to third place that reduction in bureaucracy comes through as an issue. The next issue after that is proper support for additional support needs pupils.

**Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** I would also like to look at teacher retention because that very much affects workforce planning. Gillian Martin has already mentioned workload. Teachers see the environment that they work in as being overly bureaucratic but there are other issues, including around salaries—especially in the early years. Do you have any evidence that salaries cause difficulties with teacher retention, particularly in the early years?

**John Stodter:** ADES does not have such evidence. I looked at a couple of authorities in preparation for this meeting and there does not appear to be a problem with retention rates.

If you look at authorities that have a lower retention rate and at the reasons why people leave, you can see that they often leave to get a job nearer where they live. The main reasons for people leaving are retirement or to get a job elsewhere. All authorities have a system for exit interviews and so on.

**Colin Beattie:** Can I clarify what you just said? You said that there is no problem with retention rates—

**John Stodter:** No. I said that ADES does not have information that there is a problem. That is not to say that there is no—

**Colin Beattie:** We must have some statistics that back up the fact that there is a retention issue.

**Martin Fairbairn:** I can give the committee a wee bit of help with that. We organise a couple of surveys that look at graduate destinations across the university sector, and about 98 per cent of student teachers are in the teaching profession within about six months of graduating. We also do a survey that looks a bit further out—about three and a half years after graduation. Of course, the further out from graduation we go, the more significant the problems in contacting the pool of people who have been through an education programme in whichever area. However, having given that caveat, I can say that the percentage of graduates who are still in teaching remains the same at about 97 or 98 per cent. The figure looks high, and I caution that, the further out from graduation we go, the more difficult it is to be sure of the accuracy of the statistics.

**John Stodter:** The other relevant factor to look at is the teacher absence rate. All local authorities look at that in detail and treat it seriously. It is quite positive, compared with the absence rate for other professions or for other council workers. It is about 3 or 4 per cent, which is average or slightly below average.

**Colin Beattie:** That seems to conflict a little with other evidence that we have taken.

Another issue that has been brought up is the lack of promotion opportunities. The structure has been changed—it has been flattened—and the progression that used to be available is missing. Is it valid to say that, at a certain point in a teacher's career, that would have an impact on their willingness to carry on?

**John Stodter:** That is an issue for the profession. The report on headteacher recruitment noted that flattening of the structures. The differentials—certainly, between depute head and headteacher—do not encourage or incentivise enough people to take that step. In fact, a person can earn more as a depute in a large school than as headteacher of a school that is not much smaller.

Although there are issues about structure and opportunities for promotion, there is no evidence that those issues encourage people to leave the profession. There is a huge step between people saying that they want to leave or that they are dissatisfied with their jobs, and their actually resigning. In the circumstances, you would have to be very determined to resign from a teaching post.

There are a number of nuances involved in getting to the bottom of how people feel about their job. However, the evidence shows that people are not as satisfied as we want them to be in workforces such as the teaching workforce, where morale is very important. That is not to say that very energetic or brilliant teachers cannot be found everywhere. However, generally, we hear negative views about pressure, stress and the difficulty of doing the job without all the resources that were previously available. The last time that a survey showed that teachers were reasonably happy was not long after the McCrone review and the agreement "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century" in 2001-02. The agreement was fully implemented in 2006.

I have been in education for 40 years, and such things come in cycles. I was looking at the issue yesterday, and found that we have had 20-year cycles in which there have been attempts to address dissatisfaction structurally, after which the satisfaction level goes back up to "good". Over a period, as pay, conditions and the economy decline, we see more dissatisfaction.

**Colin Beattie:** Virtually all the teachers we spoke to cited the complexity of additional support needs in the classroom as an issue—obviously, teachers cannot be experts on everything. Have you had any feedback on that? Is it one reason for retention issues down the line?

**John Stodter:** The figures do not tell me that there are significant retention issues.

**The Convener:** There appear to be two different points of view. We get evidence that teachers are thinking of leaving, but your evidence is that although they may well say that, they do not do it.

**Martin Fairbairn:** I will clarify what I said earlier. I emphasise that the statistics that I quoted were on teachers who were within six months to three and a half years of graduation. Some of the other information and input that the committee has received has been about the teacher workforce throughout the whole of the teaching career. They are two different things.

11:30

**The Convener:** We do not seem to be getting from any of the other witnesses any evidence to suggest that there is a problem with retention—unless Greg Dempster is going to prove me wrong.

**Greg Dempster:** As I said, in the first quarter of this year we had 17 people demitting their post. Those were cases supported by our area officers; there might be more cases that I am not aware of. They all cited workload as the issue, not pay. The workload affects people's decisions about applying for headships—that is an issue in recruitment into headship. However, pay is also an issue. John Stodter talked about the way that salaries for school leaders are arrived at. If someone is a depute in a larger school, why would they take on a headteacher role for less money? There is a problem with financial incentives as well as with workload.

