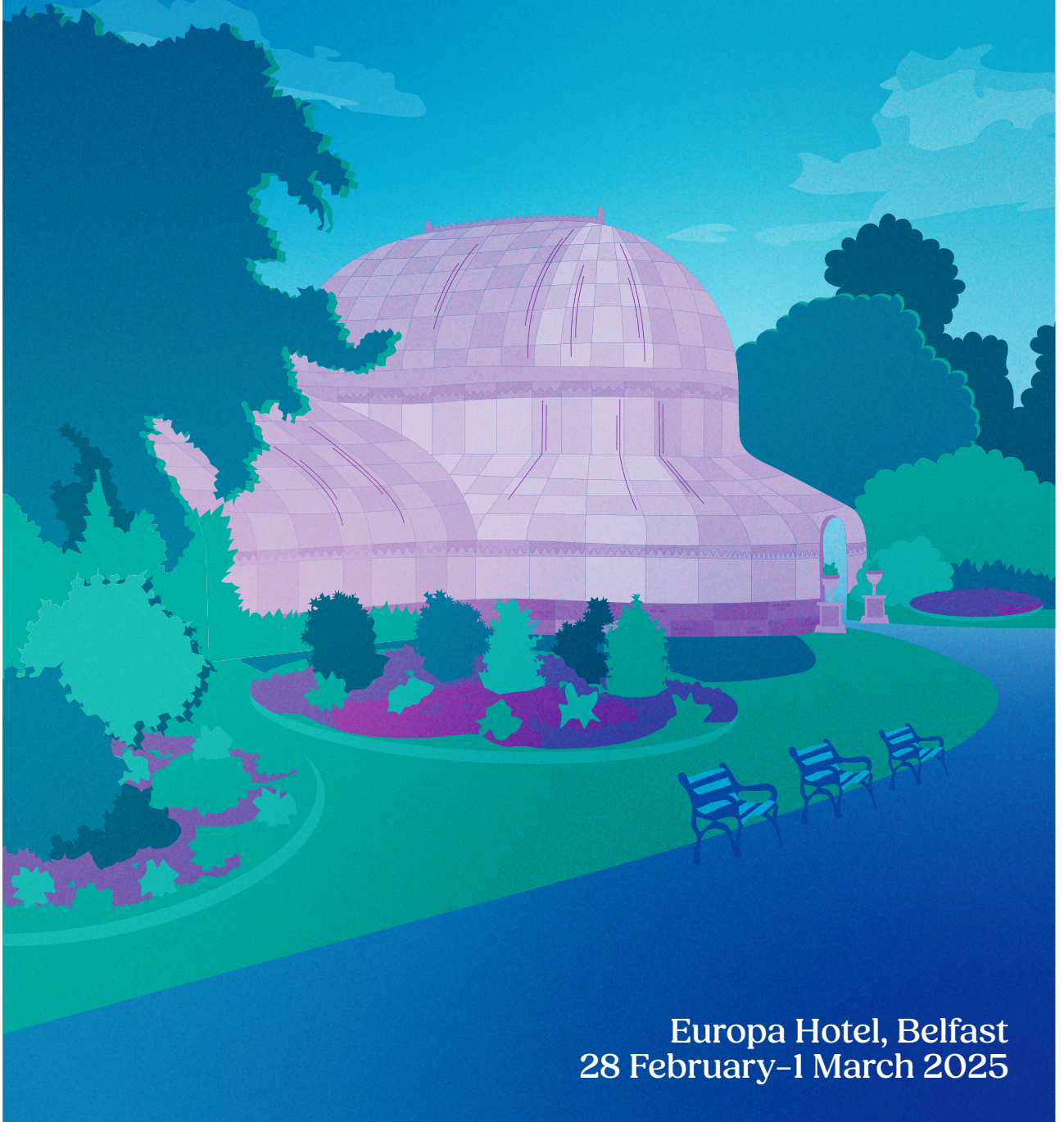




Irish National Teachers' Organisation  
*Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann*

# NORTHERN CONFERENCE



Europa Hotel, Belfast  
28 February–1 March 2025

# NORTHERN COMMITTEE REPORT



## 157th Annual Conference

Europa Hotel, Belfast  
28 February – 1 March 2025

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## Attendance at Northern Committee Meetings

Name	Surname	Total number of meetings	
Seamus	Hanna	9	
Annmarie	Conway	8	
Patrick	McAllister	9	
Michelle	McCrystal	11	
Siobhan	McElhinney	11	
Moira	O'Kane	2	left NC March 2024
Amanda	Carson	4	joined NC June 2024
Rachel	Poland	2	left NC March 2024
Eoin	O'Lochlainn	9	joined NC March 2024
Susan	McMullan	2	joined NC March 2024
John	Kelly	1	left NC March 2024
Lisa	Magennis	9	joined NC March 2024
Caroline	McCarthy	2	left NC March 2024
Geraldine	McGowan	11	
Caoimhin	MacColaim	9	
Marty	Lavery	8	
Noreen	Kelly	8	
David	Nolan	11	
Clare	Kearney-Kirwan	6	
Dermot	Gallagher	10	



# 1. SALARIES & CONDITIONS

## 1.1 Salaries and Conditions of Service

Teachers' salaries and conditions of service in Northern Ireland are determined by the Teachers' Negotiating Committee [TNC], consisting of two parties - Management Side and Teachers' Side. Up until February 2024, Management Side comprised of the Education Authority (EA), Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), Northern Ireland council for Integrated Education (NICIE), Governing Bodies Association (GBA), Comhairle Na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and the Department of Education (DE).

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) is the Teachers' Side of the TNC. NITC consists of the five recognised teachers' unions, INTO, NEU, NAHT, NASUWT and the UTU.

The TNC is now fully operational, and work has continued on attendance and flexible working. The Joint Secretaries' Forum is now functioning and has effectively replaced the Joint Working Party (JWP). Each side of the new Committee has appointed Joint Secretaries. The Joint Secretaries have attempted to meet on a monthly basis to progress the strategic agenda and programme of work of the TNC and to establish sub-groups and working parties, where necessary, to both update and establish new policies and procedures. The TU side Joint Secretaries, Mark McTaggart INTO and Justin McCamphill NAS/UWT, have a shared responsibility to effectively support the work of the TNC and its sub-committees and they are joined by Jacqui White UTU. It has already established joint working groups and commissioned research and investigations in relation to updating TNC papers.

The 'ICTU 2009' mediated agreement for the NITC, continues to provide a basis for the operation of the negotiating arrangements. This agreement between the five constituent unions, provided for a revised NITC Constitution with decision making for the two-year period from April 2009 to April 2011 being on a consensual basis of the five NITC Interests. It was agreed that after April 2011 decision making within the NITC, will be on the basis of agreement of four out of five of the teacher unions. In 2022 this agreement of 4/5 remains in place.

### **ICTU agreement (extract)**

*Having reflected on the discussions held during the above meeting I propose that the following clauses are adopted by all constituent members of the NITC in a spirit of solidarity and unity so necessary for meeting the challenges ahead in the current economic environment and in conformity with the NITC Constitution:*

- 1) *All NITC constituents accept fully that the TNC is the sole negotiating forum for teachers in Northern Ireland.*
- 2) *Section 10 of the NITC Constitution sets out the procedure for constituents wishing to submit claims and as this Constitution has been accepted by all concerned then the agreed procedure MUST be adhered to.*
- 3) *Accepting the above any current industrial action should be suspended. The issue at the centre of this industrial action shall be pursued through the agreed procedures.*

- 4) *On the matter of issues other than terms and conditions of employment for teachers such as policy implications it is recommended that all constituents participate in the Strategic Forum initiative on the basis of the preamble to these clauses.*
- 5) *The inter-trade union transfer of members is being processed by apparently all constituents in contravention of Paragraph 46 of the ICTU Constitution. As this article is designed to promote harmonious relations between unions, I recommend all constituents implement forthwith.*
- 6) *Nothing in the above negates the autonomy of any constituent union to carry out its activities as endorsed by its membership. However, such action should only be engaged in following exhaustion of the procedures as contained in the NITC.*

## 1.2 Negotiating Arrangements 2024/25

INTO is represented at the meetings of the TNC by Mark McTaggart, and Marie O'Shea, Assistant Northern Secretary. Work undertaken through Joint Working Party sub-groups is also carried out during the year and INTO was represented by the relevant official or Northern Committee representatives.

Currently monthly meetings of the Joint Working Party (JWP) have been superseded by the Joint Secretaries forum which have happened both face-to-face and via online platforms. While normally these meetings are primarily focused on the management and progression of agreed agenda items and claims, much of the business, since the last Northern Committee report, has been taken up with Covid-19 regulations and pay negotiations. Substantive work on a number of other issues was carried out by NITC but has not been fully progressed to a conclusion through the joint secretaries.

The primary focus, outside of the main pay negotiations, was based on a number of issues including:

- NISTR –employment of substitute teachers.
- EA Contracts
- TNC Reconstitution /Normalisation of negotiating Machinery through new Joint Secretaries group
- Workload, Joint Consultative committees Pilot (JCCs) & new initiatives
- Transition group - nine review areas
- Family friendly contract variations
- Attendance procedure
- Teacher redeployment
- ETI

Progress was made in some areas most notably the TNC reconstitution through a new Joint Secretaries Forum which has, since its first meeting, now subsequently meet face-to-face. A programme of work has been firmly established which has resulted in the ongoing revision of four family friendly TNCs and an update of the Teacher Attendance procedure. The Secretaries' Forum is attended on behalf of INTO by Mark McTaggart.



The group tasked with the Upfront Asks, which as part of the 2020 pay negotiations, was known as the Transition Group and managed the transition away from the previous industrial action short of strike. This group primarily looked at the upfront asks which focused on three areas: Workload (directed time budgets), Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs) & new initiatives. General agreement by the transition group in respect of Directed Time Budgets has been reached with both sides providing training.

While the Cycle to Work issue has been resolved other issues, inter alia, NISTR, Teacher Health and Well-being (THAW) and Parental Complaints largely remain ongoing. INTO is hopeful of progress in these areas especially as NISTR and THAW are included within the nine reviews areas. NITC remains of the opinion that the parental complaints procedure is unfair, and requires adjustment.

From INTO's perspective much of the business of the early 23/24 academic year, to this point, has again been overshadowed, albeit to a lesser degree than last academic year, by the pay claim.

### **1.3 Teachers' Pay**

The starting salary for teachers rose to £30,000 from 1 September 2023, representing a 24.3% increase in teachers' starting salary over the three-year period of this pay award. It was delivered by removing M1 from the Main Pay Scale in September 2023 and uplifting point M2 to £30,000. Teachers on Main Pay Scale M1 of the 2022 Main Pay Scale have been assimilated on to the Main Pay Scale point M2 of the 2023 Main Pay Scale. Teachers on Main Pay Scale M2 or above in 2022 followed normal pay progression arrangements. The full detail of the settlement was as follows...

A consolidated pay award equating to a cumulative total of 10.4% plus £1000.00 will be applied to the teachers' pay scales. This is in addition to incremental progression within salary scales which has already been implemented for eligible teachers.

Teacher salary scale points will be revalorised as follows:

- i. 1% consolidated pay award will be applied to all teacher salary scale points with effect from 1 September 2021,
- ii. 5% consolidated pay award will be applied to all teacher salary scale points from 1 September 2022,
- iii. 4.1% plus £1000.00 consolidated pay award will be applied to all teacher salary scale points from M3 upwards with effect from 1 September 2023.

In addition to the consolidated pay awards (at 3 above) Teaching and Special Needs Allowances will be increased by a cumulative total of 10.4% i.e.:

- i. 1% increase on all Teaching and Special Needs Allowances from 1 September 2021,
- ii. 5% increase on all Teaching and Special Needs Allowances from 1 September 2022,
- iii. 4.1% increase on all Teaching and Special Needs Allowances from 1 September 2023.

## 1.4 Review in Nine Key Areas

While the fulfilment of the reviews is still outstanding, it has been agreed that three key areas are to be either NITC led, or Management side led with three reviews being tasked to DE specifically to lead. Each review consists of a working group made up of agreed representatives of trade union and management sides. These working groups ultimately report to a dedicated project Oversight Group (OG), also made up of agreed trade union and management side representatives, who are tasked with considering reports from the working groups and when agreed, progressing the outcomes to TNC for implementation of any recommendations emerging from the reviews.

The nine ongoing reviews, in no particular order, are:

### 1 Review of employment model of teachers.

Management Side has taken the lead in this review. Tony Gallagher agreed to assist the group with further research, and he presented on the Education Employment Models in Estonia, Finland, Alberta (Canada), Singapore and New Zealand.

The group has discussed the merits of delegated autonomy to schools as opposed to centrally held control. They have reviewed the most significant parts of the Terms of Reference focussing on the areas to be considered and potential outcomes. The group recognise that if there is to be a significant proposed change to the employing authority model it will require legislative change.

