Dear James

The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to provide information to the Education and Skills Committee on the recruitment and retention of teachers for Scotland’s schools.

The Union is uniquely placed to provide a current, evidence based contribution to this debate both in Scotland and with comparative data across the UK nations. The NASUWT conducts a yearly survey of members in each individual nation to develop a unique picture of teacher morale, priorities and retention challenges.

The NASUWT Big Question 2016 was the 6 consecutive year that the NASUWT has carried out a detailed survey of members in Scotland. In terms of recruitment and retention, amongst a number of deeply concerning statistics, 65% of respondents said they would not recommend teaching as a career.

What are the main challenges in relation to teacher recruitment and retention?

The NASUWT is clear that the current recruitment and retention problems being experienced in Scotland are not limited to, or unique to, Scotland and many of the same issues impact on recruitment and retention elsewhere in the UK and more widely. However, there are specific factors which impact on each nation and this response addresses the issues in Scotland specifically which the Scottish Government has the ability to address or ameliorate.

The first issue impacting on both recruitment and retention is rates of pay. Teachers’ pay in Scotland is not commensurate to those of other graduate professions and this has been exacerbated by average pay increases, such as in 2014, where the average increase for graduates in other professions was 3.3% whilst in teaching it was 1%. There has been a 15.1% real terms drop in salary for teachers in Scotland since 2010.

The NASUWT Big Question 2016 found that 75% of teachers believe that people are put off a career in teaching because of pay and that 88% of teachers do not think that teaching is competitive with other professions.

There is a lack of professional standing and respect for teaching as a career compared to other professions. The teaching profession is regularly subject to negative portrayal in the media and often used by politicians to score cheap political points.

The fastest growing teachers’ union in Scotland
Another major barrier to both recruitment and retention is excessive workload. Whilst the profession is clear about the excessive workload it is also now clear to parents, carers, pupils and local communities that teacher workload has spiralled out of control. This has been accepted in published documents, such as the Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy reports, but has not been successfully addressed. Eighty-five per cent of respondents to the NASUWT Big Question 2016 cited excessive workload as their number one concern about their job; 62% of teachers have considered quitting teaching altogether in the last year; and 84% of teachers have experienced more workplace stress in the last 12 months.

The decrease in interest in teaching as a career is likely to be exacerbated in the next few years. Pupils who are now choosing their university career paths have spent their whole secondary education during the implementation of ideologically driven austerity policies and have witnessed the increase in workload that their teachers have had to endure at the same time as pay has been cut. Pupils have also personally witnessed the failings of the implementation of the presumption of mainstream at the same time as support services have been cut and teacher numbers reduced. In addition, these pupils have painful first-hand experience of the often chaotic implementation of the new qualifications. These factors alone are unlikely to make teaching an attractive proposition to the next generation of would be educators.

The NASUWT cannot identify any clear evidence that teaching is promoted as a viable career choice. The profile of teaching as a career does not appear to be regularly or successfully highlighted in schools, universities or in the media, particularly media platforms used by young people in Scotland. One example would be careers fairs held in schools, promoting and advising on careers in the public, private, third sectors and the armed forces but rarely, if at all, is teaching featured at such events.

What is the impact of teacher shortages in certain parts of Scotland or in specific disciplines?

In addition to the factors affecting recruitment across Scotland, there are also specific recruitment and retention issues impacting on particular areas. These include the increased cost of living in Edinburgh and the inflated cost of living in the Aberdeen area due to the oil industry. Recruitment and retention in isolated rural communities is a specific problem due to a number of factors which local councils will be well placed to set out. These include: the migration of young people to urban centres where the main university campuses are located; the poor provision of deregulated and profit-driven public transport infrastructure in rural areas; and the shortage of suitable affordable accommodation.

That said, while there are hotspots, the position is such that barriers to recruitment and retention exist across the country and should be addressed on a system-wide basis. This is not simply a case of targeting more money in one or two places. The NASUWT suggests that more exploration of how teacher shortages can be addressed across the whole nation is required. 

Are there patterns or key reasons why some trainees do not complete courses or do not choose to go into teaching having qualified?

Teaching is a uniquely challenging occupation. Balancing the learning and emotional needs of 30 unique individuals at any one time whilst maintaining professional expertise in a subject area is a significant challenge. There are therefore an inevitable amount of students and even probationers who, through the process of their training course and placements, realise that teaching is not the long term profession for them. Too many Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers do not think about the management of students’ workload. ITE programmes are

*The fastest growing teachers’ union in Scotland*
often characterised by needlessly detailed planning and record-keeping requirements that increase burdens and force many students, particularly those with family or caring responsibilities, to drop out.

The information that we get from our student members indicates issues such as the university not supporting students who are having difficulties in school placements for fear of upsetting the school or local authority. Where student members have had negative experiences in early placements, this has in turn negatively impacted on their motivation to enter the teaching profession.

Another factor is that a number of newly qualified teachers choose to work abroad after induction for the higher salaries and opportunity to travel, so are lost to the Scottish system.

In addition, whilst there is the opportunity to undertake teacher training on a part-time or distance learning basis, there is currently no option to undertake the induction scheme on a part-time basis which will lead to individuals either self-excluding or dropping out. The flexible route does not satisfactorily counter this as the support mechanisms on the induction scheme are not available and the additional 80 working days required to reach the Standard for Registration remain as obstacles to allowing fully registered teachers to access part-time working in order to balance personal commitments with their workload.

**How effective are the various approaches taken to cover shortages of teachers in schools?**

The NASUWT believes that it is essential to end the discrimination in relation to supply teachers’ pay and conditions introduced in 2011. There is no doubt that the creation of a two-tier workforce has led to huge difficulty in covering teacher shortages.

In many areas, schools rely on the goodwill of teachers to cover shortages, in some cases beyond the cover agreement of the employer. This cannot continue and better approaches require to be identified, and funded, to address the issue.

**Do you have views or insight into the process for recruiting the right number of teachers to satisfy the demand for teachers in Scotland’s schools?**

The NASUWT has concerns that the data available is not robust, nor easily accessible to policymakers. The Union would call for a review of the way in which teacher workforce data is collected and reported to address this concern.

The NASUWT would be delighted to attend the Education and Skills Committee evidence sessions to discuss this response in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Chris Keates (Ms)
**General Secretary**

For further information on the Union’s response please contact Jane Peckham, National Official (Scotland)