**Jim Thewliss:** I want to develop the discussion a bit further. John Stodter spoke about "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century", or TP21, and what it put into the system in relation to support and financial remuneration for the profession. There is no doubt that there has been an erosion of teachers' financial conditions over that period of time. That sits at the middle of any discussion about staff retention and attracting people into the profession. I am not suggesting that this would be a major thing, but teaching can be made attractive in comparison with other professions.

My other point is about the job-sizing toolkit, which is used to differentiate pay grades in senior

leadership in schools in Scotland. It was not particularly fit for purpose in 2000, and the system has changed significantly since then. Much of what is expected of senior leaders in Scottish secondary schools is not captured in any way by the job-sizing toolkit. John Stodter made a point about differentials. Why would a deputy in a large secondary school move to become a headteacher in a small rural secondary school if there was no financial incentive for them to do so? By dint of the job-sizing toolkit, they would not be financially rewarded and they would have to deal with all the upheaval of moving from a comfortable place in the central belt of Scotland to a rural environment. Although they might find the prospect of working in such an environment very attractive, it would not be worth their while making the move.

Using the job-sizing toolkit is like trying to run a 4G phone on a first-generation SIM card. That is where we are with it.

**Kathy Cameron:** I would like to provide some clarification on the job-sizing toolkit. It was designed some years ago, prior to curriculum for excellence. Those who use the toolkit and those who train council staff in using it acknowledge that it is not foolproof, for the reasons that I have set out. It does not take account of the changing landscape under CFE and the increased number of subjects that might be taught.

However, the toolkit cost several million pounds to develop, and I do not think that anyone has the budget to change it. If one aspect of it is changed, everything else in it has to be changed. I hear what others say about the toolkit, but there is a financial disincentive, at the very least, to changing it. Unless someone can come up with that volume of resource, I think that it is unlikely that the toolkit will change in the near future.

**Ross Greer:** On retention, is there a lack of a career progression structure short of management? Is it the case that if someone wants to progress their career in teaching, they must quickly move into management, because there is a lack of promoted posts before that point?

**John Stodter:** That is probably the case. The chartered teacher scheme, which was introduced under the McCrone agreement, attempted to resolve that issue, but I do not think that it was successful. Teaching is a job where people often have to give up their expertise as teachers to take on management responsibilities. I do not think that there is an easy solution to that. The McCormac report hinted that short-term additional payments could be introduced. In England, a system of additional responsibility payments at different levels to reward good practice in developing the curriculum was successfully introduced for a year or two, but the suggestion was not accepted here. People questioned who would decide who would

get the payments, whether the system would be fair and whether it would reward good practice—in effect, they questioned how such a rewards system would be managed and administered.

There are structural issues involved in considering how to keep the best teachers in the classroom. This is a personal but relevant anecdote. I have heard of excellent teachers whose way out was to become a guidance teacher—that was their way into management. That is a real loss because when first-class teachers move in that way, it can create vacancies in certain subjects that are difficult to fill.

**Johann Lamont:** Is the chartered teacher scheme still operating? Do you have a view on why it failed? The idea was that people in that senior teacher role would get a bit of extra responsibility but the balance of their time would be very much focused in the classroom. Has any work been done to assess why the scheme failed?

**John Stodter:** Perhaps Jim Thewliss will answer that question. I know why I think that it failed.

**Jim Thewliss:** As do I. It fell by the wayside because ultimately it did not fulfil the function that it was intended to fulfil in the first place, which was to recognise, reward and promote the use of good practice in the school. It eventually became an exercise that teachers went through to get themselves more pay.

The work that the Scottish College for Educational Leadership is doing provides an opportunity to move on from looking at teachers moving into management, which Ross Greer's original question was about, to looking at teachers moving into an effective leadership role within schools. Under the structure of leadership that SCEL is developing in its leadership framework, that role could be recognised and financially rewarded.

**Dr Redford:** The universities were very much involved in the chartered teacher programme, which involved the development of a lot of masters-based courses that were focused entirely on practice. Although we have continued to offer those programmes, the universities feel that the closure of the chartered teacher scheme meant that teaching in Scotland did not reap the full benefits from teachers following such programmes and then coming back into practice. The Government has continued to support the development of masters-level learning for teachers. Through such university-based programmes, teachers can lead developments within their schools and their clusters and thereby make a stronger contribution to the curriculum and other developments. That aspect was beginning to

emerge in the group of graduates in the chartered teacher programme.

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):**

We had a focus group with teachers last week and I put on record our thanks for the frank and open discussions that we had with them, which were valuable.

We asked the teachers what questions they would ask you, so I will ask you some of those questions now. The first is for COSLA and ADES. What planning do education authorities do for long-term leave such as maternity leave or in anticipation of people taking planned retirement?

**Kathy Cameron:** John Stodter has already referred to the fact that teachers often provide only two months' notice of their intention to retire. That can create issues for recruitment and workforce planning decisions.

