



COSLA

Briefing for MSPs

Teacher Numbers



The Local Government Settlement for 24/25 requires Councils to maintain a specific number of teachers or face an additional cut in funding and asks councils to implement a council tax freeze.

What cuts are Councils having to make to deliver these policies?

- Councils are being forced to make tough decisions due to the successive reductions in core budgets – they don't want to cut teachers or other services to children and young people.
- Given a £63m cut to core budgets, the council tax freeze funding is only worth the equivalent of a 2.8% rise – not enough to fund vital local services.
- Local Government needs additional funding to protect services and support children and young people to achieve the best possible outcomes – not more restrictions.

Better Outcomes for Children and Young People Must Be Our Focus



Local Government is committed to improving outcomes for children and young people and Councils have set out [ambitious stretch aims](#) including tackling the poverty related attainment gap.

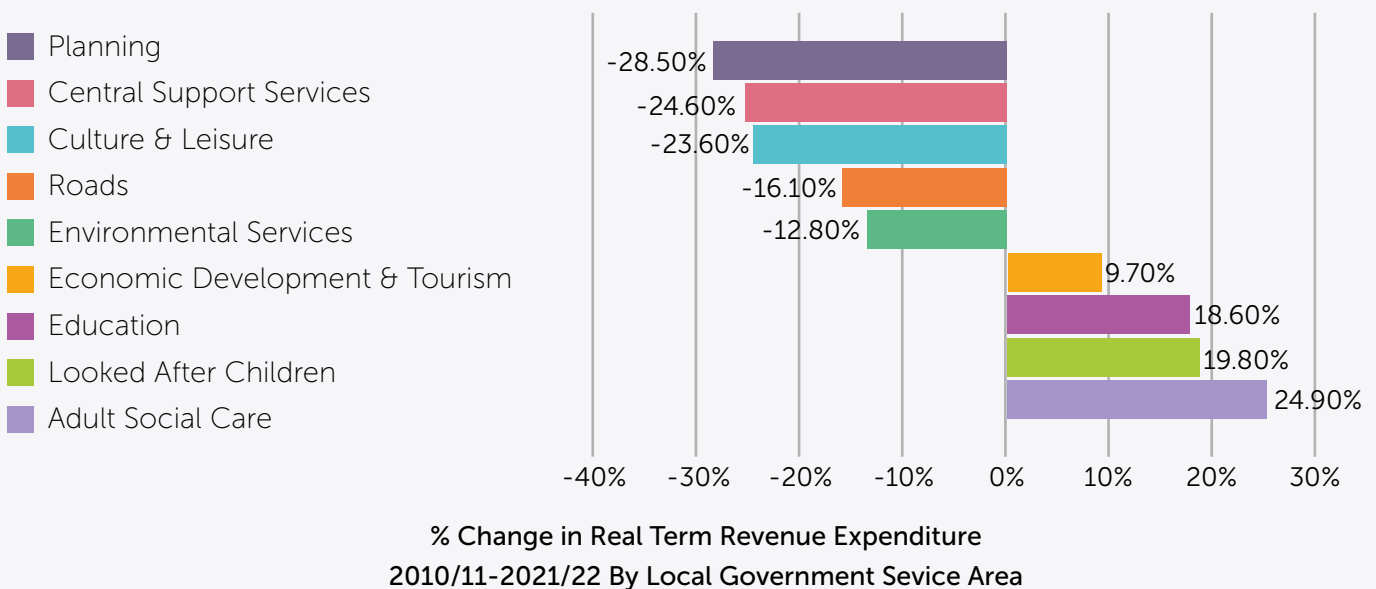
We place immense value on the work of teachers and school staff to support these aims. However, the health, wellbeing and attainment of children and young people cannot be achieved by schools alone. We must look at the services and projects that support children and young people in school and beyond the school gates.

Ringfencing spending on school staff will force even deeper cuts on services like social work support, early intervention services, cultural services, youth work and libraries, all of which are vital to supporting children and young people.

