Teacher Workforce Planning – Aberdeenshire Response

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

There is an overall low number of teachers ‘in the system’ in Aberdeenshire. Posts that are advertised generate very low levels of applicants and an even lower number of new applicants to the area. This results in internal moves and churn within Aberdeenshire which increases the feeling of instability.

An increasing number of teachers are now working part-time only, resulting in an increase in the number of teachers required to cover vacancies.

There are also difficulties with supply cover making short term cover for vacancies or absences challenging.

- The process for recruiting the right number of teachers to satisfy the demand for teachers in Scotland’s schools (including the availability of up to date information such as on supply and demand)

As above, the number of teachers relocating to Aberdeenshire is low. Although there have been some benefits from the changes in the oil and gas sector there is still a relatively high cost of living around Aberdeen, and the north of Aberdeenshire is seen as remote due in part to a limited transport network. These factors are impacting on our ability to attract NQTs to Aberdeenshire. There are also a low number of teaching students from the north of Aberdeenshire.

Aberdeenshire welcomed the vacancy survey last year as part of the ScotXed return to demonstrate the localised difficulties with recruitment.

The current system does not provide sufficient flexibility to develop local solutions.

- What are the factors that influence whether teaching is considered an attractive profession compared to other professions by those that might consider a career in teaching?

The starting salary is relatively low with newly qualified teachers earning approximately £23k whilst newly qualified social workers earn approximately £33k.

Workload (mainly caused by vacancies) is having an impact with teachers reporting routinely working more than their contracted 35 hours per week.

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

The PGDE course can be very intense and some will not complete this. Others will complete their NQT year and decide that teaching is not the profession for them after all. In some cases this is because of the impact of teacher shortages being seen at first hand by those in under pressure schools.
What is the impact of teacher shortages in certain parts of Scotland or in specific disciplines (and the extent of these shortages in your area)?

Aberdeenshire Council have been experienced teacher shortages over a number of years. Although the position at the end of the 2015/16 session was showing signs of improvement, there was a deterioration again early in the 2016/17 session.

The shortages are felt on a geographical basis for primary teaching with shortages predominantly in the north of Aberdeenshire and remote rural areas. The impact is short term cover arrangements being put in place resulting in lack of continuity of teaching staff for pupils.

In secondary the shortages are subject related and being felt across the area. The main subject shortages are STEM subjects and home economics. The impact is subjects being covered by non-specialist teachers and some subjects having to be removed from the curriculum altogether.

The shortages put pressure on existing staff, thereby making vacancies elsewhere in Scotland more attractive, e.g. NQTs (possibly not originally from Aberdeenshire) have little incentive to stay as there are a number of vacancies across the country.

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

Aberdeenshire Council has undertaken a number of initiatives over the recent years to increase the number of teachers in Aberdeenshire.

In 2014 the Distance Learning Initial Teaching Education (DLITE) flexible learning programme was implemented which allows existing employees and Aberdeenshire residents to study part-time for a primary teaching qualification.

Aberdeenshire have used recruitment agencies to secure teaching staff. There was a high volume of candidate CVs provided by the agencies but this transferred to a low number of suitable teachers being appointed. Further delays to start dates were introduced by the need to obtain GTCS Registration.

A Relocation Incentive Scheme was implemented which gave the opportunity for teachers coming into Aberdeenshire to have an upfront payment of £5,000 forming part of the Corporate Relocation and Resettlement package.

In the last two years a more proactive approach has been taken to retaining teachers who have undertaken their probation year in Aberdeenshire.

With the benefit of the Skills Development Scotland Transition Fund, Aberdeenshire has worked with the University of Aberdeen to implement the Transition into Education Scheme (TIES) which is an innovative graduate education assistant model.

Retired teachers in the Peterhead area were written to and asked to consider joining the supply register. Unfortunately this generated a very low response and has not been extended further.
Return to Teaching sessions have been held this year aimed at those who have teaching qualifications but had either not undertaken their probationary year or are currently out of the profession.

A wide range of innovative recruitment campaigns have been conducted, highlighting the benefits of working as a Teacher in Aberdeenshire. This has seen some success in conjunction with the Relocation Incentive Scheme however has not achieved the required teacher levels.

- **What factors influence teachers deciding whether to stay in the profession or to leave?**
- **What factors influence teachers when deciding whether or not to apply for promotion to senior management/headteacher level?**

There are a number of reasons why teachers choose to leave the profession including salary and workload.

For promoted posts there is a suggestion that the increase in remuneration is not felt significant enough when balanced against the increased workload and responsibility.

There is little flexibility at present to increase the number of students from particular geographical areas; and to consider alternative pathways to teaching e.g. for those who do not presently have a degree.