The working group submitted a report to the Oversight Group in December 2022. The broad areas of recommendation include adoption of a proposed 'redeployment scheme' for teachers and a scheme related to development opportunities scheme for school leaders; revisiting the definition of 'unavoidable redundancy'; consistency of recruitment; shared roles across schools where recruitment is problematic; a review of the common funding formula; HR support for Irish Medium, Integrated and voluntary grammar schools.

### 2 Review of the use of temporary and substitute teachers.

Management Side have taken the lead in this review.

The review group has been involved in the NISTR Tender Group assisting in development of the specifications for this contract and will engage again at design stage. The discussions have identified additional areas that the review group will now consider for possible inclusion in the planned guidance for schools on effective engagement of supply teachers for example, need for minimum cancellation periods and definition of a half day. The guidance will also include best practice examples around good induction which are being sourced.

The group completed and were informed in their business by a survey open to all teachers on NISTR. This provided a greater understanding of the supply workforce capacity in terms of how often they are available to work and why they are registered on NISTR.

The group has considered a draft outline options paper. Work is underway to supplement the evidence within the paper for example through the survey results and with new data from the NISTR via eTeach.

### **3 Review of Workload agreement.**

This is an NITC led review chaired by Kevin Daly INTO. The group have reached agreement on potential amendments to the Workload Agreement TNC 2011/8.

The group has worked towards the development of a dedicated webpage as a central point for all documentation pertaining to all teachers' terms and conditions of employment similar to the provision of same in neighbouring jurisdictions (for example the burgundy book in England).

The proposed amendments to the Workload Agreement have been agreed by the Oversight Group (OG) for consideration along with proposals around consistent application and regular training in the provisions of the Workload Agreement.

A final report was re-submitted by working group in December 2022 and their recommendations remain with the TNC for implementation.

Further to the issues outlined above, other recommendations relate to setting up a detailed exploration of tasks undertaken by teachers which have no educational value with a view to reducing workload at source; agreement around school and system level new initiatives continue to be developed; a DE led review of School Development and 'Baker Days' should be carried out.

### **4 Review of workload impact on school leaders.**

This is to examine current practices and the impact on the workload of principals and vice-principals. This is a TNC directed review and the trade union Side will take the lead in this review.

The group have participated in sessions with representative practitioners, facilitated by Dr Noel Purdy and have gathered written submissions from trade unions and principal locality groups. Several drafts have been written following detailed scrutiny, discussion and attempts to reach agreement. A report, agreed at working group level, was submitted to the oversight group in May 2022. Management side of the OG, at a meeting in June 2022, asked the working group to reconsider the report. Inevitably this has delayed the progression of the report and associated recommendations. Detailed correspondence and several meetings followed resulting in the recommendations of the report being reworked with the intention of submitting this to the OG at a later date.

There are a number of draft recommendations close to agreement which will cover a broad range of areas that school leaders identified as workload drivers. Further detail of these recommendations will be made available in accordance with the terms of reference of the review project. At this stage it can be reported, broadly, that the following areas (including but not exclusive to) are likely to produce recommendations in the final report: bureaucracy; excessive communication; school development planning; school improvement services and the efficacy of support services to school leaders; health and wellbeing of school leaders; hours of availability; school governance; funding; professional development; teaching principals; nursery principals; complaints and the impact of SEN provision on workload.

## **5 Review of workload associated with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision.**

This review is a DE led review of the end-to-end administrative processes associated with special educational needs provision and in particular the statementing process. This has been led by DE in collaboration with trade union side. TU side ensured practitioner involvement in the selection of their representatives who were senior lay activists with current experience in a range of SEN settings. The Working Group comprises ten members including representatives from each of the five recognised unions, EA, DE and CCMS. Given the level and volume of associated reviews and investigations into SEN provision across the education system in Northern Ireland during this period, arrangements were in place for the working group to engage quarterly with DE and EA nominated officials to receive updates on various programmes for change and associated workload implications.

A final report has been submitted to the OG in December 2022, making recommendations in a number of areas including use of data and ICT; administrative processes; the role of SENCO; review and referral process; PLPs; SEN in mainstream, specialist provision and ASD settings; administrative processes; SEN in Nursery/ Early Years; teacher professional learning in relation to SEN and budgetary issues.

## **6 Review of accountability framework.**

This is a DE led review into the accountability within the education sector and has been taken forward by a core working group chaired by DE.

Membership includes up to five MS representatives and up to five TU representatives.

The review sought to identify where any of the processes within the Accountability Framework create excessive workload and provide recommendations for reducing this without losing quality. The key focus of the group was on school support, development, improvement and inspection.

Given the broad scope of this review, to maintain focus and manageability, it has been necessary to determine a discrete, priority number of issues to be considered. It was agreed that it would be helpful to focus the review around specific areas that appeared to be drivers of excessive workloads: school improvement, school development planning, and inspection. Three subgroups were formed to this end.

It is expected that the review might have the potential to achieve the following outcomes:

- Recommendations around an enhanced model for teacher learning and development that ensures TPL is a continuous, iterative process and consideration given to the need for a potential system for effective recording throughout a career.
- A reduction in workload associated with the inspection process with clear guidance around what is and what is not required.
- A clear picture around school improvement in respect of the roles and responsibilities and signposting for help and support.
- Proposals for a revised, streamlined School Development Planning process with examples of good models provided in some form of Desk-aid type guidance.

- Proposals for a system that ensures effective, periodic review of School Development Plans that provides constructive feedback at a high level.
- Proposals around how performance measures encourage improvement and are used to set targets / ensuring effective accountability at pupil, school and system level and impact on workload.
- Development of an 'accountability framework user guide'

## **7 Review of consultation arrangements.**

With the stated aim of promoting positive industrial relations, this joint management/NITC review will develop consultative arrangements in schools. This is a TNC led review and management Side will take the lead in this review and will aim to set out the progress and key changes made in industrial relations since the Agreement was reached in April 2020 and the ending of the industrial action including:

- The review of the TNC Constitution.
- The establishment of a Joint Secretaries Forum.
- The arrangements in place to ensure early consultation between management and teaching unions in respect of any new policies or proposals for change that may impact on teacher workloads; (Work has commenced on a pilot of Joint Consultative Committees within schools)
- The establishment of the joint working groups to address the 9 identified areas in the Agreement.
- Commencement of joint reviews of the programme of policy and procedures reviews.

Management Side and NITC jointly considered:

- The principles of consultation with an agreed understanding of what consultation means.
- Consultation machinery covering engagement with NITC on initiatives which potentially impact on teacher workload.
- The practical arrangements for establishing consultative arrangements in schools – local arrangements.
- The manageability of proposed arrangements both central and local.
- Training support for management and trade union participants in the consultative process.

An attempt was made to develop an agreed protocol or guidance on the development and implantation of new initiatives at system level, a previous draft version having been rejected by DE following work undertaken by the 'transition group'. However, NITC could not support the proposed document and therefore agreement was not reached.

The initial findings of the group have been agreed by the Oversight Group and is currently with TNC for implementation.

Areas for recommendation include a draft proposed guidance document for schools on effective consultation has been developed and agreed by the working group with significant input and support from the Labour Relations Agency; extension of the pilot period for JCCs; training in HR

for school leaders and aspiring leaders to be developed; ensuring consistent HR advice is available for schools; in line with the review of the Workload Agreement this review lends voice to the importance of a central resource for documents relating to teachers' terms and conditions.

### **8 Review of Statutory Assessment at Key stages 1,2 and 3.**

This DE led group, while working closely with NITC, will make policy recommendations regarding the purpose, nature and design of key stage assessment in Northern Ireland. The group will hope to benchmark against best practice and produce proposals and recommendations to support the development of fit for purpose arrangements for key stage assessment. This will be led by DE in collaboration with trade union side and will have practitioner involvement.

Unfortunately, DE have yet to appoint staff to this review and there is no indication of timescale for this.

### **9 Review of initiatives to promote and support Teacher Health and well-being.**

A joint Management/NITC review to promote teacher health and well-being. This is a TNC led review and the trade union Side will take the lead in this review, chaired by Nuala O'Donnell, INTO. The group has reviewed existing potential support for teachers in their role so that they have access to help, advice and practical intervention which promotes health and well-being. The review has identified good practice and sought to make recommendations to address gaps in support provision.

The group considered...

- The availability of existing support services to teachers and school leaders across all sectors.
- Gaps within the current provision of 'help, advice and practical intervention' in relation to health and well-being for teachers including principals and vice principals.
- Specific consideration of gaps in provision of support, advice and practical intervention around health and well-being linked to equality issues and the need for greater awareness and training in this area.
- Specific consideration of the teaching workforce profile in relation to health and well-being.
- Health and well-being challenges faced by teachers and school leaders in relation to challenging behaviours and complex needs.
- Support available to improve health and well-being of staff experiencing excessive workload.
- The need for a revised TNC Strategy in relation to Teacher Health and Wellbeing (THAW).

The group hoped to establish a baseline 'health profile' of the teaching workforce and obtain views on helpful supports, develop a database of evidence around the key issues by an agreed date and prepare a full review report for presentation to the Oversight Group by an agreed date.



## 1.5 Teachers' pay and conditions:

- Work experience visits – INTO have advised its members that the new policy is totally unworkable and sees benefit in consulting with EA to highlight issues. Kevin Daly has taken the lead for INTO in this regard.
- Code of Conduct – This document is still within the consultation period, however, INTO members have been instructed not to sign the document that was delivered to schools.
- EA contracts – Meetings led by Assistant Northern Secretary, Marie O'Shea, continue with EA officials in regard to hybrid contracts, essential car use, permanency delays, SEN allowances and four-year permanency claims. The NITC sub-committee is now as follows:

Marie O'Shea (INTO)  
Maxine Murphy-Higgins (NASUWT)  
Danielle Black (NEU)  
Rebekka Gilpin (UTU)  
Liam McGuckin (NAHT)

This group has been very successful in securing many permanent posts for EA employees.

Much of the business of the TNC/JWP has been focused on the pay negotiations. INTO is keen to re-establish the idea of the full TNC and with the reconstitution of the TNC, measures are now in place to upgrade policies and procedures using the joint Secretaries Forum. The first two areas, as already noted, that have been agreed as being priority are in regard to the Attendance Procedure and the mix of family friendly policies.

Teachers' terms and conditions continues to be a feature of the negotiating arrangements. INTO remains of the view that such a review should only commence when sufficient funding has been secured and an agreed process had been developed.

In June 2024, NITC put a pay claim to Management Side for a cost-of-living increase of 13.6% on all pay points for 2024-25.

While the NITC settled the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 pay claims in good faith and recognising the financial situation at the time. The reality is that inflation over the three-year period was in excess of the average award to teachers and school leaders.

From 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2024 the cumulative rate of inflation as per the ONS Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 21.1%. This is a shortfall of 8.3% for a teacher on UPS3.

CPI inflation at the end of March 2024 was 3.2%.

The NITC are committed to pay restoration and are therefore submitting a claim for 13.6% which is based on the shortfall over the past three years and the current rate of inflation plus 2% to account for a move towards pay restoration.

During the summer 2024, Teachers in England received a pay uplift of 5.5%.

By October, no offer had been received by NITC.

On 13 November 2024, INTO informed Management Side of the intention to ballot members for strike action and action short of Strike from 25 November 2024 to 16 December 2024.

The result of the ballot was communicated to Management Side on Tuesday 17th December 2024.

## 1.6 Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

The work of the NITC sub-committee to review this Act and provide guidance is ongoing. The members of the group were...

- Justin McCamphill (NASUWT)
- Paul Groogan (INTO)
- Carney Cumper (UTU)
- Liam McGuckin (NAHT)
- Gordon White (NEU)

Objections to the introduction of the Act were raised again at NITC and it was agreed that the detail of the act was, among other things, bureaucratic and not conducive to teacher/parent relations.

While the review of TNC 2011/1 Teacher Health and Wellbeing Strategy (THAW) was finally completed in 2016, the revised and updated document still (2025) remains under consideration by Management Side. As previously noted, this document will be considered under the review of initiatives to promote and support Teacher Health and well-being.

Redundancies continues to be a subject of discussion at the negotiating machinery. Because of the covid-19 crisis identification of potential redundancies has temporarily ceased. Only category one redundancies in respect of school closure and amalgamations have been actioned.

## 1.7 Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC)

NITC has the following representation from the recognised teachers' unions.

