

## **EIS Consultation Response – Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, Pre-budget scrutiny of public service reform, September 2025**

### **Background**

The EIS welcomes the opportunity to share our experiences of Scottish education, as delivered by local authorities. The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) is the largest and most effective, Scotland only, education union. We represent over 80% of Scotland's teaching professionals, across all sectors, from early years to Higher education. The EIS is committed to promoting and protecting the interests of Scottish education and ensuring a better future for pupils and teachers alike.

### **Introduction**

The EIS has campaigned staunchly against the austerity cuts imposed since 2010. The education sector is feeling the effects of these austerity measures years down the line, as we battle to restore teacher pay, and to ensure that all pupils have access to the resources and the support that they need whilst at school. At the most recent EIS AGM, EIS President Allan Crosbie used his speech to again call on the UK Government to end austerity, and to bring about meaningful investment in our public services.<sup>1</sup>

The Stand Up For Quality Education campaign<sup>2</sup>, launched in 2023, calls directly for: a significant reduction in teacher workload, an increase in funding and support for pupils with additional support needs, and to build the skills, resources and school culture to address distressed, violent and aggressive pupil behaviour. If these issues are successfully addressed by the Scottish Government and COSLA, Local Authorities and teachers, we shall be able to sustainably deliver quality education for all.

According to the Scottish Government pupil census there were 36,544 pupils in local authority schools with an identified Additional Support Need (ASN) in 2007 - the latest data gathered in 2024 identifies there are 284,448. This equates to a jump of 5.3% of the school roll having an additional support need in 2007 to 40.5% in 2024. The number of children and young people with additional support needs who are now spending all of their time in mainstream classes has increased more than ten-fold from 25,456 pupils to 264,415, or 93%, of pupils with an ASN being educated all the time in mainstream classes. Most of this boom in need will rightly be credited to improved understanding of the additional educational barriers that some children and young

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<sup>1</sup> EIS, "AGM Address by EIS President Allan Crosbie" (5<sup>th</sup> June 2025) <https://www.eis.org.uk/eis-agm-2025/presidentspeech>

<sup>2</sup> EIS, "Stand Up For Quality Education" <https://www.eis.org.uk/campaigns/SU4QE>

people face, and improvements in identifying additional needs amongst children and young people at earlier points in their lives.

However, this boom in identified needs has not been met with an increase in professional support. Over the past 4 years teacher numbers (including those working in early learning and childcare) have fallen every year from 54,285 in 2021 to 53,412 full-time equivalent teachers in 2024.<sup>3</sup> This is a decrease of almost 900 teachers during the same time period that the Scottish Government pledged to increase the number of teachers and classroom assistants by 3,500<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted that the number of school support staff has increased by 747<sup>5</sup> full-time equivalent staff members during this same time period, yet this too falls considerably short of the Scottish Government's own ambitions.

Most recently, in spite of the commitments made by the Scottish Government, some local authorities have threatened to cut teacher numbers in order to make savings. Glasgow City Council, for example, planned to cut 450 teaching posts earlier this year – a move which was only dropped following the threat of strike action by EIS members.<sup>6</sup>

Added to the threat of job losses, newly qualified teachers, and those at the beginning of their career continue to face job insecurity, with many sitting, sometimes for years, on temporary contracts, or being forced to take part-time or supply work because they cannot secure permanent, full-time work as a teacher.<sup>7</sup>

This context is important for the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee to take notice of as any plans to “reform” public services must be cognisant of the damage that has been done by austerity measures, the cuts that many councils are still having to make in light of soaring inflation, and the increased needs of Scotland's children and young people. EIS surveys carried out over the past 8 years have repeatedly found that teaching professionals across Scotland are desperately seeking the resources they need to support children and young people in schools. Many of our members are over-worked and under-supported in their roles and have become weary of repeated new initiatives that aren't supported by full investment or training, and often don't have time to fully bed in before the next set of changes are then brought about. The EIS calls on decision makers to ensure that the ambitions we all share for Scotland's children and young people are met with the resourcing they need.