Maternity is a different prospect. Those who are planning to take maternity leave give that information at different times, depending on their individual circumstances. The factor at the other end is whether they take the full year's leave or decide to come back earlier, which is a personal decision.

All those factors have to be gone into. Communication, from the teacher to the school to the education authority, is undoubtedly key, and I am sure that there are always better ways of communicating, which would enable clearer workforce planning as a result.

**Ruth Maguire:** You have set out what happens, but what planning is done by local authorities and education departments? I take on board your point about two months' notice for retirement, but I imagine that you often have a longer lead-up for maternity leave?

**John Stodter:** Staffing is a big responsibility and local authorities tend to work closely with headteachers. Authorities have at least one dedicated person and sometimes a whole staffing section within the service or in corporate personnel. Staffing is an anxiety and worry for headteachers, so there are regular visits to schools to look at those issues. Headteachers will be the first to know if somebody is going off on maternity leave or if there is an idea that somebody might retire—albeit that they might not inform the authority formally until the last minute, which is understandable.

Headteachers plan based on that information and begin the search as soon as they know that a vacancy is about to arise. They will start with their staff and contacts and, if that fails, the search will be wider. Quite often such issues are tackled in the staffing round, before headteachers start filling posts with probationers and new people. The

timetable for staffing starts with primary 1 enrolment and goes all the way through to August, ending up with the staffing in the school. Searches depend on how much notice the headteacher in the school gets, but the planning starts early and recruits can be local or drawn from the supply pool if there is a permanent pool. Therefore, known—planned—vacancies are often filled before taking probationer teachers and using wider adverts. It is almost like a set of Russian dolls: there is internal recruitment, then wider internal recruitment, across the authority, before people go external to try to fill posts.

**Ruth Maguire:** On the topic of recruitment, one question that teachers have posed is why they are required to use the myjobscotland portal. In one example, a small school that wanted to hire a support assistant posted on myjobscotland and that resulted in 300 applications for the job, which made the recruitment process pretty onerous.

**Kathy Cameron:** Myjob was set up principally to help councils to cut costs, particularly in relation to advertising teaching posts but not restricted to those. The myjob team at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities monitors advertising regularly, and the savings on both print and online costs are significant—I am looking at a document that I received from a colleague last week. It depends on the type of post. For example, myjob has an engagement with *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland* for unpromoted posts, which takes down the additional costs, so there is an opportunity to further expand the range of posts that are advertised. Other posts are advertised through other online sites that have no additional costs. My point is that we are trying to save councils money by using the portal.

We are also trying to develop a supply portal to tackle some of the other issues that have been discussed this morning, for example recruitment and booking supply teachers for different posts.

The portal was put in place as a cost-saving measure for councils, because the costs of advertising through the print media were becoming unsustainable.

11:45

**Ruth Maguire:** My next questions are for Education Scotland. Again, I will phrase them as they were phrased by the teachers we spoke to—it is not my phrasing. Do Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority communicate with each other?

**Alan Armstrong:** Yes. We have a lot of regular meetings. We often meet the SQA in different national forums along with local government, ADES and other partners around the table, but we also have direct links through our team of

curriculum experts. For example, our science expert is very closely connected with the science senior team in the SQA.

**Ruth Maguire:** I suppose that my question, therefore, is: why would a teacher think that you do not communicate well with the SQA?

**Alan Armstrong:** I would be interested in exploring that issue.

**Ruth Maguire:** So it is not something that you recognise.

**Alan Armstrong:** No, not from our discussions.

**Ruth Maguire:** Another issue, which a previous panel member raised, is the documents that are issued to teachers. The teachers asked whether Education Scotland considers that, in those documents, it treats teachers as professionals.

**Alan Armstrong:** That has absolutely been the intention ever since curriculum for excellence started. Going back to the links with SQA, I would say that if there is a major change in any qualification—say, in computer science, which might be changing as a result of revised experiences and outcomes, or as has happened in science in the past—the materials that we provide are aimed at professionals. They do not tell teachers what to do—far from it. They give illustrative examples of the kinds of approaches that can be taken; they are not prescriptive.

**Ruth Maguire:** Is there a way in which teachers can feed back to you how they receive such documents?

**Alan Armstrong:** Yes. We have groups, and programmes of support for literacy and numeracy—and, indeed, any other on-going development that we might have—always include a feedback loop. Of course, the website also has a general inquiries email address that anyone can use.

**Ruth Maguire:** Thank you.

**The Convener:** That brings us to the end of the first evidence session. Thank you all for attending and answering our questions.

I suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes so that the panels can change over.

11:47

*Meeting suspended.*

11:51

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** I welcome to the meeting our second panel of witnesses: Ken Muir, chief executive, and Ellen Doherty, director of

education, registration and professional learning, from the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

Daniel Johnson will begin the questioning by asking about ITE.

**Daniel Johnson:** As you will no doubt be aware, we have spent the past few weeks looking at the quality of teacher education, and we have also had a wider examination of curriculum for excellence. Given your accreditation role, how do you think teacher training needs to adapt to curriculum for excellence? What lessons have been learned, and how do they inform your accreditation process?