- |          |                     |
|----------|---------------------|
| • NEU    | 3                   |
| • INTO   | 5                   |
| • NAHT   | 1 [with 1 observer] |
| • NASUWT | 5                   |
| • UTU    | 5                   |
| • Total  | 19                  |

### **INTO Representation on NITC**

INTO representatives on the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council in 2024 are:

- Geraldine McGowan (NC Chair)
- Marty Lavery (NC Vice-Chair)
- Mark McTaggart
- Marie O'Shea
- Tommy McGlone

### **NITC Officers**

The NITC Officers were re-elected in September 2023 and are:

- Chair: Jacquie White (UTU)
- Vice Chair: Justin McCamphill (NAS/UWT)
- Honorary Secretary: Mark McTaggart (INTO)
- Minutes Secretary: Pauline Buchanan (NEU)
- Treasurer: Graham Gault (NAHT)

### **Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC)**

Each NITC union has two representatives on the Teachers' Side of the TNC. The INTO representatives in 2023/24 were Mark McTaggart and Marie O'Shea.

#### **NITC Side of the TNC**

- NEU: Pauline Buchanan
- INTO: Mark McTaggart, Marie O'Shea (Tommy McGlone)
- NAHT: Graham Gault
- UTU: Jacquie White, Stephen McCord (Rebekka Gilpin)
- NASUWT: Justin McCamphill, Raymond Beggs

### **NITC Issues**

#### **DE Strategic Forum**

INTO continues to engage in the Strategic Forum to promote education partnership and planning. INTO is represented at the forum by Mark McTaggart, Northern Secretary.

## 1.8 Education Authority (EA)

The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) were dissolved on 31 March 2015. The Education Authority was established under the Education Act Northern Ireland 2014 and became operational on 1st April 2015. EA is a non-departmental body sponsored by the Department of Education. It employs over 39,000 people across Northern Ireland in a wide variety of roles. This includes teachers in controlled schools, school-based support staff and staff in administrative headquarters. EA remains responsible for all of the operational functions previously carried out by the five ELBs in accordance with the Education Orders. Sara Long is no longer the chief executive, she has been replaced by Richard Pengelly and Cynthia Currie has taken up position as the Director of Education.

## 1.9 Department of Education

INTO held several meetings with Departmental officials in the past year. In particular INTO raised a number of ongoing concerns including:

- Investing in Education and associated cuts
- Awarding permanency
- The governance of schools
- Teachers' pay
- School inspections and ETI

## 2. PENSIONS

### 2.1 Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme Pension Board (NITP-SPB)

NITPSPB meetings are held on a quarterly basis. Kevin Daly, Trade Union Official INTO, attended these meetings as a member representative on this body. Northern Committee (NC) received reports on each of the meetings at the closest subsequent monthly NC meetings.

For each meeting a quarterly report on performance and governance is produced to enable Board members to monitor the administration and management of the Teachers' Pension scheme. Minutes of meetings are published on the DE website. Items discussed at the Pension Board meetings include;

#### 2.1.1 Pensions Dashboard

The Pensions Dashboards (Amendment) Regulations 2023 deal with the requirement for pension schemes to enable individuals to access their pensions information online, securely and all in one place. Dashboards are to provide clear and simple information about an individual's multiple pension savings, including their State Pension.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has made the Pension Dashboards (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2023. The regulations include a connection deadline of 31 December 2016, with DWP and The Pensions Regulator to publish staging timeline guidance for schemes.

The regulations come into force on the 09 August 2023

NITPS input to this will be guided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Pensions Dashboards launch which has been delayed. Confirmation of a proposed timetable for NI schemes is pending. Whilst the final connection deadline is 31 October 2026, it is anticipated that DWP and the Pensions Regulator will issue guidance requiring schemes to connect before this date.

#### 2.1.2 Pension Applications

A significant number of delays to processing of pensions were experienced by scheme members between April and December 2024.

520 pension applications were made in time for summer 2024 retirements. 372 were processed and paid by August 2024. The total number processed by October 2024 was 440, leaving 80 pension payments delayed well beyond the anticipated four month period as outlined in the pension application forms and guidance.

INTO raised concerns around this through the Pension Board and Scheme Advisory Board. Issues have arisen due to staffing at TPPT.

Officials in Northern Office made representation on behalf of members where such cases were raised.

### 2.1.3 Risk Register

A risk register is updated regularly to ensure that all risks to the teachers' pension scheme are identified, monitored and addressed in a timely manner.

### 2.1.4 Annual Benefit Statements (ABS)

Annual Benefit Statements are now accessible through the Teachers' Pension Portal. INTO have consulted with our financial advisers in relation to apparent inaccuracies reported to Northern Office by members. Platinum reported that the majority of statements they had seen to date, in consultations with members, were, on the face of it, inaccurate in respect to 'Option 2' elements of the statements. INTO Officials have raised this with Teachers' Pay and Pensions through the Scheme Advisory Board and Pension Board and have asked that the necessary steps be taken to provide accurate pension statements.

### 2.1.5 Dealing with queries from scheme members

INTO members continue to report difficulty in getting in touch with staff in Teachers' Pay and Pensions (TPPT). This anecdotal information has been substantiated by the data provided by the Department in relation to calls received and responded to. Staffing at TPPT has been an issue for several years and remains a concern. Deficits in staffing and loss of experienced staff has been cited as the primary reason alongside a large increase in the volume of calls associated with the launch of the Pension Portal. While recruitment of new staff has been approved for TPPT, recruitment and retention is reported as a challenge and a significant number of vacancies continue to be filled by agency staff. INTO representatives have repeatedly raised concerns directly with senior staff at TPPT and DE, anticipating that staffing issues will not be addressed by Spring of 2025 and that this is likely to lead to a repeat of delayed pension payments experienced by INTO members in 2024.

### 2.1.6 Scheme Finance/ Scheme Valuation

The results of the 2020 actuarial valuation of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) have been published on the Department of Education website.

The three component reports which make up the formal reporting of the NITPS actuarial valuation are available on the DE website.

The finalised valuation results for NITPS confirm an employer contribution rate of 29.1%, resulting from the SCAPE discount rate change, with effective from 01 April 2024.

HM Treasury (HMT) has committed to providing funding for increases in employer contribution rates resulting from the SCAPE discount rate. For devolved administrations, it is understood that proportional funding via the Barnett consequential process will apply. Confirmation from HMT/ Department of Finance on how the funding mechanism will operate is pending.



## 2.1.7 Legislation

### **McCloud**

The McCloud judgement refers to the Court of Appeal's ruling that Government's 2015 public sector pension reforms unlawfully treated existing public sectors differently based upon members' age. This affects the period between April 2015 and April 2022.

The Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) has introduced a 'deferred choice underpin' which will allow all affected members, at the point at which they access their pension, to choose how they wish to have their service during the remedy period awarded ie either in their legacy scheme or the reformed scheme.

All relevant legislation is now in place.

The practical outworking of this is that scheme members applying for access to pension benefits are being provided with a letter providing guidance to the deferred choice, an updated statement of benefits as they would apply in each of the two options provided and a final choice form to be completed and returned to TPPT. This is issued following submission of the TP4 pension application form.

### **Goodwin**

The Goodwin case identified male survivors of opposite-sex marriages and civil partnerships are treated less favourably than survivors in same-sex marriages and civil partnerships.

Scheme rules will be changed to ensure that the male spouse or civil partner of a female member is treated in the same way as a same-sex spouse or civil partner. Survivor benefits will be calculated using service from 1 April 1972, or 6 April 1978 if the marriage or civil partnership took place after the last day of pensionable service.

This change will apply for deaths in respect of female members which occurred from 5 December 2005, which is the date that same-sex civil partnerships were introduced.

In the interim period, DE will consider application of the policy intent if a priority case should arise.

## 2.1.8 Annual Pension Increase

Pension Increase is always applied on the first Monday falling on or after 6 April. The increase in 2023 was 6.7%, which was applied from 6 April 2024.

Pension Increase is based on the rate of Consumer Prices Index (CPI) in the year to the preceding September.

## 2.1.9 Major Initiatives – Replacement Pensions System

The introduction of the on-line portals is complete. Members are reminded that their Annual Benefit Statements are now online, with a paper statement able to be accommodated in certain circumstances.

The Department of Finance continues to attempt to reduce estate costs by reducing the number of civil service offices. As a result, TPPT have now moved from their long standing offices in Waterside House and are now based in Orchard House which is situated in the city of Derry.

## 2.2 Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme Advisory Board (NITPSAB)

NITPSAB meets on a quarterly basis. INTO is represented on the NITPSAB by Nuala O'Donnell INTO Senior Official and Kevin Daly INTO Official.

The meetings dealt with the following issues:

### 2.2.1 Opt out data

The number of teachers opting out of the Teachers' Pension scheme in Northern Ireland remains low with no discernible trends apparent and to date has given no cause for concern.

### 2.2.2 Scheme Valuation

The Government Actuary Department (GAD) has completed the 2020 NITPS Scheme Valuation. Valuations of public sector pensions are carried out every four years, meaning that the 2024 valuation is now overdue.

The finalised valuation results for the 2020 scheme for NITPS confirm an employer contribution rate of 29.1%, resulting from the SCAPE discount rate change, with effective from 01 April 2024. Increased costs to be funded by HM Treasury and proportional funding via Barnett consequential to be provided to devolved administrations.

### 2.2.3 Member Contribution Rates 2024/25

DE Circular 2024/03 set out changes from 01 April 2024 to salary bands for contribution rates for members.

Salary bands applicable to member contributions for the NITPS changed in line with an increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). CPI rose by 6.7% in the year to September 2023, therefore, the salary bands for contribution rates for members have increased by 6.7% with effect from 01 April 2024.

These arrangements apply to all members.

#### Member Contribution rate: 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

Up to £34,289.99	7.4%
£34,290 to £46,158.99	8.6%
£46,159 to £57,729.99	9.6%
£54,730 to £72,534.99	10.2%
£72,535 to £98,908.99	11.3%
£98,909 and above	11.7%

Contributions are based on a member's annual salary rate (actual earnings).

## 2.3 ICTU Pensions

INTO along with other public sector trade unions, through NIC ICTU, continue to meet with the Department for Finance and Personnel and the other public sector government department officials. Nuala O'Donnell continues to represent INTO, and the NITC, on the NIC ICTU/DFP Public Services Pensions Bill Collective Consultative Working Group. (CCWG). This group met regularly during the year to address issues of concern in relation to the implementation of the Public Sector Pensions Act NI. Jim Quinn of the FBU was elected as the new co-chair of the TUS.

### 2.3.1 CCWG

The CCWG met twice in 2024

Issues discussed at CCWG meetings included:

#### **Collective Consultation Sub-Group on the review of the effects of the Public Service Statutory review of PSPA (NI) 2014**

Data collation for the Statutory Review of the PSPA(NI) 2014

Data returns were received from all schemes apart from NITPS for the 2023/24 data collation. NITPS advised that their aim was to have their data return with DoF by the end of September 2024. The Group were advised that DoF aim to issue letters and templates for the 2024/25 collation to Departments in November 2024.

Some points of note were highlighted from the templates received to date:

- Scheme membership has increased in the LGPS(NI) by 6.08%, by 1.68% in the HSC scheme and by 0.51% in the CS(NI) scheme. Alternatively, the FPS and PPS had decreases in membership of 5.5% and 4.21% respectively.
- IHRs in the HSC have gone up from 129 in year ending 31 March 2022 to 244 in year ending 31 March 2023 which is an increase of 89.15%.

## 2.4 Consultations

### **CONTRIBUTION YIELD CONSULTATION**

The Department of Education has launched a consultation, concerning draft provisions proposed in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025, which will run for eight weeks and close on 14 February 2025.

NITPS members are required by legislation to collectively contribute 9.6% of their pay towards scheme benefits. An adjustment to the tiered member contribution structure rates is required to ensure that the 9.6% yield will be achieved. The consultation will determine the preferred option to achieve 9.6% yield from 01 April 2025.

Two options have been presented.

Option 1 – increase all but the lowest tier of contributions by the same multiple to achieve an aggregate member contribution yield of 9.6%. Net effect on salary would see a range of increases for members of between £7 and £14 per month.

Option 2 – increase all tiers by the same multiple to achieve an aggregate member contribution yield of 9.6%. Net effect on salary would see a range of increases for members of between £4 and £12 per month.

INTO has responded to the consultation by the February deadline, taking the view that Option 2 is preferable as this represents a more equitable spread of contributions for members.

## 3. EDUCATION

### 3.1 SEN

#### 3.1.1 CYPS

A new Director of CYPS, Dale Hanna, was appointed in 2024. Quarterly CYPS/ Teacher Trade Union Consultation meetings took place throughout the year.

Issues discussed included: SPiMs, SEND Transformation, SEN Allowances and Terms and Conditions of teachers in the Support Services.

##### 3.1.1.1 SEN Placement Project

The majority of pupils with a Statement of SEN were placed by September 2024.

Second stage was to manage and plan and meet pressures for Sept 25 and Sept 26. The aim is to have a strategic area plan for the next 10 years. There has been a lot of engagement, ramped up communication with parents, schools, and politicians. 99.86% of pupils within the transition years have a confirmed place.