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<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government, “Teacher census supplementary statistics 2024” (25<sup>th</sup> March 2025)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/teacher-census-supplementary-statistics/>

<sup>4</sup> SNP, “SNP Manifesto 2021: What we're doing for young people” (15<sup>th</sup> April 2021) <https://www.snp.org/2021-young-peoples-manifesto/>

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government, “School support staff statistics 2024” (25<sup>th</sup> March 2025)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-support-staff-statistics/>

<sup>6</sup> BBC News, “Teacher strikes halted as council to drop job cuts” (13<sup>th</sup> February 2025)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9w5zlg705o>

<sup>7</sup> TES, “End the scandal of temporary contracts in education” (20<sup>th</sup> May 2021)

<https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/end-scandal-temporary-contracts-education>

## **Committee Questions:**

In order to support our written response, the EIS consulted with our Local Association officers who provide direct member support in each of Scotland's 32 local authorities. Where appropriate, local examples have been provided under some of these questions.

### **1. How have local authorities been reforming public services in recent years?**

The EIS welcomes the additional capital investment that many local authorities have made to their school estates. The EIS routinely sends out FOI requests to all local authorities asking them to outline their planned spending on areas such as capital spend on education projects, and we have noted the commitments from Scotland's Councils to update and improve their school buildings.

Under the 2021 SNP manifesto there was a commitment to "provide every primary and secondary school child in Scotland with a laptop or tablet to get online – including a free internet connection and the support to use it."<sup>8</sup> As such many of our local authorities noted the roll out of digital devices within their schools. The full impact of this initiative in reducing digital poverty for children and young people and the full impact that it has made to teaching and learning is still to be assessed.

However, many EIS members continue to cite poor ICT provision in schools with increased workload as teachers themselves continue to use laptops that are slow or don't work. Members also repeatedly raise frustrations with poor internet connections when in schools which impacts on the lessons they can deliver.<sup>9</sup>

Our North Ayrshire Local Association noted that over recent years their council has been required to achieve efficiency savings despite rising service demand, rising energy costs and inflation. Initially it was proposed to cut teacher numbers by 90 full-time equivalent (FTE) over two years and by 50 – in 2025/26. This was due to falling school roles but also because they felt increasing the pupil teacher ratio was acceptable as it was the lowest it had been in years. There were also proposals to reduce Personal Support Assistants. The final number of teachers reduced in North Ayrshire was 28.

This sentiment was echoed by many other Local Associations with Inverclyde reporting:

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<sup>8</sup> SNP, "SNP Manifesto 2021: What we're doing for young people" (15th April 2021) <https://www.snp.org/2021-young-peoples-manifesto/>

<sup>9</sup> EIS, "2023 EIS Member Survey: Workload, Health and Wellbeing, and The Cost of Living Crisis" (April 2023) <https://www.eis.org.uk/Content/images/Research/2023MemberSurvey.pdf>

*“They have been ‘streamlining’, ‘rationalising’, ‘delivering differently’ all of which mean cutting budgets, reducing staff and thereby reducing the capacity of the system to deliver the same quality of service. They have been reforming by expecting the same, or a better service on reduced funding.”*

The EIS is deeply concerned about the rising number of Councils that plan to cut teacher numbers in order to save money. This is fully explained under our response to question 3.

## **2. What is preventing councils from achieving “transformative change”?**

The EIS is concerned that the basic provisions of education continue to be under-funded. The EIS has long reported that many teachers feel forced to work additional hours unpaid, and to provide basic classroom supplies in order to ensure their pupils experience the education that they deserve. For years Scotland’s teachers have been subsidising education with both their time and their own money.