**Ken Muir (General Teaching Council for Scotland):** I would go back to my previous experience as chief inspector of education with Education Scotland, where at the minister's behest we had the legal responsibility to undertake a review of initial teacher education programmes on an iterative basis. It was the best part of six or seven years ago now that inspectors approached the universities to look at their readiness for curriculum for excellence. In the initial stage of what was a two-stage process, we found that they were not as well prepared as we had hoped for; however, at the second stage—or about nine months later—they had shown significant improvement. We have seen a genuine attempt by university programmes to meet the very complex and wide-ranging needs that teachers require initial teacher education programmes to meet for curriculum for excellence, and I would suggest that universities have come a long way.

However, that is not to say that I think that the teacher education programmes wholly cover what is required to deliver curriculum for excellence. We recognise from schools and the implementation of curriculum for excellence that we still have a way to go for teachers to understand the philosophy and thinking behind it so that it can be implemented successfully.

**Daniel Johnson:** In our evidence taking, we focused quite extensively on literacy and numeracy. Should we have a renewed focus on that area?

**Ken Muir:** It is important for the committee to understand that the GTCS accredits teacher education programmes on a six-year basis, and a lot of the programmes that previous witnesses have referred to were probably accredited the best part of four, five or six years ago. We have a fairly significant reaccreditation programme in the coming session, but I would admit that the focus on literacy and numeracy—and perhaps even health and wellbeing and digital literacy—was less prominent when we accredited the programmes that many students coming through the system have experienced.

Last year, because of our expectations and the feedback that we received from universities, there was a strong sense that we needed to major much more on the likes of literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and digital literacy during the accreditation process. The committee has a copy of the questions and the policy on accreditation that we submitted to you, and you will see that literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and digital literacy, in particular, now feature much more prominently. In the past academic session, we have accredited a number of university programmes, and we have commented on the need for some of them to focus more on aspects of literacy, numeracy and some elements of curriculum for excellence.

**Daniel Johnson:** We have also encountered concern that the faculties are teaching learning about learning rather than helping student teachers to develop technique. Does the balance need to be looked at again?

**Ken Muir:** When we accredit programmes, we look for a balance of theory and practice. It is important to understand that although a one-year postgraduate programme lasts for one year, it is followed up with an induction year—a probationary year—that is based wholly in a school and funded by the Scottish Government. The probationer receives a salary, and the year builds on the placement experiences that they will have had in their single postgraduate year.

When we accredit a programme, we try to ensure that there is enough scope within it for students to understand the complexities of teaching. We know that teaching is not an easy job—the folk sitting around the table who were previously teachers will know that. At the same time, the students must have enough opportunity to put the theory into practice, and they must be supported in doing so through the teacher induction year, which is their probationary year. In a sense, we have a two-year programme to prepare students, as much as possible, to become fully fledged teachers.

**Daniel Johnson:** I have one last question. You have pointed out that you are responsible for accreditation, which is being looked at again for a number of institutions, as accreditation is accorded on a six-year basis. Is it a weakness that you are responsible for accreditation but not for considering implementation, responsibility for which rests with Education Scotland? Should the two responsibilities be brought under one body?

**Ken Muir:** There is certainly a disjoint there. Before the university programmes come to GTC Scotland for accreditation, they go through an internal university accreditation process, so there is Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education oversight of the programmes.

As I said, ministers can request that Her Majesty's inspectors undertake a thematic aspects review of an element of teacher education. The GTCS does not have that statutory responsibility although, in fairness, we work closely with the Scottish Council of Deans of Education and what was previously the Scottish Teacher Education Council in taking feedback on the success or otherwise of implementation of the teacher education programmes.

There is undoubtedly a disjoint between our having an accreditation role but not necessarily a quality assurance role in relation to implementation.

**Liz Smith:** I declare an interest as a registered member of the GTCS.

Previous panels have raised a concern about workforce planning, and students have raised concerns that there is a lack of consistency in the delivery of the programme. This morning, we have heard that there seem to be some issues with the definitions of workforce planning in terms of what the numbers mean. Were you surprised to hear the evidence that came from the panel that we had in front of us two weeks ago, which made pretty strong criticisms that some workforce planning is not working very well for student trainees?

**Ken Muir:** I was. The General Teaching Council takes feedback from students, and I was surprised, because our evidence suggests that there is more positivity among the students than the committee heard.

12:00

I am not denying that the issues that were raised were perfectly valid—they were. However, I go back to the impact of the review that was published last year of the Donaldson report, "Teaching Scotland's Future". A specific question was asked about the extent to which students felt that the initial teacher education programme adequately prepared them for moving into their probationary year. The response was that 92 per cent considered the ITE year to have been either effective or very effective, which suggests that although individual teachers and students have some difficulties with the system, in the main it is a system that produces teachers who are as ready as they can be.