Outside transition approximately 93.7% of the remaining pupils were allocated a place. EA created over 1450 places to meet the needs of Children with SEND and have started to build this capacity for Sept 25 and beyond. There is still a lot of work to do for 25/26 as the need is continuing to increase.

##### 3.1.1.2 Permanent Contracts

TUS continued to support teachers in the EA Support Services to gain permanency after four years and a number of teachers were confirmed permanent in December 2024.

##### 3.1.1.3 Time Budgets

Directed Time Budgets for the EA Support Services for September 2024 are still under discussion between NITC and EA CYPS.

##### 3.1.1.4 Administrative workload

INTO, along with colleagues from UTU, NASUWT and NEU met with Gillian Cuthbert, Interim Assistant Director of SEND Support Services, Ursula Garvey and Peter Boyd in August 2024 to discuss ongoing concerns in relation to the changes being introduced to the Support Services and the impact of these on the Support Service teachers and schools. It was an initial meeting which was then followed up by monthly meetings to address issues as they arose. INTO held joint online meetings with the other unions and their members of the Support Services to update members on the meetings with EA CYPS. These regular meetings are continuing into 2025.

### 3.1.2 SEND Transformation Programme

Following issues raised by TUS the implementation of the SEND Transformation programme was delayed initially to January 2025 and then to September 2025. Among the concerns raised were that sufficient time had not been given to consult with the support services on the proposed changes.

Engagement sessions with schools in January 2024. These engagement events were held online, which was the preferred method of engagement for schools. The sessions incorporated a presentation, facilitated break-out sessions and plenary Q&A. 362 school leaders/SENCOs took part in the sessions.

Information was issued to schools in September 2024 with information on how the Autumn term would operate as EA prepare to move to the local team's model in 2025. Children, young people and schools, were still able to access Support Services while work continued to establish the local teams and Regional Management Unit. During this period there were some changes to the support offered, which focussed on prioritising the current waiting lists and clearing as much of these as possible before implementation of the new local team's model, with direct referral only being for children with the most significant and complex needs.

#### 3.1.2.1 SEND Implementation Budget

Schools were informed at the end of June 2024 that the SEND budget for the upcoming school year for SENCOs was £11 million, the same as the previous school year but half of the budget for 2022 – 2023.

#### 3.1.2.2 Graduated Response Framework

In May 2024, school SENCOs received an email offering a 1-day workshop to 'support schools on the practical application of the Graduated Response Framework'. Two days sub cover was to be provided - one day for the face-to-face workshop and an additional day's cover to be taken back in school. This training did not take place with the postponement of the implementation of the SEND Transformation Project and is planned for early 2025.

#### 3.1.2.3 SENCO Support & SEND Implementation Learning Area

The new 'SENCO Support & SEND Implementation Learning Area' went live on the EA Portal in November 2024. It replaced the legacy SEND Website which is due to be archived.

The new Learning Area allows SENCOs, teaching and non-teaching staff the facility to search for and download resources and materials to assist with the implementation and development of SEND in schools. There are currently 245 documents available for access.



### 3.1.3 SEN Area Planning Frameworks

EA consulted on and received approval for:

The establishment of Deanby Centre Special School, a new 3-19 special school in Belfast which opened on 1 September 2024;

Redesignation of Harberton School to operate as a 3-19 school, over two campuses increasing the numbers at the school to up to 500 pupils.

Changing the management of the services under Belfast Hospital School to the management of the Education Authority.

The NISRA projections prepared for the Department of Education at March 2023 indicated the need for 1,648 additional special school places across all LGDs to 2031/32. The need for additional specialist provision places will almost double with 3,584 places required for the same period.

### 3.1.4 SEN Allowances and Pay policy

The EA SEN Scoping exercise was completed in 2023 providing an overall picture in terms of teachers and SEN allowances within a defined time period including teachers engaged through NISTR on a temporary basis. In parallel to this work, Management considered it was important to develop a Salary Policy for teachers in special schools, specialist provisions in mainstream schools and EA Services, that will set out the principles to guide all pay decisions in these settings with objectivity, transparency and consistency whilst at the same time reflecting the needs and circumstances of individual schools and settings. The initial focus of Salary Policy development is on the SEN allowances aspect given the current issues.

EA commenced the formal engagement with the Teacher Unions on the SEN allowances salary policy proposals in May 2024. The Teacher unions responded highlighting a number of issues but to date no further information has been received.

### 3.1.5 Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools (Specialist Provision)

From 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024, EA Operational Plan 1 activity resulted in 212 specialist provision classes in 108 schools. It is estimated that over the life span of Operational Plan 2: 2024-26 there will be a need for a further 958 specialist provision places - 678 primary schools places and 280 post primary school places. This equates to the provision of at least 80 additional classes. While there is some capacity in the current primary and post primary estate, the increase in demand will require additional accommodation to be provided at an additional cost. During the autumn term of 2024 the ETI carried out part 1 of an evaluation of the SPIMS and published that report in November 2024.

### 3.1.6 SEN Capital Programme

On 30 April 2024 the Education Minister, Paul Givan announced a new SEN Capital Programme which will deliver; up to eight entirely new special schools over the next 10 years; new builds for a number of existing special schools; an extension and refurbishment programme for special schools; accommodation for specialist classes in mainstream schools as well as additional maintenance and equipment funding.

He announced that the planning of new build schools for Sperrinview and Knockevin Special Schools would begin immediately, along with capital planning for the much needed second campus of Ardnashee Special School.

## **3.2 ETI**

### **3.2.1 Inspections**

The meetings between ETI and NITC continued in 2024. Following the cessation of industrial action in the summer term, pilot inspections took place in volunteer schools. Formal inspections resumed in September 2024, with over 100 inspections taking place before 31 December 2024. Despite initial concerns about a return to inspections most members found the new inspection process to be a reformed process, with more focus on the learners and how they are learning than on data and paperwork. Regular meetings between ETI and NITC continue.

### **3.2.2 New Framework for Inspection**

In May 2024, The Education and Training Inspectorate, ETI, published their New Framework for Inspection which was informed by, and co-designed with, schools and organisations, resulting in a new inspection process underpinned by a revised vision and mission. It was updated in September 2024 following a number of pilot inspections in May and June after the cessation of industrial action in April 2024.

The document details the key changes to the inspection process and will be kept under ongoing review across the first year of implementation.

### **3.2.3 ETI Pre-school Phase Insights Report**

This report was published on the ETI website in October 2024. ETI concluded that there are many strengths which have been detailed in this report and which have been rightly celebrated in the settings. There have been challenges over the last number of years and undoubtedly new challenges will emerge. However, this report outlines that collaboration at all levels not only enables challenges to be overcome, but also empowers staff to try new ways of working which are important to ongoing evaluation and improvement.

### **3.2.4 ETI Primary (including EOTAS) Phase Insights Report**

This report was published on the ETI website in October 2024. The Key findings included, digital technology is changing how children are taught and how schools communicate with parents and raising children's understanding of anxiety and developing their resilience to support their social, behavioural, and emotional wellbeing (SBEW) needs is a priority. In all primary schools where there was a follow-up inspection improvement was evident in the quality of education provision.

Challenges identified included: The legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic and industrial action necessitates a bold leap forward in school improvement, not just a return to the status quo; Timely interventions and a highly skilled workforce are key to unlocking the full potential of all children, including the rising number of children with complex special educational needs (SEN); A growing number of school leaders are expressing concerns about their own emotional health and

wellbeing and that of their staff; Schools are working proactively to address low attendance which is a legacy of the COVID-19.

### 3.2.5 ETI Post-primary Insights Report

This report was published on the ETI website in October 2024. The Key findings included: Effective leadership and communication are crucial to the development of a culture of continuous improvement; Schools continue to develop creative and innovative approaches for living and working in today's evolving technological landscape; Schools value cross-departmental working and support to meet pupils' needs effectively; Schools where inspection had previously identified areas for action have shown improvement.

Key challenges identified that: Schools need to be enabled and supported to deliver a quality curriculum for all; Schools and centres need better access to professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of all pupils; Pupil absence is a serious concern; and flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of pupils arriving in Northern Ireland is paramount.

### 3.2.6 ETI Evaluations

#### 3.2.6.1 An Evaluation of Mutual Understanding in primary schools

In February 2024 the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) published an exploratory evaluation of the mutual understanding strand of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) area of learning. The purpose of the work was to review, and share effective practice of, how mutual understanding is preparing children for living in, and contributing to, a diverse society.

The report celebrates the commitment to, and work of, primary schools in creating a culture of respect for, and acceptance of, diversity; it also details some of the challenges facing schools.

#### 3.2.6.2 An Evaluation of the digital skills provision in education

During 2023, ETI undertook two evaluations focusing on digital skills provision and published the reports in April 2024. The first report, 'Future Ready Digital Learning: the impact of teachers' devices on education provision' recognises that the rollout of digital devices to the teaching workforce is impacting positively many aspects of school life and professional practice. Also, the successful integration of digital technology within and beyond the classroom to enhance education provision appears achievable, with much potential for further innovation and benefits to learners.

The second report, 'A baseline evaluation of the digital skills provision in primary and post-primary schools' highlights that schools have laid a sound foundation for the development of children and young people's digital skills.

The reports conclude that to optimise the potential benefits of digital technologies in education, DE should continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders to develop and implement an agreed system-wide digital skills strategy for education.

#### 3.2.6.3 ETI publishes reports on Special Educational Needs

14 November 2024 marked the launch of two reports with a dissemination event held at CAFRE, Greenmount Campus, Antrim.

### **Specialist Provisions in Mainstream Schools - Part 1**

This ETI report examines the effectiveness of the arrangements, and the quality of the provision, for the growing number of pupils in specialist provisions in mainstream schools (SPiMS) classes. It sets out what is working well for the children and young people and what is needed now to help ensure they get access to provision that helps them to be 'happy, learning and succeeding', in line with DE's vision for all children.

In conclusion the ETI found that overall, the staff in our primary and post-primary schools, with the support of EA SSST and their counterparts in special schools, have worked tirelessly to provide high quality learning experiences for the pupils being placed in SPiMS classes. In a significant minority of the schools, these pupils would benefit from appropriate and planned opportunities to work alongside their peers in the mainstream classes, particularly as they progress up through the school. In a small number of instances, due in the main to a lack of access to the services of allied health professionals, the pupils' needs may have been better met in a special school setting.

### **The Statutory Assessment (Statementing) Process**

This ETI report explores whether the current process of statutory assessment, or 'statementing', for children who may be presenting with special educational needs is meeting the needs of those children. It focuses on the practicalities of the statutory assessment and review process and on issues relating to the implementation of educational statements.

ETI found that the process for assessment to statementing is overly bureaucratic and slow which causes delays in learners accessing support. Many parents, and some principals/leaders, seek statutory assessment for a learner in order to access the support of a one-to-one classroom assistant which is not always the most educationally sound option, particularly when it can currently reduce access to Stage 2 pupil support services. The removal of access to Stage 2 services on allocation of a statement of SEN needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

In conclusion ETI found the evidence from this evaluation highlights critical deficiencies in the Statutory Assessment (Statementing) process for learners with SEN. The current arrangements are not identifying and assessing the needs of all learners with SEN in a timely way. The process is overly bureaucratic and is not focused sufficiently on getting to the specifics of how education can be adapted to meet the educational needs of the learners. In short, the current process is not working effectively enough in meeting the needs of learners with SEN.

## **3.3 Secondment of new EA Chief Executive**

The Board of the Education Authority (EA) agreed to the Education Minister's proposal to second Richard Pengelly to the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) with effect from 15 April 2024. He replaced Sara Long who left the post after five years to take up another appointment.

In welcoming the Board's agreement, Education Minister Paul Givan said:

*"I am pleased the Board has agreed to the appointment of Permanent Secretary Richard Pengelly as CEO of the Education Authority and I am grateful to the Head of the Civil Service for agreeing to release Richard to undertake this important role."*

## 3.4 Controlled Schools Management Authority

In September 2024 Education Minister Paul Givan announced the establishment of a delivery and implementation group to lead in the development of a management authority to support the controlled schools' sector.

Mr Mark Baker, currently Chief Executive of the Controlled Schools' Support Council, will chair the group, comprising Richard Pengelly, Chief Executive of the Education Authority and Ronnie Armour, Deputy Secretary at the Department of Education.

## 3.5 New Chairperson for the Board of the Education Authority

In December 2024 Education Minister Paul Givan announced the appointment of Mr Mervyn Storey, fellow Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) politician, to the post of Chairperson of the Board of the Education Authority (EA) with effect from 1 January 2025.