In the 2023 EIS teacher survey, when asked if they spent any of their own money to buy food, clothing, school equipment, or pay for pupils that they teach so they don’t go without, the vast majority, 69%, said yes, they do. Only 31% said they did not use their own money to support pupils. Additionally, when asked if the cost of living crisis had affected their spending on classroom resources, 51% said they spent less because they can no longer afford it, and 15% said they spent more because of greater need.<sup>10</sup>

This sentiment was echoed by our Local Associations, with North Ayrshire Local Association stating:

*“Rising costs for staff, building and energy costs make it difficult to achieve change, never mind transformative change.”*

## **3. Given local government’s claims that efficiencies have been achieved over the past 15 years, what impacts have these had on service users and the local government workforce?**

The EIS has been campaigning against many of the “efficiencies” that numerous councils have been making in recent years. A move to Faculty Model schools, Cluster Schools, cutting teacher numbers and the move to more online learning have all been deployed to ‘reform’ education, but are little more than austerity cuts.

Dundee City Council for example proposed the introduction of faculties to the Children and Families Committee, in a bid to make savings from the education budget in 2019. These plans would have removed 110 principal teachers from secondary schools in

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Dundee as part of plans to change middle-management structures in schools.<sup>11</sup> According to the agreement reached following recommendations from the McCrone Report the role of a principal teacher includes:

- “Responsibility for the leadership, good management and strategic direction of colleagues.
- “Curriculum development and quality assurance. contributing to the development of school policy in relation to the behaviour management of pupils.
- “The management and guidance of colleagues.
- “Reviewing the CPD needs, career development and performance of colleagues.
- “The provision of advice, support and guidance to colleagues. responsibility for the leadership, good management and strategic direction of pastoral care within the school.
- “The development of school policy for the behaviour management of pupils.
- “Assisting in the management, deployment and development of pastoral care staff.
- “Implementation of whole school policies dealing with guidance issues, pastoral care, assessment and pupil welfare.
- “Working in partnership with colleagues, parents, other specialist agencies and staff in other schools as appropriate.”<sup>12</sup>

Principal teachers are promoted posts within the school system and they provide vital experience and expertise to both their junior and senior colleagues. Removing these posts would have resulted in fewer experienced teachers (including many subject specialists) and less dedicated support for pupils. These plans were thankfully halted following the threat of planned strike action by local EIS members and a legal challenge, also by the EIS.<sup>13</sup> Whilst the plans in Dundee have been delayed, unfortunately, many local authorities have already imposed the faculty model within their schools, affecting the support that children and young people receive.

Headteacher sharing between schools has long been implemented across Scotland. This involves one Headteacher managing two schools and dividing their time and expertise between the two. What is becoming more common in recent years is the sharing of Headteachers across more than two schools. So-called “Cluster” schools are becoming more common, as Dumfries and Galloway has several with one Headteacher in Annan overseeing 6 schools, as reported in 2023.<sup>14</sup> A written answer

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<sup>11</sup> The Courier “EIS Stop Faculties campaign in Dundee: all you need to know” (13<sup>th</sup> April 2022) <http://thecourier.co.uk/fp/education/3186776/stop-faculties-campaign-dundee-eis-articleisfree/>

<sup>12</sup> EIS, “Teaching Profession for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (January 2001) [https://www.cep.edu.rs/public/teaching\\_profession\\_for\\_the\\_21st\\_century.pdf](https://www.cep.edu.rs/public/teaching_profession_for_the_21st_century.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> BBC News, “Dundee teachers’ strike off after legal challenge to faculty plans” (22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-61894126>

<sup>14</sup> The Courier (As presented in Pressreader) “Shared Head Teacher ‘experiment’ could be rolled out region-wide” (13<sup>th</sup> May 2023) <https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-courier-advertiser-angus-and-the-mearns-edition/20230513/281736978799223>

provided to Miles Briggs MSP reveals that the number of shared headships has increased from 134 in 2007 to 469 in 2023.<sup>15</sup>

The EIS is deeply concerned that the educational rationale for the increasing use of shared headships across Scotland has not been proven, and that these seeping reforms are simply another way to cut teacher numbers in schools. The EIS has also repeatedly raised concerns around teacher workload. Key findings from our most recent national survey on teacher workload (completed by more than 10,000 members) include:

- Only 17% of respondents said they are very satisfied, or satisfied with their workload levels generally
- 64% of members said they can never complete all of the tasks assigned to them in their working week
- 73% of respondents said they rarely, or are never able to do the necessary preparation and correction within the working week
- 44% of members said they usually work more than 7 hours extra per week, with a quarter of these respondents saying they work more than 15 additional hours – the equivalent of more than 2 full working days extra
- Only 1% of respondents said they have sufficient time in a typical working week to complete paperwork, liaise with colleagues and external agencies, and attend meetings in relation to supporting pupils with Additional Support Needs
- Almost half (48%) of members who said they plan to leave teaching within the next 5 years are considering doing so because workload is too high.<sup>16</sup>

We believe that recent cuts to teacher numbers have increased this workload, and significant investment is needed to improve the working lives of teachers and the experiences of pupils.

EIS Inverclyde Local Association succinctly described the impact of “efficiencies” in their local area:

*“Efficiencies are cuts. Budget decisions are now being taken knowing that there will be, and accepting that there will be, a detrimental impact on service users because of a decreasing number in the workforce. The workforce is being cut through natural wastage (posts being deleted as staff retire or move on) or through voluntary severance. For example, our Council’s grounds maintenance team has been reduced meaning cemeteries are cut every four weeks over summer instead of every two weeks as it was previously. There is a visible impact and is not an ‘efficiency’ - things aren’t running more smoothly, they’re just running less than before.”*

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<sup>15</sup> Scottish Parliament, “Question reference: S6W-34443: Miles Briggs: To ask the Scottish Government how many shared headteacher roles have been in place in schools in each local authority area in each year since 1999.” (4<sup>th</sup> March 2025) <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/questions-and-answers/question?ref=S6W-34443>

<sup>16</sup> EIS, “National Survey Results – Workload” (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025) <https://www.eis.org.uk/teacher-workload/nationalsurveywl>

The EIS is staunchly opposed to cuts to teacher numbers and will continue to defend members in all areas where cuts to teacher numbers are proposed.

**4. What support is available to councils looking at ways of reforming how they deliver services?**

The EIS does not have a view on this.

**5. To what extent would multi-year funding packages help local authorities make changes to how they deliver services?**

The EIS does not have a view on this.

**6. What scope is there for local authorities to shift resource from 'corporate functions' to 'frontline workforce'? To what extent could more shared services between councils help reduce non-frontline staff numbers?**

The EIS is concerned about the use of “shared-services”. Our evidence on faculties and shared headships above demonstrates that these moves are often brought about to save money and have considerable workload implications for teachers and “front-line” staff. After years of austerity cuts, there are no more efficiencies to be made in terms of school staffing.

The cuts to technical support and auxiliary staff across many local authorities are already having a considerable impact on the workload of teachers delivering practical subjects. Many of the comments left by EIS members highlighted that a significant amount of the unpaid work they currently do is attributed to setting up for science lessons. Within Home Economics, many teachers highlighted that washing aprons, cutting fabric, ordering food, and cleaning kitchens before and after lessons were all previously done by auxiliary staff and are now the responsibility of classroom teachers. This directly impacts learners’ experiences as there is less time for teaching and learning, and also has a significant impact on teachers as they try to complete all these extra tasks alongside their full duties.<sup>17</sup>

Fife Local Association noted that their local authority tried to implement shared services, and this failed:

*“We’ve tried shared services with a neighbouring authority and are now looking to revert. This question seems to suggest that some non-frontline workers are more*

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<sup>17</sup> EIS, “National Survey Results – Workload” (3rd June 2025) <https://www.eis.org.uk/teacher-workload/nationalsurveywl>

*easily disposed of – ‘back room’ teams – finance, payroll, admin, etc are just as crucial.”*

**7. Given the reduction in satisfaction with a range of council services, what more should be done to include the public in the redesign, delivery and improvement of public services?**

The EIS does not have a view on this, other than to ensure strong partnership working with trade unions such as the EIS, whose members are experts in delivering public services and who know what is required for them to work effectively in support of our citizens.

**8. To what extent does the current legislative framework prevent local authorities from transforming the way they deliver public services?**

The EIS does not have a view on this.