As you have heard from previous witnesses, it is called initial teacher education for a reason—it is only initial teacher education. It can be very difficult, particularly where there is a one-year postgraduate programme, for the universities to include as much as they would like, both in a practical sense and to make a link between the theories of teaching and learning and the practice, in order to cover the full gamut. Mr Beattie referred

to additional support needs, and that is a good example. When you consider the range of additional support needs that teachers are confronted with in schools, it is a big ask to adequately prepare a teacher for the whole gamut. That is not to say that the issue of additional support needs should not be touched on—and it is touched on in the initial teacher education programmes.

Yes, the system could be much better and there is certainly some inconsistency, as the recent Scottish Government content analysis report showed on the coverage of aspects of literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. To some extent the way in which one measures what is literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing is the reason behind the level of variation.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland has used the accreditation criteria to identify literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, and digital technology as things that require more profile in the teacher education programmes. In the five programmes that we have accredited this year, although we are giving some recommendations for improvement to some of those programmes, we have seen that that has been taken on board positively by the universities.

**Liz Smith:** I want to follow up on concerns about the variable quality of some of the placement experiences. Although some students were very positive about their placement, others made the case that they were used as cover or asked—more or less—to make the coffee and so did not have a quality experience.

I think that one of the changes that the GTCS has made is to move from an opt-in system to an opt-out one. Does that opt-out refer to individual schools or to individual departments in a school? If I have understood correctly, a couple of years ago we had problems with a lot of departments that were not accepting trainees, and that was part of the issue with the quality of experience. Can you clarify that for us?

**Ken Muir:** Ellen Doherty might have something to say on that point.

The student placement system is operated by the GTCS on behalf of a partnership between the schools, local authorities and universities. We operate the machinery, but it is for those partners to ensure that the information about the students—where they stay, where they are travelling from, whether they have private or public transport, whether they are looking for a denominational school and so on—goes into the system. It is a requirement on those partnerships to ensure that there are sufficient placements and that all that data is accurate before it comes to the General Teaching Council of Scotland. We simply

crank the handle when those ingredients are put into the machine and what come out are the placements.

There is a student placement management group, which has representation from all the stakeholders. We also have a user group, which is largely made up of folk who operate the system at the sharp end. There are a number of students who find out relatively late that they are being placed in a particular school—I recognise that that is an issue.

Four-year students coming into their first year and one-year postgraduate students coming into teacher education may not find out that they are eligible for their course until they have received their SQA results. The SQA results come out at the end of the first week in August. The first placements that some university programmes have in place are at the end of August. That gives us a two or three-week window for the universities to feed the information into the system, for the placements to be identified, for the schools to confirm that those placements are still valid, for the local authorities to confirm that they are content with them and for that information to be sent out to the students concerned.

I think that we have taken fairly substantial steps on the back of last year to improve the system so that folk find out as early as possible. One of the changes that the management group has made this year is to run the set of 18,000 placements for the whole year at the beginning of the year. Last year, we divvied it up by term, which probably caused more problems than it solved. However, if the ingredients coming into our machinery—the data—are accurate, and if there are enough placements agreed between the schools, the local authorities and the universities as prerequisites before the students come in, we can produce 18,000 perfectly valid placements that agree with the protocols that have been set. I know that travel time has been an issue and that some folk have complained about the amount of time that that takes.

**The Convener:** You have already said that, Mr Muir. I suspect that Liz Smith will want to come back to that point.

**Liz Smith:** My query is related to the problem with the accuracy of data. The bottom line that the committee is concerned about is the shortage of teachers. There are people out there who would like to be able to teach but who feel, for one reason or another, that there are constraints in the system that are preventing them from being in the classroom. I was concerned to hear from the previous panel that nobody is quite able to explain exactly why those barriers are in place. What do we have to do to ensure that all those teachers who are validly accredited and who want to teach



are actually able to do so? Where are the blocks in the system that are preventing more people from coming into the teaching profession and getting a good job?

**Ken Muir:** The committee has heard evidence about the status of the teaching profession, and that is an issue. The negativity about teaching in the media is certainly a block. As was mentioned earlier, there is a need to allow folk to have greater flexibility in how they train to become teachers. A good example of that is the teacher induction scheme, which covers the probationary year. There are blocks in that scheme, because it is only for those who fulfil their training on a full-time basis, and it is only home-funded students who are eligible for it.

GTC Scotland has done a lot of work over the past two years with jurisdictions in other parts of the world to encourage teachers to come to Scotland. We know from the survey that was conducted for us by Chord UK, of which members have copies, that one of the reasons for people lapsing from the register last year was simply that they were unable to secure a job in Scotland. Others who lapsed were overseas students who were trained in Scotland but who could not continue their job because of immigration and visa requirements.

Greater flexibility is required to allow folk into the teaching profession and to better meet their needs. The traditional model of coming in as a full-time student and fulfilling a one-year or four-year programme is no longer the only way in. We need to look at ways in which we can offer more flexibility for teacher education programmes and for folk who wish to change career and enter the teaching profession. It has never been a major issue, because we have had a surplus of teachers in the past.