Welcoming the appointment, Paul Givan said:

*"I am pleased to make this appointment today as Mervyn Storey brings a wealth of expertise and experience to this role at a critical moment as we seek to transform our education system for the next generation. He has a sound understanding of the education landscape and an appreciation of the values that underpin the work of the Authority.*

*"Delivering this transformation will require exceptional leadership. There could be no-one better placed to drive forward our agenda than Mervyn, and I look forward to working with him as we make real and impactful change to the lives of children, young people and their families in Northern Ireland."*

## 3.6 Pre-school

### 3.6.1 Standardisation of Pre-School Education

Education Minister Paul Givan has announced that an additional 2,500 children in 105 pre-school settings from throughout Northern Ireland will be offered full-time pre-school education from September 2025. The 105 pre-school settings from all council areas and pre-school management types will begin the transition of moving from part-time to full-time hours from September 2025.

### 3.6.2 Pre-School Education Inclusion Support Fund

Education Minister Paul Givan has announced a £1.2m Pre-School Education Inclusion Support Fund to support young children with special educational needs (SEN).

The pilot Fund will provide resourcing to pre-school education settings with at least one child undergoing statutory assessment of their educational needs. Settings will receive a payment of £750 per month, per class to help them meet the needs of children with SEN.

The Fund is part of the Minister's £25m Early Learning and Childcare package and aims to begin addressing the needs identified by pre-school settings through the End-to-End Review of SEN.

As children are referred for statutory assessment throughout the year, further payment tranches will be made in December 2024, January and February 2025.

### **3.7 Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum**

In October 2024, Education Minister Paul Givan announced a Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum as part of his Department's response to the findings of the Independent Review of Education.

Launching the Review the Minister said:

"Curriculum is at the centre of every classroom, every school and indeed of our entire education system. The Independent Review is very clear – we have not invested sufficiently in curriculum review, advice or resources. I am giving my assurance that this will change. I am pleased to announce that I have commissioned, Lucy Crehan, an international expert in education policy, to carry out a focused, timebound review that will examine curriculum design and delivery. I want every child to be taught a broad, ambitious and knowledge rich curriculum."

The Review will make recommendations to inform the future of curriculum in Northern Ireland.

The Minister continued:

"Skills derive from the application of knowledge and understanding. By ensuring all children have access to high-quality content, we can bridge gaps in knowledge that often arise from socio-economic disparities. The message is clear. Without sufficient and relevant knowledge, children will not become the kind of contributors our society needs."

In addition, the Curriculum review will be accompanied by a new literacy and numeracy strategy for Northern Ireland.

### **3.8 RAISE**

The RAISE programme, announced in October 2024, was a new initiative, partially funded by the Irish government's Shared Island Fund, which aims to raise achievement to reduce educational disadvantage.

It is a whole community, place-based approach in localities across Northern Ireland to support the Department of Education's vision that "every child is happy, learning and succeeding".

The DE declared that the methodology used to select localities was objective and data informed with all areas having to meet a threshold of need under a wide range of criteria. Super Output Areas across Northern Ireland were analysed using seven criteria – free school meal entitlement, Special Educational Needs, pupil attendance and GCSE attainment as well as the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation measures of income deprivation affecting children and health deprivation and disability, and Crime and Anti-social behaviour.

More than 400 schools in 15 areas across Northern Ireland were identified as being eligible for funding from the scheme. The list published by the DE included almost 40 grammar schools and a

prep school, where parents typically pay fees for their children to attend. In addition some schools with 60% + of their pupils were left out of the scheme. The DE said the list “will be refined” as they continue to engage with the education sector and other stakeholders.

### **3.9 Defibrillators in Schools**

Education Minister Paul Givan in November announced a new initiative to fund and roll out Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) to all schools in Northern Ireland.

A recent survey had indicated that less than half of schools in Northern Ireland currently have a defibrillator on site. The Department of Education will provide over £700,000 of funding to provide defibrillators in around 600 schools.

### **3.10 Examinations**

INTO engaged in a series of meetings with CCEA throughout 2024 and were represented at these by Annmarie Conway, CEC District 2 Representative and Kevin Daly, Trade Union Official. Chairs of Northern Committee have also attended on occasion.

#### **3.10.1 Statutory Assessment**

DE commitment to a Review of Assessment at Key Stages 1,2 and 3, remains outstanding. The long standing INTO boycott of these assessments remains in place pending the completion of any review and agreeable outcome.

The current education Minister has had communications sent to schools, most recently on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024, asking schools to engage with statutory assessments at key stages 1,2 and 3 and submit ‘levels of progression’ (LOPs) with a view to providing system wide data. NITC unions continue to advise members against engagement in these assessments and the assignation and submission of LOPs.

The Independent Review of Education (IRE) has made recommendations around assessment and qualifications but at the time of writing there is no information available on how, if at all, these might be taken forward or how the IRE will impact on the outworking of the long anticipated review of Key Stage Assessment.

Linked to this is the ongoing development and piloting of Computer Adaptive Testing. This is still under development with trials continuing.

#### **3.10.2 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

While broadly welcomed by INTO, RSE remains a potential issue for schools in terms of introduction to the curriculum, workload and training issues. Materials for use in schools are available on the CCEA website and training is being rolled out across the system. The issue remains a potentially controversial one with some faith communities and lobby groups making their views known on issues such as reproductive rights being included in the curriculum.



### 3.10.3 Examinations Post Pandemic

Adaptations and mitigations in examinations and external qualifications which were in place as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic have been reduced and were removed entirely for 2024 awards.

CCEA have developed and issued guidance to schools on 'Centre Resilience' in the event of further disruption to schooling in circumstances similar to the pandemic period. This guidance reflects that was already in place in England and Wales. INTO responded to consultation on this in April 2024. Concerns around potential workload implications and the need to mitigate against this were raised.

### 3.11 Mobile Phone Pouches

In September Education Minister, Paul Givan, issued new guidance to support school leaders in restricting the personal use of mobile phones throughout the school day, including at break and lunch times.

The new guidance will be accompanied by a pilot of phone free solutions, which prevent pupils from using their phones during the school day. These are a pocket-sized fabric pouch with a magnetic latch that is sealed at the beginning of the school day and opened using a special unlocking base. The Department invited expressions of interest for the pilot from schools.

### 3.12 Healthy Happy Minds Pilot Scheme Evaluation

The Department of Education published an independent evaluation of the Healthy Happy Minds pilot project in March 2024. The pilot project was introduced to provide therapeutic and counselling support in primary schools and test approaches which would help inform provision in the longer-term.

Education Minister Paul Givan said:

*"...it is important for me to now take the time to consider the Healthy Happy Minds evaluation, along with wider research and feedback from stakeholders in developing the Department's longer-term approach to supporting pupil emotional health and wellbeing in conjunction with health colleagues and professionals."*

The Healthy Happy Minds pilot service ran in primary schools from November 2021 until March 2023.

### 3.13 Relationships and Sexuality Education Consultation

In January 2024 The Department of Education published the analysis of the response to the public consultation on changes to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) regulations. The consultation ran for 12 weeks from 1 September to 24 November 2023. A total of 13,461 responses were received with over 25,000 comments.



The Department completed the consultation on its legal duty to provide for a parent to request to have their child excused from age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion as part of the Personal Development strand of Learning for Life and Work (LLW) at key stages 3 and 4.

The Department's Regulations are in response to the statutory requirement introduced by the Secretary of State and came into effect on 1 January 2024. Alongside the Regulations, the Department has published guidance for schools in relation to the provision of RSE in schools following the Secretary of State's amendments to the LLW curriculum at key stages 3 and 4. Feedback from the consultation and engagement with stakeholders has informed the guidance.

### **3.14 INTO National Education Conference 2024**

The 2024 Consultative Conference on Education took place in November in Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford. The conference theme was Sustaining Teachers, Sustaining Education. Three students from Mary Immaculate College Limerick presented to delegates their research projects undertaken around the topic of sustainability.

Delegates were allocated to one of four discussion groups to consider set questions on various issues around sustainability. Each session was well attended and delegates appreciated the opportunity to discuss the different topics with peers. Dr Anne Dolan from Mary Immaculate College, gave a keynote on Friday evening entitled Celebrating sustainability stories within and beyond our school communities.

On Saturday morning delegates attended two workshops, from a choice of eight. Four workshops ran twice in the bigger rooms, in the smaller rooms the workshops ran once each. Saturday's keynote address was given by Deirdre Hodson, who works in the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture in the EU Commission. She addressed the conference on Learning for Sustainability in school education: A European perspective, highlighting initiatives across the EU in the area of sustainability.

Delegates said: *Keynote speakers excellent. The workshops were fantastic. The discussion groups gave delegates a chance to discuss and share what's happening on the ground.*

*Focus on sustainability was excellent and really important. Also the angle taken, looking at celebrating what is already happening, rather than overwhelming teachers with the sheer extent of the climate and biodiversity crisis which we are facing. Good selection of workshops.*

### **3.15 National Education Committee**

The Education Committee conducted its work by considering relevant education topics, responding to consultations and reviews, conducting research and preparing for the annual Consultative Conference on Education. Nuala O'Donnell, INTO Senior Official, along with Lisa Magennis, District 1 (replaced by Caroline McCarthy after Congress) and Caolan Byrne, District 2 represent INTO members in the north on the INTO National Education Committee.

The term of the current Education Committee began at the end of Congress 2024 and will end following Congress 2027. The committee is currently considering topics on which to conduct research and which will form the basis of future Consultative Conferences on Education.

The following topics were discussed during the year: Sustainability; Special Education; Curriculum; Teacher Workload; Assessment of Need; Exemptions from Irish; Creativity; School Evaluation; Social/emotional literacy; Teacher Education; Mental Health.

### **3.16 INTO Symposium on Special Education**

The INTO symposium on Special Education took place in February in the Midlands Park Hotel Portlaoise. There was a very high level of interest in the event which was testament to the genuine commitment teachers have to improving the school lives of children with special educational needs (SEN) Dr Brian Fitzgerald from the NCSE provided delegates with an overview of the school inclusion model. District 5 secretary Niamh Harris delivered an emotive and impassioned speech to delegates on her experiences both as a teacher and mother to her artistic son Oísín. She highlighted how teachers and parents have to fight for appropriate resources. Niamh's honest and insightful contribution was greeted with a standing ovation from delegates.

Caroline McCarthy, INTO Northern Committee gave a comprehensive overview of the SEN provision in Northern Ireland. There was a panel with representatives from the major stakeholders in special education. John Boyle INTO general secretary highlighted the importance of increased funding and resources for special education and he closed the symposium by outlining the efforts the INTO has made and continues to make to secure better resources for schools and assuring delegates of the organization's unwavering commitment to continued campaigning on the issues raised.

### **3.17 SCOTENS**

This year's SCOTENS annual conference took place in the Slieve Russell Hotel in October. The theme was Innovative Pedagogies for Inclusive Education: Implications for Policy and Practice. Over 120 delegates attended the conference which was opened by Faustina Graham, Chief Inspector, ETI NI and Yvonne Keating, Chief Inspector, DE RoI. There were a wide range of insightful presentations by researchers from north and south of the border, with parallel sessions on both days under the themes: Agency and Voice, Context/Setting, Learning Strategies, Teacher Education, Autism, Policy/Leadership and Pedagogy.

The conference proceedings, including the Keynote addresses can be accessed via the SCOTENS website, <https://scotens.org/conferences/>

# 4. IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS (ICTU)

## Introduction

The INTO is an affiliated member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions which is based in Dublin and like the INTO, has a northern section, located in Belfast. In the north, it is led by an Assistant General Secretary Mr Gerry Murphy. Mr Owen Reidy is General Secretary of ICTU.

The current President of ICTU is Mr Justin McCamphill, the Regional Officer of the NASUWT who was elected following the 2023 ICTU BDC in July.

The NIC-ICTU is currently chaired by Mr Paddy Mackle of the UCU. The NIC of ICTU has a number of subcommittees, in areas such as Global Solidarity, Disability, Human Rights, Health and Education, dedicated to working on advancing the ICTU's trade union and social-economic policies on which are a number of INTO nominees. Elections are held every two years to the NIC-ICTU and currently INTO is represented on this body by the Northern Secretary, Mark McTaggart.

## 4.1 Congress Officers (until November 2024)

- Mr Paddy Mackle UCU (Chair)
- Jacqui White UTU (Vice Chairperson)
- Gerry Murphy ICTU (Assistant General Secretary)
- INTO Representative Mark McTaggart (INTO Northern Secretary)

## 4.2 Key Issues:

### Economy

The local economy continues to suffer with a cost-of-living crisis. The war in Ukraine gave rise to severe price rises in the costs to households and industry of energy initially and further then on food prices. This uncertainty caused a loss of confidence across the financial markets both in the UK and globally in the British economy. These factors coupled with the continuing Brexit and Protocol fallout and the lingering negative consequences on supply changes of the Covid-19 pandemic have combined to bring about a cost-of-living crisis not experienced since the 1980s. The impact on working people saw a dramatic and sustained rise in industrial unrest, which manifested in ongoing strike action across both the private and public sectors.