Councils are Trying to Protect Education Against a Cut of £63M



Councils spend around 50% of their budget on Education, and the **teachers' pay bill is almost £3.3bn**. The tables below show that Councils have protected and invested in education as much as possible, whilst other services have taken the hit. This is in the context of several years of extremely high inflation which has had to be absorbed by Councils. Scottish Government's **cut of £63m** to the Local Government settlement for 24/25 (and no additional funding to meet pay claims or rising demand for services) means it has reached the point where this is increasingly untenable, and councillors must now consider education taking a proportion of this year's cut.



	Actual Spend 20/21	Actual Spend 21/22	Estimated Spend 22/23	Estimated Spend 23/24
Employee costs: Teachers*	£2,918m	£3,024m	£3,184m	£3,206m
Employee costs: all other employees*	£1,119m	£1,233m	£1,359m	£1,436m

*excludes teachers and staff in special schools as estimates are not available. Info taken from official Scottish Government statistics (LFR and POBE)

Councils have welcomed the £145.5m provided in recent years to support staffing in schools. However this accounts for a very small proportion of the funding required to pay the 54,000 teachers in Scotland (just under 4%). 96% of teachers are funded from core Local Government budgets, which have seen a real terms reduction over the last 10 years.

Pupil Numbers Are Falling



The **school roll fell in 2023** and the [Office of National Statistics projects](#) the number of 5-19 year olds in Scotland will **decrease by a further 7%** by 2030.

When pupil numbers fall, Councils get less funding. As [29% of Council funding](#) is allocated on the basis of pupil numbers (to account for changes in population across Scotland) this can make a big difference. However, it's not always practical or desirable within our communities to reduce the number of schools. For many, especially in more deprived areas, schools are a focus for family support and youth work too. The erosion of protective factors like this is a cause for concern.

So with less funding and less pupils, Councils are now being required to retain the same number of teachers. This can only result in even bigger cuts to all other services.

Councils Maintained the Pupil Teacher Ratio in 23/24



The pupil teacher ratio in Scotland is **13.2 – remaining at its lowest level in the past ten years**. The lower this ratio, the more teacher support there is for each pupil. Scotland is significantly below the pupil teacher ratio of other nations across the UK. Despite reductions to core funding, this has been prioritised.

Nation	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
Wales	18.4
England	18.0
Northern Ireland	17.4
Scotland	13.2

Why the Council Tax Freeze May Not Be an Option



The requirement to maintain teacher numbers at an arbitrary level may mean some Councils who planned to accept the funding offered for a Council Tax freeze can no longer do so, as they now need to raise revenue to pay for additional teachers.

The £145.5m that is provided for teacher numbers (and now as a specific grant) equates to a 5% increase in Council Tax. This is significant in the context of a £63m cut overall.

Pay Deals Have Never Been Fully Funded by Scottish Government



Over the last 3 years **Local Government has had to find £260m to fund pay deals for teachers**, in addition to the £290m provided by Scottish Government. On top of this, funding has been required for the pay deals for other council staff.

Because of Scottish Government direction of funding for additional teachers and other very specific education related policy, councils have been forced to make cuts in other service areas, including those that help our children and young people most such as sports centres and swimming pools, youth centres and youth work, support assistants and family support workers.

There are Possible Impacts on Teacher Contracts



Removing the funding from general revenue means that Councils will have far less certainty for future years - this makes it more difficult to hire teachers on a permanent basis.

Graham Donaldson, former head of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and author of Teaching Scotland's Future **noted** "the more confident councils are in their budgets, the more permanent contracts there will be. That is an iron law."

Where councils have no guarantee that they will be funded in future years, there may be greater use of temporary contracts. It's worth noting that the £145.5m accounts for roughly 2000 teaching posts that could be affected.

Council Budgets are Based on Community Views



Councils have been consulting with communities on the proposed budgets and difficult decisions for weeks. This last-minute demand from Scottish Government disregards this and means that Councils cannot take into account the priorities of their communities.

Councils were contacted about this on 12 February. The first budgets are set on 15 February. This is not an acceptable way of working.



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