**Liz Smith:** I think that there are issues to do with immigration that are not helpful, but there are other issues too. We have teachers from other jurisdictions who are perfectly well qualified and very experienced and who would like to teach in Scotland, and we want to encourage that. There is anecdotal evidence out there that some schools are finding it very difficult to get people accredited. I know that you have done quite a lot of work to try to improve the situation. When we have teacher shortages, it is vital that we free up people who are properly accredited—it is right that teaching is a properly accredited profession—and enable them to teach in Scotland.

**Ken Muir:** Ellen Doherty and her team have been doing a lot of work on the registration of teachers to try to increase flexibility, so she might want to say something about that.

**Ellen Doherty (General Teaching Council for Scotland):** The question takes me back to a point that was made earlier. There are also people who want to return to teaching. I am always interested to hear about people who decided at around year 5 that it was time to have their family. That is great; it keeps the number of children in Scotland's schools up, as we want. However, maternity leave can turn into a career break and, as the curriculum moves on, the teachers do not want to feel that they do not know what they are doing.

Such people need support to return to teaching, and there are barriers in that regard. We are talking about people in whom the Scottish education system has invested. The University of Edinburgh has designed a return to teaching programme, which will be disseminated nationally. That is one way of using resource that is available to us to enable people to come back.

Diversity in Scottish teaching is important, and we should include in our thinking people who work outwith Scotland and abroad. There is a qualification framework in that regard. Quality is what underpins the work of the GTC, because children in Scotland deserve the very best. Part of our job is to identify quality, look at qualifications, and help people who are on their way into the profession.

As Mr Muir said, the organisation has moved on from just offering the full registration that you would expect a Scottish university to offer to considering the qualifications that people from outwith Scotland bring and giving them provisional conditional registration. That means that people are coming with some of the base requirements, but there is a learning gap. We are setting up programmes for professional learning, so that we enable such people to be in our schools while maintaining quality.

We now have a full range of registration categories: full registration, provisional registration for probationers, and provisional conditional registration for people who come from abroad. There is also provisional conditional registration for people who want to move from the college sector into the secondary sector. We have helped people to bring STEM expertise from colleges, particularly in vocational subjects—the committee has heard about the shortage of STEM teachers—into the school system.

We are not looking at a deficit model; we are actively looking at what people can bring, as learners, and we are looking at quality.

**Liz Smith:** How many potential teachers are on your books awaiting accreditation because they have come from another jurisdiction?

**The Convener:** Please keep answers brief.

**Ellen Doherty:** We can supply definitive numbers—they change daily. I am happy to supply the numbers to the committee. From January this year, we have had about 452 registrations to take forward.

**Liz Smith:** It would be helpful to have the figure.

**Clare Haughey:** Liz Smith asked about student placements earlier. The committee has heard about difficulties to do with placements, such as people being told quite late in the piece where they are going. How long has the GTC been running education and postgraduate education throughout Scotland?

**Ken Muir:** Are you talking about the student placement system?

**Clare Haughey:** Yes.

**Ken Muir:** This is our third year.

**Clare Haughey:** How long have universities known that the SQA puts out exam results at the start of August and people then find out where they are going to university? How long has the system been in place?

**Ken Muir:** I was talking about students who are awaiting confirmation that they have been accepted for a teacher education programme—

**Clare Haughey:** Absolutely. How long has that system been in place? I understand that it is quite some years.

**Ken Muir:** Yes, it is. It is no different from the situation for many other applicants for university programmes, who wait until the SQA results come out at the beginning of August to find out whether they have been accepted for a programme that might start in September.

12:15

The issue with the student placement system is that some of the placement patterns that the universities have for this coming year will start on 29 or 30 August—

**Clare Haughey:** Why?

**Ken Muir:** That is a good question. One question that we ask of the programmes that we are accrediting under the new accreditation criteria is whether those programmes allow for placements to be contained within the system in a practical way that does not create the difficulties that we have had in the past few years.

In order to change things, a different placement pattern or a different time for placements to start in the universities would be needed. Some universities do not start their placements until September. One in particular does not start its placements until January. However, such a

change is more a question for the universities. It is about what they are looking for in their programmes and how they balance the delivery of the theory with the practice on placement.

**Clare Haughey:** But surely—

**The Convener:** Briefly, please.

**Clare Haughey:** If you are the organisation that has oversight of that, why are you allowing some universities to have placements at the end of August? It is logistically impractical. Other universities are able to schedule their programme so that they have three, four or five months' lead-in.

**Ken Muir:** I would not say that the timing is impractical, although for some individuals, it is. However, now that we have the student placement system, when we accredit the programmes, we ask universities about that very issue—is the placement pattern in the programme feasible? Does it work in a way that does not create some of the difficulties that we have had in the past?