This combination of factors comes on top of the established structural issues already impairing economic growth and stability, further drastically inhibiting the economy in the north. The NIC-ICTU continues to be active in seeking to represent the interests of workers effectively in these circumstances and to contribute to various initiatives and efforts to resuscitate the economy in

the north. This task was made infinitely more difficult because the NI Executive and Stormont have been collapsed due to the DUP standing down its First Minister, Mr Paul Givan, MLA in February of 2022.

The economy in the north has a large retail sector that continues to experience a downturn as a consequence of Brexit along with the Covid-19 pandemic hangover and now the cost-of-living crisis. Workers in this sector, already the victims of low wages and poor hours, are continuing to experience increased employment instability. The outdated and negative economic doctrine of austerity which underpins the approach of the Conservative government in London is further badly affecting these workers. ICTU's policy document "No Going Back" provides a detailed and considered alternative economic strategy and it remains the trade unions go to text in providing arguments to challenge the current status quo. This policy manifesto is regularly updated to reflect the ongoing changes in our economic circumstances with a view to it remaining the trade union blueprint for a better future for all.

There was an expectation following the New Decade New Approach Deal of 2019 that additional funds were to be made available to support public services. This expectation remains to be met due in large part to the pandemic and also because the Executive failed to produce even a draft economic strategy. This stinging austerity budget imposed by the Secretary of State, Mr Chris Heaton-Harris in November 2022 and April 2023 has continued to drive a series of campaigns in the areas of health and social care and education to challenge the continued cuts being experienced to services and employment in these areas. The pairing back of jobs across both public and private sectors and the erosion of services is calling into question the viability of services and the ability of working people to access them.

In December 2023, as part of political talks at Hillsborough Castle, the UK government made an offer of a package of finance to restore the Stormont Executive. The trade union response to this was to indicate that there was a need for sustainable public finances, rather than quick fixes.

ICTU policy analysis outlined what was required for the longer term:

- Public sector pay is a recurring expenditure. Offering 1 year funding to meet public sector pay requirements is not only shortsighted, it is financially irresponsible.
- The Secretary of State should release funding for payments this fiscal year, as a confidence-building measure.
- A fiscal floor is about providing public services in Northern Ireland on the same basis as the rest of the UK. This cannot simply be achieved by setting an arbitrary limit on public spending.
- Transforming public services is an on-going process and the financial commitment must match the scale of what is being proposed.
- A stabilisation fund is welcome, but such a fund can only fulfill its purpose if the longer term settlement is sustainable.

Later in December came the announcement of 18 January strikes, as individual disputes were co-ordinated into a 'Generalised Day of Action'.

Within days of the day of action, finance was unlooked and local political parties had resolved remaining issues sufficiently to return to the Stormont Executive.

On 15 February, the Minister of Finance announced an allocation of £685 million had been made available to allow public sector pay negotiations to begin.

INTO Northern Secretary, Mark McTaggart has contributed to the ongoing work of the NIC-ICTU led by Assistant General Secretary, Gerry Murphy around engaging with all the local political parties, to promote trade union policies and support initiatives to assist in protecting workers rights in the post Brexit era. The NIC-ICTU campaign, entitled “Workers Demand Better” aimed at encouraging our politicians to get back to work at Stormont and the putting in place of meaningful protections for workers in the face of the unprecedented cost of living crisis currently being visited upon society has continued throughout 2023. This overarching campaign is aimed at providing a context and routeway in the face of the cost-of-living crisis which encompasses all the multitude of campaigns underway in the community and voluntary sectors as well as the affiliated trade unions.

The NIC-ICTU continues to meet on a monthly basis and engages in meetings with various political parties, the Northern Ireland Office [NIO], The Northern Ireland Civil Service [NICS], the NI Executive Forum and other arms-length bodies. The NIC-ICTU’s major policy document [“No Going Back”] remains the policy document underpinning NIC-ICTU’s approach to this work and provides an alternative pathway to the public discourse on the shape of a post pandemic economy. In this year, while the NIC-ICTU’s focus continues on seeking to ensure that the commitments on trade union rights, included in the political settlement [New Decade New Approach] which saw the re-instatement of Stormont and the Executive in 2019, were pursued,.

NIC-ICTU facilitated meetings between relevant ministers and trade unions in order to negotiate settlements to the wide range of disputes. A key meeting was held with the Finance minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald in May 2024 with all of the unions representing public sector workers who had taken industrial action.

There were further positive developments in early summer when a General Election was called, with the promise of changed circumstances across the UK as well as locally. The NIC-ICTU discussed and agreed that certain policy areas needed to be highlighted to assist with the serious public conversation during the election period, all matters which we have long advocated, based on motions passed at delegate conferences over the years, and from across the democratic structures of NIC-ICTU

In July 2024, the Ministry for the Economy opened a public consultation with proposals to update and substantially improve workers rights in Northern Ireland. NIC-ICTU has been lobbying for such legislation since the Better Work Better Lives campaign and has been engaged in negotiations with political parties, government officials and other interested groups, such as members of the Labour Relations Agency’s Stakeholder Forum.

Key for Minister Conor Murphy is what he calls his ‘Good Jobs Agenda’. The four aspects of a Good Job, as defined by the Carnegie Framework are: terms of employment; pay and benefits; voice and representation; and promote a healthy work-life balance.

### **Challenging Racism and the Far Right**

ICTU and its affiliates have defended the rights of migrant workers and have opposed racism with the same commitment that we oppose sectarianism. They have hosted marches and rallies in

defence of migrants and asylum seekers. They have for years delivered an education programme which provides training on racism and the far right. ICTU appointed in 2023 David Carroll as project leader against racism and the far-right following resolutions passed at the 2023 BDC in Kilkenny.

After the horrific murder of three children in Southport and attempts to kill others, there was a wave of unrelated racist violence triggered by misinformation on social media a disgraceful and cynical manipulation by politicians and international actors. A racist attack followed in Ballykelly and there were calls for street agitation aimed at mosques and minorities. ICTU immediately called for support for victims and the emergency services.

After a wave of violence and arson targeting muslim-owned businesses forced the Stormont Assembly to break its summer recess and debate the violence at Stormont, NIC-ICTU called for a public rally at the steps of Parliament Buildings for trades unionists and all those across the community who share values of equality, diversity and solidarity.

## Brexit

The leaving of the European Union by the United Kingdom Government on January 31st, 2020, against the democratic will of the people of Northern Ireland remains a matter of deep concern for NIC-ICTU.. The positive opportunities the Protocol presents have not been fully seized upon or even promoted and this must become a priority.

NIC-ICTU remains deeply concerned that much of current EU law will cease to be enforceable in the post Brexit era and that Stormont may not exploit the devolved authority it has regarding workers' rights that would allow it to maintain these rights in line with EU developments in this area. The majority of EU legislation has now been transposed to UK law, there does however remain the possibility that key rights and obligations, derived from EU directives, will be removed in future with the passing of the EU Retained Law Bill. NIC-ICTU remains strongly of the view that Brexit must not be used as a pretext to dismantle hard won rights and protections or to drive down employment standards generally. The NIC-ICTU with the support of our trade union comrades across the island will continue to campaign and lobby to prevent these potentially negative consequences happening.

The unity NIC-ICTU established in the run up to Brexit with the business, agriculture, voluntary and community sectors to protect workers and their families from the inevitable economic fall-out and to seek to exploit any opportunities that may arise is something NIC-ICTU has been working hard to maintain. To this end the ICTU north and south will continue to develop and adapt our policy positions which outline practical proposals both for the short and longer terms to enable the necessary protections for workers and their families to be maintained and continue to be allowed to evolve in line with EU policy developments in these areas. Additionally, NIC-ICTU continues to advocate for the opportunities of the Protocol to be highlighted and the ambiguities clarified.

INTO has been central to these interactions and will continue to support the efforts of the trade union movement in attempting to protect our society from the negative effects of Brexit now that it is a reality. One way in which this can be achieved is to see the proposals in 'No Going Back' concerning the public finances and taxation policy mainstreamed and eventually implemented by the Executive and the government in Dublin. The other significant steps NIC-ICTU can take is to continue lobbying the politicians and parties in NI to fully exploit the flexibilities incorporated in

the Protocol to minimise the impact on the economy and take advantage of the privileged trading position the Protocol provides NI industry and trade. INTO will continue to be central to ICTU's efforts to achieve these objectives which will continue to be a feature of ICTU's approach for the years ahead.

INTO plays a full part on the various sub committees of the NIC-ICTU. INTO is represented on the Education Trade Union Group [ETUG] by the Northern Chairperson of INTO's Northern Committee, Geraldine McGowan and the Assistant Northern Secretary, Marie O'Shea. This group has dealt with a range of issues affecting the education sector and is currently leading the fight back against the latest round of cuts to the education budget arising from the Heaton-Harris budget. It is made up of trade unions representing all the workers employed in the education sector.

ICTU's Equality and Human Rights programme is ensuring that these issues remain central to workers, despite the official neglect by government of the Bill of Rights and a Shared Future.

### INTO Representation on NIC ICTU Committees

- ICTU Women's Committee                      Marie O'Shea    Geraldine McGowan
- ICTU Health and Safety Committee        Paul Groogan
- ICTU Global Solidarity Committee        Kevin Daly
- Youth Committee                                Rachel Poland

NIC-ICTU is once again willing to work in co-operation with Belfast Trades Council, in 2024 to ensure the May Day celebrations continues as a family friendly event and is located in a weeklong programme of events.

## 4.3 Training

Senior Official, Nuala O'Donnell, continues to work closely with the ICTU Officials in Belfast, on the improved INTO Trade Union Representative training and additional courses designed to promote trade union effectiveness and address professional and other issues. The numbers of members taking part in courses continues to grow and credit is due to Nuala O'Donnell and the ICTU staff in Belfast in ensuring the courses on offer are relevant and topical. Further courses, the majority of which come with accreditation, continue to come on stream for members.

INTO training opportunities continue to be organised and run by the Northern Office under the direction of Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official, Paul Donnelly and Emmett Hassen. Attendance at these accredited courses is being hampered by the overall lack of financing across the education system in the past year and in particular the lack of temporary teachers available to provide cover for members attending the courses. There has been an increased level of internal INTO co-operation north and south in this year and members are attending courses in significant numbers on matters of a professional nature and related to health issues of interest and concern, whether the member is located north or south.





## 5. INTERNAL

### 5.1 Query Management

Northern Office receives telephone queries from members from 9am to 5pm (Monday to Thursday) and until 4pm on a Friday, with an answering machine service available between 1pm to 2pm each day and at weekends. In addition queries are received by email to [infoni@into.ie](mailto:infoni@into.ie) and the INTO member's portal, through the 'Raise a query' facility.

Active cases for individual members and schools continue to be managed by officials in the Northern Office. The officials aim to ensure that members are advised of developments relating to cases and are apprised of the opportunities / developments at each stage. Northern Committee and CEC members are apprised of developments pertaining to casework in their area.

INTO relies on a rota of officials to respond to members' queries. Paul Boyd has been retained as cover for triaging cases in the event of officials' absences. The Assistant Northern Secretary has responsibility for the management of the query and casework load in Northern Office.

### 5.2 Representation

Members continue to be supported to pursue legitimate grievances and in response to all disciplinary and contractual matters, through the agreed procedures.

In assisting individuals to resolve grievances INTO has supported members through mediation, conciliation and arbitration stages of the agreed procedures. INTO continues to recommend to our members that mediation and conciliation should be undertaken by independent practitioners, selected from the LRA (Labour Relations Agency).

### 5.3 Conciliation

Members continue to avail of the use of conciliation services provided by the LRA, as part of the agreed procedures.

### 5.4 Arbitration

Members are supported to an independent appeal panel where other mechanisms have failed to resolve the grievances. Members have been supported to this stage on, Grievances, Redundancy / Dismissal, Bullying / Harassment and Disciplinary matters

In 2024 INTO brought a number of cases to Independent Appeal. Due to the backlog caused by the Covid pandemic, cases have in several instances been delayed.

## 5.5 Industrial Tribunals

INTO continues to support members taking cases to industrial tribunals following a positive recommendation by a *Prima Facie* committee and a supportive legal opinion. Representation of members is provided by a Senior Official and the relevant Northern Committee member. In all cases legal assistance is sought.

## 5.6 Equality

Regular Reports of on-going equality matters are presented to the Northern Committee and the INTO Equality Committee. INTO is represented by Susan McMullan up to 1 March 2024), Mairead McLaughlin and Grainne McAleer on the INTO National Equality Committee, along with Senior Official, Tommy McGlone.

## 5.7 Recruitment

### 5.7.1 Students

INTO, UTU and NEU jointly attended St. Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College, University of Ulster and Queen's University freshers' fairs which were held in the colleges. To enable a quicker registration process, students complete one form for the three unions, registering via a QR code and completing an online form.

