

Report of the SNCT Support Group Meeting 5 February 2025

The SNCT Support Group meets as required between meetings of the SNCT. A meeting was held on 5 February 2025 and was chaired by Des Morris, Joint Chair, SNCT Teachers' Side.

The main actions items are noted below for the full SNCT.

1 Pay Claim 2025/26

It was reported that there would be a meeting of the Teachers' Panel on 7 February 2025 to agree a pay claim for 2025/26. Once agreed the claim would be submitted by Teachers' Side Joint Secretary.

COSLA Side Joint Secretary acknowledged the update and looked forward to receiving the claim.

2 Reduction in Class Contact Time.

The Teachers' Side reported that no proposal on the reduction of class contact hours had been received by the deadline previously set by Teachers' Panel, of Monday 3 February 2025, nor had anything been received prior to the start of this meeting. It was advised that Teachers' Panel was to meet on Friday 7 February 2025 to consider the response to this issue.

Scottish Government reported that discussions had been ongoing between COSLA and Scottish Government and it was hoped that a letter could be issued by the end of the week.

The Teachers' Side advised that it would be helpful if any communication could be sent prior to the commencement of the Teachers' Panel on Friday. It was further advised that should a proposal not be forthcoming it was likely that there would be a formal dispute lodged as this had previously been discussed by Teachers' Panel.

COSLA reported that COSLA Leaders had considered this issue and that COSLA officers had been mandated to work with Scottish Government on reduction of class contact time.

In response to a comment from COSLA related to the validity of this matter being the basis for a dispute Teachers' Side commented that any side of the

SNCT can declare a dispute based upon a failure to agree. In addition, the point was made that the prospect of a dispute had been discussed on a number of occasions, and this had not been raised as an issue previously.

3 ASN Working Group

It was reported that it had originally been hoped that this group would meet in December 2024 or January 2025 but this had not been possible. As had been reported previously, it was the intention that the teachers' side of the group would consider wording that could be shared at a further meeting of the full working group. It was agreed that there should be a meeting of the full working group in March 2025.

4 Job Sizing Review Group

This group is scheduled to meet on 25 February 2025. It was noted that this group had been long running but it was acknowledged that progress was being made.

The efforts of the two Job-Sizing Co-ordinators who had undertaken much of the work so far was noted.

5 Pay and Leave Specification Group

It was noted that a date for a meeting of this group was currently being sought. The Teachers' Panel was keen that this work be progressed and welcomed the date being set. It was also noted that a program of meetings may assist in progressing the matters under consideration. This was acknowledged.

6 Miscarriage Special Leave

Support Group considered a paper submitted by Teachers' Panel which set out that Teachers' Panel is seeking the implementation of two weeks of paid special leave for a woman who suffers a miscarriage before 24 weeks into a pregnancy and for the partner/other parent. The rationale for this was set out along with examples of other employers who offer similar arrangements.

In addition, Teachers' Panel was seeking the addition to the SNCT Handbook of the provisions for parental bereavement leave and pay. The basis for this addition was to ensure that employees covered by the SNCT Handbook looking for information on entitlements under family leave can be made aware of this valuable entitlement.

Teachers' Panel also advised that it would wish to see specific reference to the ACAS guidance concerning time off for still birth or miscarriage, particularly concerning the treatment of any sickness absence, to ensure consistency of approach across councils.

The goal of the Teachers' Panel in bringing this forward was to ensure that there was a modern, sympathetic and up to date policy in place.

Scottish Government advised that the policy in place for employees of Scottish Government allowed for two weeks paid leave for both parents affected by a miscarriage (regardless of gender) before 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Scottish Government reported that the Cabinet Secretary for Education is clear that she is supportive of policies that improve terms and conditions of parents and that, as part of the SNCT, Scottish Government colleagues would support an amendment to the SNCT Handbook on this issue.

Following contributions from COSLA it was clear that the proposals were not supported by the employers' side at this stage.

As it became clear that the group could not agree this issue during the meeting it was agreed that the matter should be remitted to SNCT Joint Secretaries for further discussion.

7 Amendment to Handbook – IMI to IMT

This matter had been discussed at SNCT Joint Secretaries prior to being placed on the agenda of Support Group. Scottish Government reported that the position from its perspective was not absolutely clear.

Teachers' Panel requested that the information received by Scottish Government be shared with the Teachers' Side Joint Secretary and a proposal that this matter be remitted to SNCT Joint Secretaries was agreed.

8 Supply Teachers' Pay

The Teachers' Side presented a Teachers' Panel motion to Support Group which called for the reinstatement of full pay for supply teachers from day one for work undertaken and set out the context for the motion.

COSLA and Scottish Government advised that they would wish to consider the paper further before responding.

It was agreed that this matter could initially be discussed further through SNCT Joint Secretaries.

9 Paid Leave for Fertility Treatment

The Teachers' Side presented a Teachers' Panel motion to Support Group which called for the introduction of a specific entitlement for staff covered by the SNCT Handbook who are undergoing fertility treatment to have paid leave to attend appointments and undergo treatment.

In presenting the Teachers' Side set out the context for the motion. The Teachers' Panel was seeking the introduction of an up to date, sympathetic provision for employees covered by the SNCT Handbook which would provide certainty. The Teachers' Side also raised a concern that there is currently a lack of consistency of approach across councils. It was further advised by the Teachers' Side that it believed that the SNCT Handbook remaining silent on such a human issue was not satisfactory.

Scottish Government reiterated the point made previously in the meeting that the Cabinet Secretary for Education is supportive of policies that improve terms and conditions of parents and that, as part of the SNCT, Scottish Government colleagues would support an amendment to the SNCT Handbook on this issue.

After further contributions from Support Group members it was clear that there would not be agreement on this matter at this meeting and a proposal that the matter be referred to SNCT Joint Secretaries was agreed.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Bain (Employers' Side)
Stuart Brown (Teachers' Panel)
David Leitch (Scottish Government)

Joint Secretaries