**Johann Lamont:** Concerns about late notification were not just in relation to the first term—there were concerns about that throughout the student experience. Are you recognising the changing nature of students in initial teacher education? They may be folk who are older and have family responsibilities. Are those factors properly fed into the process?

I accept that you are just running the machine, but it is what you put into the machine that determines whether it is effective. Late notification makes a huge difference if someone has family responsibilities or whatever. Does the process allow for flexibility in relation to the different needs across the student body?

**Ken Muir:** When the system operates and we produce the placements, there is always the opportunity for the universities or the schools to reject them. Often, when universities reject placements, it is because of the personal circumstances of students.

At the initial stage of putting the ingredients into our machinery, we are not asking whether students have caring arrangements, for example, or whether they have family circumstances that—

**Johann Lamont:** It feels as though you are building in a delay, then. If someone has a young family, they are not going to be able to do a placement that involves an hour and a half of travelling in both directions by public transport. They are physically not going to be able to do it.

Surely it must be possible, if you want older people with experience to come into teaching, to minimise the barriers. Given that we have already heard evidence that people have to give up their

jobs and have no salary for a year or whatever unless they are on a special programme, are you looking to develop a system that is sensitive to their circumstances from the start? Currently, at the next stage, they are having to say, "I cannot do that." That creates a lot of tension and stress for everybody involved, I would have thought.

**Ken Muir:** There are a couple of answers to that. One is that there is flexibility in that the universities can reject the placement that has been offered and can put in a placement that is more appropriate to the needs of individual students. The system does not do that from the off—

**Johann Lamont:** Should it?

**Ken Muir:** We could certainly look into it. The management group that oversees the placements has considered that option because we recognise that, when placements are rejected, it tends to be because of those personal, family-related circumstances.

The 90-minute travel time protocol was agreed with the universities to be appropriate. The average travel time for students using the SPS is 28 minutes; that is not to say that there are not some who are much closer to the 90 minutes. The programme management group is aware of that; as the organisation that turns the handle, we are as keen as any to make sure that the placements are as sensitive as possible.

**Johann Lamont:** It will be worth while to reflect on those concerns and cut out the slack in the system that comes from waiting until someone rejects a placement, given that they know their capabilities at the beginning.

Do you monitor mentoring closely? Effective mentoring in schools is a significant part of the course. There is some evidence that it is difficult for staff to mentor properly, although we are not criticising staff, who have so much else going on. Have you thought about proposals to protect the mentor role? It is important to teachers' experience that they have proper mentoring in probation. Are you looking at that?

**Ellen Doherty:** We are—absolutely. Mr Muir referred to the recently accredited programmes, which have had a lot of attention. The probation year has time set aside formally for mentoring; that is not so much the case in the student year. In looking at the programmes, we are asking universities how mentors are decided on for students in school and we are making the point that mentoring is a particular role. We ask whether the individuals who are chosen to mentor have the skills and abilities to lay the foundations strongly from the beginning. We are working with universities that have developed modules to support mentors for students and probationers, so

that the quality of mentoring is improved across the piece. We know how that can influence a good beginning.

**Ross Greer:** I will be brief, as I am conscious of the time. I go back to Ken Muir's comments on additional support needs. We agree that the incredibly broad spectrum of needs means that every teacher cannot get the full gamut of knowledge in their initial teacher education but, from the evidence so far, I think that the inconsistency between universities and between courses is incredible. We should not take anecdotal evidence as gospel, but we heard that one support needs course was simply an optional module in the fourth year, which seemed completely inadequate. Surely it is your role to ensure that all courses reach at least a higher minimum standard.

**Ken Muir:** That is our role, which we try to achieve through the accreditation process. When we accredit programmes, we make it clear that any electives, options or modules that are not part of the mainstream programme need to be looked at closely to see whether they should be part of that programme. Additional support needs courses are a good example; the criteria show clearly that there is a strong expectation that programmes will contain enough baseline coverage of additional support needs for teachers who are going into classes, either as students on placement or in their probationary year, to have enough experience and support to deal with at least the mainstream areas of additional support needs.

**Ross Greer:** Do you recognise that a lot of the evidence that we have received indicates that that is not happening consistently?

**Ken Muir:** The approach is perhaps not as consistent as it might be—that has been shown by the content analysis report and some of the evidence. We need to remember that initial teacher education and the probationary year are just the beginnings of a career for teachers. When I was teaching, youngsters came into my classrooms who brought particular difficulties that I had not been exposed to through teacher education or in my probationary year.

We need to look closely at how newly qualified teachers are supported beyond the probationary year and at teachers' on-going engagement in their professional learning to understand and know, in a practical sense, how to deal with youngsters who bring increasingly complex needs into the classroom.

**Clare Haughey:** I have a brief question about flexibility in the probation year, which I also put to the previous panel. What is your role in ensuring that there is flexibility to retain the teachers

Johann Lamont referred to, who might have caring or other commitments outside the profession?