480 students were recruited since 1 September 2024. The overall student membership figure on 31 December 2024 was 1278.

INTO have met with St. Mary's Students' Union on several occasions and are working closely together to plan for upcoming webinars and seminars to support our student members in 2024/25.

INTO continued to support student members via annual sponsorship of student handbooks, the Graduate event for St Mary's and the pantomime in Stranmillis. Sponsorship of the Ladies GAA teams in both St. Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College, continued along with sponsorship of the Men's GAA Team in Stranmillis University College and sponsorship of tops for the St Mary's Students' Union Executive.

### 5.7.2 Student Teacher Awards 2024

At Stranmillis University College the Vere Foster medal was awarded to Amy McCloy.

At St Mary's University College, Clodagh Davis was selected to receive the Vere Foster medal, and the John Cull Medal, sponsored by Newry Branch, was awarded to Ruth Chestnutt.

## 5.8 Membership

All INTO school representatives were circulated with recruitment materials in April and August. The INTO membership is continuing to grow. The membership figure at the end of December 2024 was 7216.

Gender	District 1	District 2	Total
Prefer not to say	1	1	2
Non Binary	1	0	1
Female	2697	3001	5698
Male	734	779	1513
Not provided	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3434</b>	<b>3782</b>	<b>7216</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7216</b>		

Membership rates for INTO members increased in September 2024. For all members paid directly by DE INTO subscriptions were raised from 0.55% to 0.6% with a maximum deduction of 1.5 times the minimum. For members paying by Direct Debit their subscriptions were raised from £14 to £20 per month for full time members and from £7 to £10 for part time or supply teachers.

The online application process for members in schools or institutions who are not paid directly by DE is progressing, with a lot of work being done internally to put this facility in place. Members who pay by Direct Debit should be able to do so online by early 2025.

## 5.9 Appointment of the Intern

The position of Intern was advertised on 9 February 2024. Dermot Gallagher was successful in his application and was seconded from his teaching post for the school year 2024/25 to work in INTO Northern Office.

As INTO Intern, Dermot has worked closely with the officials throughout the year, answering members' queries and dealing with members' cases. In addition, as an elected member of the INTO Northern Committee, and a previous member of the national Education Committee Dermot has focused on Education issues, terms and conditions, recruitment, and increasing participation between all members at school, branch, and district level.

In his role as intern Dermot attended the INTO National Education Conference and has been attending the Equality Committee on behalf of Northern Office from September 2024.

## 5.10 Youth Committee

INTO Youth Committee consists of members throughout District 1 and District 2 across a range of sectors.

The committee is facilitated by Kevin Daly, Trade Union Official and supported by Rachel Poland (INTO Representative NIC-ICTU Youth Committee). The overall aim of the Youth Committee is to increase participation of younger teachers within the union.

## **5.11 INTO Training**

### **5.11.1 School Representative Training**

Twenty one new INTO School Representatives received training in Northern Office in 2024 and went back into their schools armed with the information on how to carry out this important union role updated on how to deal with issues as they arrive in their schools.

Eleven new Health and Safety Representatives also received training on their role as INTO Health and Safety reps.

### **5.11.2 Training for School Leaders**

16 school leaders successfully completed the accredited course for school leaders on 'Building Good Staff Relations' after attending a 6-week course covering topics such as Effective communication, Managing difficult situations, Handling grievances and disciplinaries and Mediation/LRA.

A further 19 INTO school leaders enrolled for the course this year which will continue in 2025.

### **5.11.3 Financial Planning**

Platinum Financial delivered seven webinars and two seminars for INTO and UTU members in 2024. In total 688 INTO members attended these pre-retirement and mid-career financial planning webinars and 90 members attended the two seminars. Platinum Financial continue to provide this very important service to INTO members to enable them to consider and plan for their financial futures.

### **5.11.4 Webinars**

The series of webinars for INTO members continued in 2024, with two webinars delivered by INTO Officials, in conjunction with NEU and UTU with a total of 97 members attending. The webinar themes were: School Salary Policy, and Role of the Teacher Governor. Two further webinars were postponed due to delays in agreeing the new policies. All the webinars are recorded, and the PowerPoint presentations and the recordings are available for members to view on the INTO website, [www.into.ie/ni](http://www.into.ie/ni).

### **5.11.5 Regional Officer Training**

INTO Branch and District Officers from across the North attended Regional Officer training in Monaghan in December 2024. There was a high level of engagement from the officers in attendance who received training and updating on the use of IT and the INTO database for branch and district purposes, along with branch and district finances. Thursday evening was a lively session with branch and district officers taking part in discussions with the Northern Secretary, General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary on current issues, consultation and

communication with members and participation in Northern Conference and Congress.

On Friday the officers participated in further discussions on recruitment, retention and participation of members, and were trained on preparing motions for conference/congress, and communications and social media.

## 5.12 INTO / NEU / UTU

### 5.12.1 INTO/ NEU / UTU Board

#### Representatives

INTO	UTU	NEU
John Boyle	Stephen McCord	Pauline Buchanan
Caoimhin MacColaim/Marty Lavery	Lynelle Fenton	Alastair Donaghy
Geraldine McGowan	Janice Mullan	Edel McInernery
Marie O'Shea/Nuala O'Donnell	Jacquie White	
Mark McTaggart	Rebekka Gilpin	

The INTO / NEU / UTU relationship continues to develop. The Board has decided to prioritise integration at CEC/NC level. A range of joint events were organised, including retirement courses, an annual Leadership Conference, and general benefits for members.

### 5.12.2 Joint Training

INTO, NEU and UTU Officials met on a number of occasions during the year to plan and agree a joint programme of training for members, school representatives and Health and Safety Representatives from the three unions. Some courses were delivered in person by the union officials and others were delivered virtually in interactive webinars. Further details of these are contained in the Training section above.

### 5.12.3 Annual Leadership Conference

There were three joint leadership conferences in 2024. The first joint union (INTO-UTU-NEU) Leadership Seminar was held in January in the Junction, Dungannon, on pay and industrial action, Managing Stress in the workplace and ETI.

May 2024, in the Armagh City Hotel with an attendance of 150 school leaders. The main sessions of the conference were on ETI, Protecting Yourself in your Role as Principal, Directed Time Budgets and Reasonable Adjustments for teachers.

In October 2024, the joint leadership conference focussed on SEN. Over 150 school leaders and SENCOs attended the conference in the Tullyglass Hotel, Ballymena. Speakers included, EA CYPS, ETI, Children's Law Centre, Middletown Autism Centre and The Children's Commissioner.

### 5.12.4 Membership Plus

All members received their new Membership Plus cards in August 2024. The Membership Plus card entitles members to over 600 offers and discounts on many different products and services.

### 5.13 National Committees

The two representatives on the INTO National PDC from the North of Ireland, Henry Duffin District 1, and Mark Murtagh District 2, attended meetings of the PDC during 2024, along with Marie O'Shea, Assistant Northern Secretary (replaced by Paul Groogan, TU Official, in September 2024).

The two representatives on the INTO National Education Committee from the North of Ireland, Lisa Magennis (replaced by Caroline McCarthy, after Congress 2024) District 1 and Caolan Byrne District 2 attended meetings of the EDC during 2024 along with Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official.

The two representatives on the INTO National Equality Committee from the North of Ireland, Susan McMullan (replaced by Mairead McLaughlin, after Congress 2024) District 1, and Grainne McAleer District 2, attended meetings of the EQC during 2024 along with Tommy McGlone, Senior Official (replaced by Dermot Gallagher, NI Intern in September 2024).

### 5.14 Communication

The communication system for issuing emails to members was changed from Newsweaver to Dot Digital in 2024, which caused a number of initial issues for staff in Northern Office to send information out to all members at short notice. There remains an issue with members opting out of bulk emails on the INTO portal as this means they do not receive the information via email. Where members have complained about not receiving INTO information they have been asked to check if they have opted out and if so they opt in.

### 5.15 Annual Vere Foster Lecture

The 11th Annual Vere Foster Lecture took place on the evening of Friday, 20 June 2024, in the Malone Hotel in Belfast. Professor Siobhan O'Neill delivered a lecture entitled, *Mental Health in children and young people: The role of Education*. Professor Siobhan O'Neill was appointed the Mental Health Champion in 2021 following a period of acting as the Interim Mental Health Champion on the request of the Minister of Health. Siobhan is on a mission as the Mental Health Champion to improve the mental health of the people of Northern Ireland by promoting evidence-based services and care for those who suffer from mental illness and suicidal thoughts.

### 5.16 Annual Brendan Harron INTO Art Competition

The INTO Annual Art Competition for members was renamed the Brendan Harron INTO Art Competition in honour of the Late Brendan Harron. Brendan gave a lifetime of service to INTO, as INTO school Representative, Northern Committee Representative and Chairperson, National Education Committee Representative and INTO Senior Official. Brendan was an art teacher and it was only fitting that the annual art competition should be named after a man who had given so much to INTO. The 2024 winner of the inaugural Brendan Harron INTO Art Competition was David Bell, an INTO member in All Saints College Belfast. His painting of Nelson Mandela is displayed in INTO Northern Office. The competition entries were published in Printout.

# **THE IRISH NATIONAL TEACHERS' ORGANISATION NORTHERN CONFERENCE 2024**

## **Resolutions Passed / Remitted**



RESOLUTION 1	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>commends the INTO membership for their continued support of the ongoing industrial action in support of fair pay for teachers;</li> <li>further commends the NITC for engaging in coordinated industrial action;</li> <li>notes with concern that teachers and school leaders in the north of Ireland receive the lowest level of remuneration of all teachers across these islands;</li> <li>condemns the political representatives for their failure to progress the pay claims of teachers and school leaders for three successive years; and</li> <li>instructs Northern Committee to escalate its efforts to achieve a salary uplift</li> <li>which reflects the true value of the teaching workforce.</li> </ol>	<p>Motion has effectively fallen since passed at Conference.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p>

RESOLUTION 2	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>notes; the decreased SEND implementation funding made available to schools to support the proposed changes to the SEN Framework; the dramatic increase in the establishment of specialist provision classes within mainstream schools (SPiMS); the chronic underfunding and cuts to support services, adding an intolerable strain on school budgets;</li> <li>believes that the current funding model for schools is not fit for purpose; and</li> <li>instructs Northern Committee to; work through NITC to lobby the Department of Education, the EA, and all other relevant stakeholders to review the provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and to provide funding that meets the needs of children admitted to schools, particularly those with complex needs.</li> </ol> <p>work through the NITC, to campaign for appropriate funding and staff training to meet the needs of children with SLD within mainstream schools (SPiMS).</p> <p>work through the NITC to campaign for an appropriate increase to the additional funding, available to schools to recognise and support the additional workload associated with proposed changes to the SEND Framework.</p>	<p>This is ongoing work and is part of the SEND Transformation:</p> <p>This year has seen an additional £1.25M for EYFS SEN CORE WORK.</p> <p>Additionally INTO has</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>worked through NITC to give a SEND Presentation to Assembly Education Committee</li> <li>presented a SEND Motion to NIC-ICTU at the Biennial Delegate Conference</li> <li>consulted with EA Joint Consultative Forum</li> <li>met regularly with EA Children and Young People's Services</li> </ul>



RESOLUTION 3	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. deplores the huge loss of life, in particular the killing and injuring of thousands of children and hundreds of teachers; and the ongoing destruction of the Civilian infrastructure including school, hospitals and places of worship during the latest Israeli bombardment of Gaza;</li> <li>b. notes the motion passed at Congress 2022 calling for support of the BDS movement;</li> <li>c. commends the actions of the Northern Committee and INTO members who have demonstrated tremendous solidarity with the Palestinian people; and</li> <li>d. calls on Northern Conference to:                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. continue to publicise the actions taken by INTO in support of those affected by the attacks on Children, young people and teachers in Gaza and the West Bank;</li> <li>ii. investigate how best to implement the motion supporting the BDS movement passed at the 2022 Congress; and</li> <li>iii. initiate a campaign to encourage INTO members, branches and districts to declare themselves Apartheid Free Zones (AFZ).</li> <li>iv. work through the NITC, to lobby the EA to amend their procurement to reflect the BDS movement principles.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. This campaign is front and centre of INTO work; there has been excellent representation from INTO at the ongoing rallies, and a large Northern delegation was present at the recent INTO Conference to Spotlight Rights of Palestinian Children – 18th January 2025 Liberty Hall, Dublin</li> <li>ii. CEC have implemented this part of the motion.</li> <li>iii. Since conference both District 1 and 2 have declared that they are Apartheid Free Zones as have the majority of branches. NC continue to encourage branches in their area to sign up to this.</li> <li>iv. The work to lobby EA to amend their procurement to reflect the BDS Principles is ongoing. INTO are actively involved in this work through the Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFPP).</li> </ul>

