

£145.5m of Teacher Numbers funding - 30th October 2024

COSLA issued a briefing to all MSPs earlier this year which set out our concerns around the Scottish Government's approach to the £145.5m of funding for teacher numbers, which would require Councils to maintain teacher numbers at their 2022 levels, regardless of changes to the pupil roll or the financial position of the council. The [briefing can be found online](#) and in summary:

- Sets out that Councils remain committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for Children and Young people, across their health, wellbeing and attainment.
- Demonstrates that Councils continue to invest in both teaching and education support staff and have protected education whilst other services have faced greater cuts.
- Sets out that pupil numbers are falling, and that the pupil teacher ratio has remained at a long-term low of 13.2 – significantly below other nations across the UK.
- Is clear that the £145.5m accounts for just 4% of teachers in Scotland, and the remaining 96% of teachers are funded from core Local Government budgets, which have seen a real terms reduction over the last 10 years.

Considering the Scottish Parliament is debating teacher numbers this afternoon, MSPs may find it useful to understand the range of other issues that created barriers to Councils being able to maintain teacher numbers at 2022 levels in this financial year:

- The £145.5m would have supported 2,621 teaching posts in 2021 but due to pay settlements would only support 2,077 in August 2024, which does not take into account wider inflationary pressures or that there have been flat cash allocations for key education funding streams – particularly Scottish Attainment Challenge funding which are also required to fund the employment of teachers.
- The pay deal for teachers in 24/25 requires Local Government to contribute £135m, Scottish Government is only contributing £43m to the cost of the pay award. This means cuts to services and jobs.
- Dr Sue Ellis, former professor of education at Strathclyde University, [has stated](#) that 'Councils are stuck between a rock and a hard place', and that councils needed greater control of their budgets as "all the cuts, whether to libraries and librarians, staff classroom assistants, additional support needs, home school links teachers, all of those will impact the most on the children who are the most disadvantaged anyway".
- The independent [Accounts Commission](#) set out that "Scotland's councils are facing a significant gap in the money needed to deliver local services and the

money they have available. Together, all 32 councils have a gap of £585 million. This is estimated to increase to £780 million by 2026/27". The Accounts Commission's [Transformation in Councils](#) report, published earlier this noted that 'Ring-fenced and directed funding also makes it difficult for councils to identify opportunities to make the level of savings required through efficiencies alone".

- The £145.5m is not additional as it was introduced in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and was subsequently baselined – removing it is a cut to existing funding.
- Local Government had increased teacher numbers even prior to this funding – since 2017 teacher numbers have increased by 2,524 which is a 5% increase in the workforce.

Due to these concerns, Councils were unable to sign grant letters issued by the Scottish Government earlier this year. Since July, Councils have had no confirmation from the Scottish Government that they will be able to access the £145.5m, despite attempts to reach an agreement.

As we have been clear, Local Government is committed to providing the best support we can to Children and Young People, however this is extremely challenging in the current financial constraints. Last week the COSLA President wrote to the First Minister seeking a meeting to consider these issues (and broader areas of disagreement between the Scottish Government and Local Government) to find resolution.

For further information – COSLA's Children and Young People team can be contacted at cyp@cosla.gov.uk