**Ellen Doherty:** We are considering how we can support teachers in that. The nature of the teacher population and of those who are coming into teaching is changing, and we need to be more sensitive to that. You will be familiar with the current design of the probationer year. We are reflecting on whether that could be delivered part time or more flexibly over two years, for example.

Some people take the induction year, which is the standard approach, but others, whose circumstances do not allow them to do that, can go down the flexible route, which takes longer and has less support. We are aware of the inequality of that experience, and the GTCS is doing a significant piece of work to equalise the mentoring and the support that are given to individuals to retain them in the profession and ensure that we maintain the standard.

**Ken Muir:** We are involved in a European Union project on distance-learning-based initial teacher education programmes, because we recognise that, in some rural areas, where accessing teacher education is more difficult, we need to look further at distance learning as a potential mechanism for the theory aspect in particular. Ellen Doherty has done work in the European group to look at the upsides and downsides of moving to a greater element of distance learning in ITE programmes. That would open up some of the flexibility that we know is required in the system.

**Ruth Maguire:** I have questions from the teachers who were in our focus group. First, why is the amount of paperwork, or online work, to verify teachers' actions increasing? The suggestion was that teachers should be trusted to meet the standard, subject to peer assessment and line management.

**Ken Muir:** That refers to the requirement for a teacher's professional learning to be signed off every five years as part of a professional update. That was required of us by the Scottish Government. We have worked closely with the professional associations to make that a success, which it has been.

The system requires teachers to log into an electronic system, record their professional learning and consider the impact of that learning. What we expect of teachers in that respect is no different from what would be expected in any other profession.

We undertake an annual evaluation exercise on professional update. We investigate all the queries that come in and the concerns that are expressed. Very few of them relate to the system. Often, we find that the issue is the broadband width or that the infrastructure in the school or local authority

does not allow people to access their MyGTCS account as readily as they might wish to.

Not long ago, I was in a primary school in Glasgow where the headteacher told me at the beginning of lunch time that they were going to switch on their computer so that they could access the internet by the end of lunch time. Those are the kinds of issues that teachers face.

The GTCS gets it in the neck because we operate the system—it is a bit like the SPS situation, in a sense. The truth is that, when we investigate why teachers have had difficulty with the system, we find that often that is not to do with any bureaucracy but to do with getting logged on to and using the system. The restriction is not a result of the system; it relates to the internet and broadband width, which are other aspects of life.

**The Convener:** I am not sure how your response answered the question. Surely the question was, "Why don't you trust us?"

**Ruth Maguire:** There was an element of that. What is your reflection on using peer assessment?

12:30

**Ken Muir:** That is a slightly different question. Part of the GTCS's role is to support and promote teacher professionalism, within which is embedded the value of trust. We feel that the profession should be trusted and that the complexity of what it delivers for youngsters, communities and society generally should perhaps be better understood.

The GTCS's council places huge amounts of trust in the teaching profession. Part of Ms Maguire's question was about professional learning. We trust teachers to engage meaningfully in professional learning and to keep their skills up to date in order to meet the changing needs that youngsters have.

**The Convener:** Finally, and to follow on from that point, how do you make it clear to teachers that you trust them? In the focus group of teachers who Ruth Maguire and I met yesterday, the point came across that the teachers felt that they were being treated as though they were children—or, rather, not as though they were professionals. How do you get across to them the message that you just gave us on how you feel about them?

**Ken Muir:** I hope that teachers do not feel that way because of anything that the GTCS does. In the system, there is a wider issue about professional trust in teachers. Part of our role is to encourage the public to have trust in the quality of the teachers who are teaching children in schools these days. However, a wider issue is about how society at large views teaching and the extent to which it trusts in teachers. There is no question of

the GTCS not having respectful trust in the job that teachers do.

**The Convener:** That brings us to the end of our evidence session. I thank both our witnesses very much for their attendance and for answering our questions.

## Annual Report

12:32

**The Convener:** The next item of business is consideration of a draft annual report. Do members have any comments? Thank you very much. We will—

**Colin Beattie:** May I say something on the annual report?

**The Convener:** It is too late; you have missed your opportunity. [*Laughter.*]

**Colin Beattie:** On page 1, under “Membership changes”, I have a feeling that the date on which Richard Lochhead replaced Jenny Gilruth might not be correct, as the report refers to September 2017.

**The Convener:** You may well be right, and that will be changed quickly. Is that the only change that you have noticed?

**Colin Beattie:** Yes.

**The Convener:** The report must be otherwise correct, then. Thank you very much. Once that dreadful error has been corrected, we will formally publish the report before the end of the month.

## **School Infrastructure (Witness Expenses)**

12:32

**The Convener:** The next item of business is consideration of witness expenses for the school infrastructure inquiry. Are members content to delegate to me the signing off of any witness expenses?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** That brings us to the end of the public part of our meeting. Before we continue in private, I will wait for the public gallery to clear, which could take some time.

12:33

*Meeting continued in private until 12:36.*

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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