RESOLUTION 4	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. deplores the prevalence of large class sizes in our schools;</li> <li>b. notes with concern that the current EA policy of a maximum of 30 pupils in FS/ KS 1 is not reflected in all schools</li> </ul> <p>further deplores the lack of a cap on class size in K S2; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. lobby DE and EA to revise the current cap downwards; and</li> <li>ii. extend the legislation to include a similar cap in KS2 classes.</li> </ul>	<p>This requires legislative change and INTO through NITC will lobby DE and EA on this matter through ongoing reviews of education.</p>

RESOLUTION 5	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes the dire shortage of teachers available to cover short and long-term absences, particularly in specific post primary subject areas;</li> <li>b. further notes, with great concern, that qualified teachers are compelled to accept long-term employment in other sectors due to the unpredictable nature of paid employment in their chosen profession;</li> <li>c. instructs Northern Committee to:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. investigate the reasons why locally educated teachers choose to work outside the local education system;</li> <li>ii. share knowledge gained from their examination of the teacher supply panel system in ROI with DE and lobby them to explore a similar system in the north; and</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. calls on Northern Committee to update Northern Conference 2025 on the outcomes from points c) 1 and 2.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. INTO have a plan to conduct a Survey of 4th year students in ITE colleges. This will be conducted by summer 2025.</li> <li>ii. This matter was raised in a briefing to the Stormont Education Committee. Further information was made available to DE Officials through JSF discussions.</li> <li>d) This work is ongoing and more information will be presented when available to conference.</li> </ul>

RESOLUTION 6	
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes, with concern, the discontinuation of funding for the Engage Programme;</li> <li>b. acknowledges the positive impact this initiative had on vulnerable children and young people; and</li> <li>c. calls on the Northern Committee, through NITC, to lobby the Department of Education for the reinstatement of the Engage programme.</li> </ul>	<p>INTO has raised the importance and effectiveness of the Engage programme with DE and it was included in briefing papers to the Stormont Education Committee and discussed there.</p> <p>This work is ongoing.</p>
RESOLUTION 7	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. deplores the inappropriate use of the Northern Ireland Supply Teachers' Register and the adverse impact it has on supply teachers' terms and conditions of service; and</li> <li>b. calls on Northern Committee to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. call on the employing authorities to address the inappropriate use of the Northern Ireland Supply Teachers' Register for the booking of teachers on successive discrete contractual engagements beyond the 6 months period set out in the agreed procedures; and</li> <li>ii. work through the NITC, to challenge this less favourable treatment, by all means necessary.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Refer to TNC 2016/1</p> <p>EA issued a reminder of above TNC document to all schools in April 2024, as a result of engagement with NITC.</p> <p>There continues to be engagement with the NISTR Management Team as and when an issue arises.</p>



RESOLUTION 8	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes with concern the volume of work imposed upon post-primary teachers in the delivery of internally assessed elements of external qualifications; and</li> <li>b. calls on Northern Committee to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. engage with the relevant stakeholders, including the exam boards, to seek to reduce workload for teachers that arises from the delivery of external qualifications to manageable levels;</li> <li>ii. continue to embed the system wide provision of fit for purpose directed time budgets which provide adequate time for all professional tasks required of teachers, including work associated with the delivery of qualifications; and</li> <li>iii. call on DE, through NITC, to initiate a system wide review of qualifications in the north of Ireland.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. As part of the pay negotiations in January 2025, it has been agreed by MS and TUS to seek to reduce workload for teachers that arises from the delivery of external qualifications to manageable levels.</li> <li>ii. INTO has delivered a DTB webinar (April 2024) to embed the system wide provision of fit for purpose directed time budgets which provide adequate time for all professional tasks required of teachers, including work associated with the delivery of qualifications.</li> <li>iii. This has been raised with the Curriculum and Assessment Directorate. Controlled Assessment has been raised at TNC and remains a matter of ongoing discussion.</li> </ul>

RESOLUTION 9	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <p>a. congratulates the INTO leadership on its successful implementation of Strike Action and Action Short of Strike;</p> <p>b. notes with dismay the lack of progress in the delivery of the recommendations, jointly agreed by Union and Management Side of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC), of the eight completed reviews arising from the TNC 2020/1 Pay and Workload Agreement deal; and</p> <p>c. calls on Northern Committee to:</p> <p>i. demand from Management Side an agreed timeframe and mechanism for the implementation of the recommendations of the Workforce Reviews; and</p> <p>ii. in the event of a failure to implement the review recommendations within an agreed timeframe, to ballot members for industrial action up to and including strike action.</p>	<p>Work on the recommendations has continued, and while progress has been slow NITC continues to work to ensure that the necessary changes to school leaders and teacher's workload are put in place.</p> <p>The recommendations have been categorised as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Completed</li> <li>· In train</li> <li>· Short to medium (Programme of work)</li> <li>· Outside TNC</li> <li>· Long term (requiring funding, legislative change etc)</li> <li>· Not Agreed</li> </ul> <p>In terms of outside TNC, these are the recommendations around SEN and Accountability, both of which are part of End-to-End Reviews.</p> <p>This continues to be a significant focus of INTO work through NITC and TNC.</p>

RESOLUTION 10	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <p>a. notes a teacher's pension contribution is impacted and reduced when a teacher is on maternity pay. The teacher's pension contributions are based on the reduced rate of salary paid; and</p> <p>b. calls on Northern Committee to work through the NITC, to lobby the DE to rectify full pension contributions to be based solely on the teacher's annual rate of pay for all teachers in all circumstances and not on the sliding scale of maternity pay.</p>	<p>This motion has effectively fallen since passed at Conference and has been deemed unimplementable by NITC.</p>

RESOLUTION 11	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. gives a cautious welcome to the introduction of an online portal for the management of teachers' pay; and</li> <li>b. calls on the Northern Committee to communicate all issues raised by members with the Education Authority (EA) and continue to engage with EA until those issues are rectified.</li> </ul>	<p>INTO Northern Office has been dealing with issues on a case-by-case basis, and thus far have been expedited efficiently</p>

RESOLUTION 12	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes the sharing of the EA SEND Transformation video, and the proposed changes to the Service Delivery of EA Pupil Support Services; and</li> <li>b. calls on the Northern Committee to work through NITC to demand:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. the EA conduct and publish a risk assessment on the impact of pupil outcomes of any proposed changes to Service Delivery; and</li> <li>ii. that any proposed changes to Service Delivery are piloted, and workload proofed before implementation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>This is ongoing work and is part of the SEND Transformation:</p> <p>Following pressure from NITC, SEND Transformation Implementation has been pushed back to September '25</p> <p>SEND Transformation video referred to has been withdrawn from the EA website</p> <p>Schools notified of pause of referrals to PSS, and an interim 12-week teaching block for Autumn 2024 3.9.24 - referral portal has opened in February 2025, but only to those schools which have completed the Graduated Response Framework training.</p> <p>EA CYPS have submitted a business case for funding for sub cover for SENCOs and all teachers for training in SEND Transformation implementation.</p>

RESOLUTION 13	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes that the current funding formula for education fails to meet the needs of a majority of schools; and</li> <li>b. calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC to lobby DE to review the school funding formulae, with a view to removing teaching costs from the schools LMS budget.</li> </ul>	<p>The Barnet formula needs reviewed, and this would require legislative change.</p> <p>NITC has raised education funding with the Stormont Assembly Education Committee.</p>
RESOLUTION 14	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes that there is no existing documentation to regulate the logistics, frequency and defined allocated time in relation to travel between sites on a split campus school; and</li> <li>b. calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC to develop a workable document in relation to travel that is agreed at TNC level.</li> </ul>	<p>INTO continue to raise the issue of travel at NITC and advocate for the TU side of TNC to develop a workable proposal paper on travel.</p>
RESOLUTION 15	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. recognises that for SEND transformation to succeed there must be significant investment in training and support for schools; and</li> <li>b. calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC to demand that the EA ensure SEN pupils can gain access to all necessary educational services irrespective of their school placement or home address.</li> </ul>	<p>This is ongoing work of INTO Northern Office.</p> <p>It forms part of the SEND Review There is regular Engagement/Consultation between INTO/EA/CYPS/ NITC on this matter as per resolution 12</p>

RESOLUTION 16	Actions
<p>Tugann an Chomhdháil dá haire foilsiú na tuairisce; 'Fair? Shared? Supported? Scrúdú a dhéanamh ar Ionchais agus Réaltachtaí do Chleachtóirí lán-Ghaeilge', ag Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.</p> <p>Tugann Comhdháil an Tuaiscirt treoir do Choiste an Tuaiscirt na moltaí sa tuairisc a chur faoi bhráid na n-eagraíochtaí bainistíochta cúí.</p> <p><i>Conference notes the publication of the report; 'Fair? Shared? Supported? Examining Expectations and Realities for Irish-medium Practitioners', for Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.</i></p> <p><i>Conference instructs the Northern Committee to highlight the recommendations in the report to the appropriate management organisations.</i></p>	<p>Northern Committee have had discussions with Management Side of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and raised concerns on teacher supply and workload arising for IME schools.</p> <p>This has progressed to the inclusion of further motions at Conference 2025.</p>

RESOLUTION 17	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes with concern the direction of travel indicated in relation to academic selection set out in the recently published 'Independent Review of Education'; and</li> <li>b. calls on the Northern Committee to declare, again, the INTO's agreed position on academic selection and to publicly distance themselves from this aspect of the report.</li> </ol>	<p>INTO remains opposed to Academic Selection.</p> <p>This was clearly reflected in the INTO response to the Independent Review of Education.</p>



## PRIVATE MOTIONS

RESOLUTION 18	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <p>a. notes with concern the increasing levels of abuse towards teachers; and</p> <p>b. calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC to call on the Department of Education and the Education Authority to strategically campaign for zero tolerance towards abuse of any kind against school staff and to provide such signage for display in schools to ensure they are safe places for everyone.</p>	<p>This is ongoing work of a sub-committee of NITC.</p>
RESOLUTION 19	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <p>a. notes with concern the increasing levels of abuse towards teachers; and</p> <p>b. calls on Northern Committee to work through NITC to call on the Department of Education and the Education Authority to strategically campaign for zero tolerance towards abuse of any kind against school staff and to provide such signage for display in schools to ensure they are safe places for everyone.</p>	<p>This is ongoing work of a sub-committee of NITC.</p>
RESOLUTION 20	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <p>a. notes the current length of bereavement leave available to those who have suffered the loss of an immediate family member;</p> <p>b. believes this is insufficient and in need of immediate review and amendment; and</p> <p>c. calls on Northern Committee to negotiate with DE, through the NITC, an increase to the current duration of bereavement leave given to teachers who have suffered the loss of an immediate family member.</p>	<p>See TNC 2014/5</p> <p>This would necessitate re-opening The Jordanstown Agreement so has not been actioned.</p>

RESOLUTION 21	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. notes with concern the lack of opportunity available to teachers to attend their own children's parent/teacher meetings; and</li> <li>b. calls on Northern Committee to engage with NITC and the TNC to renegotiate TNC 2014/18 'Teachers' Absence Not Exceeding Three Working Days' to include a leave of absence affording teachers the opportunity of this reasonable request to attend such meetings during school hours.</li> </ul>	<p>This would necessitate re-opening The Jordanstown Agreement so has not been actioned.</p>

RESOLUTION 22	Actions
<p>Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. commends the work undertaken by members on behalf of INTO, including staff reps and branch/district officers; an</li> <li>b. calls on Northern Committee to liaise with officials in Northern Office, to ensure that members are provided with prompt information/updates via email and that responses are provided in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	<p>This was an issue with the change from Newsweaver to Dot Digital and the lack of access given by Northern Office to this.</p> <p>Dot Digital member updates now go out monthly and additional updates as and when required.</p> <p>Northern Office continue to engage with the INTO Head Office Communications Team on regular communications meetings to support this work.</p>

Emergency Resolution	Actions
<p>Conference deplores the successful efforts by Israel to lobby governments (including the UK government) to defund UNRWA on the determination that UNRWA employees were involved in the October 7th attacks.</p> <p>Conference notes UNRWA is responsible for the education of 300,000 students and employs 9500 teachers in Gaza. Many of the 284 schools it runs in the strip have been destroyed by Israeli airstrikes and controlled demolitions.</p> <p>Conference calls on the NC to work through the NITC to lobby all relevant government agencies to restore funding in light of the plausible genocide, as identified by the International Court of Justice, leading to a deteriorating humanitarian situation for all young people and their teachers in Gaza.</p>	<p>INTO has contributed monetary aid to UNRWA, most recently through donations collected at the Conference on the rights of Palestinian children.</p> <p>The plight of teachers and students in UNRWA schools was also highlighted at the conference.</p>











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