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Moving ahead: Voice Community one year on



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COMMUNITY NEWS AND VIEWS

COMMUNITY EVENTS

For the latest events, see our events calendar:
<https://community-tu.org/mymembership/events-calendar>

FROM THE BLOGS

If you have a story you'd like to tell and would like to write a blog for us, please contact: editor@community-tu.org.



A future for young workers

By **Jack Whiston**: As we start to find our way back to normality from the stresses of the pandemic, it's useful to reflect on what we have learnt and experienced to see how we can build a better working world for the future... With lots of young people now not knowing where to turn for help, more and more are beginning to realise that the collective action of a trade union is what they need for a more stable future: <https://community-tu.org/a-future-for-young-workers>

Let's invest in the skills of our young workers

By **Kate Dearden**: Young workers today are growing up in a unique environment... the world of work they'll enter will be basically unrecognisable from the one they were born into... It's time for a real, concerted effort to end the skills deficit: <https://community-tu.org/lets-invest-in-the-skills-of-our-young-workers>

A history of supporting disabled workers

Community has been supporting disabled people since 1899... Despite immense progress... discrimination against disabled people is still too commonplace... Community... [continues] to fight for a better working world where disabled people are able to live and work free from discrimination: <https://community-tu.org/supporting-disabled-workers>

A right to request a predictable contract

A contract is an essential for employment. It details how much you will be paid, what benefits you are entitled to and what you and your employer can expect from one another. However, not all contracts are equal... <https://community-tu.org/a-right-to-request-a-predictable-contract>

Training to be a Mental Health First Aider

By **Charlotte Edwards**: Charlotte attended a Mental Health First Aid course organised by Learning Organiser Lisa Francis and funded through the Welsh Union Learning Fund... I now have a better understanding of how to help someone in need, whether that is in spotting signs of a crisis, or being able to point them in the direction of professional help, or just being there, as a non-judgemental sounding board, and it's given me confidence that I don't need to have all the answers, just offering support is powerful enough: <https://community-tu.org/training-to-be-a-mental-health-first-aid>

Community recognised for supporting armed forces community

Community has been recognised with the prestigious Silver Employer Recognition Scheme Award from The Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Greater London for supporting service personnel and the armed forces community: <https://community-tu.org/community-recognised-for-supporting-armed-forces-community>

VOICE COMMUNITY STAFF NEWS

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY TO RETIRE NEXT YEAR

Deborah Lawson, Community's Assistant General Secretary (Voice Section), has announced that she will retire in April 2022. Further details will follow next year.



Farewell...



Sue Cornish, Voice Community's Director of Corporate Services and Accountant, retired in September, after 22 years' service.

Assistant General Secretary Deborah Lawson said: 'I have known Sue and her work for a very long time, and she was a loyal and committed colleague and member of staff.'

'She successfully steered and managed the finances, and many other areas of Voice's operations, in the most professional, vigilant and thorough way – something which I and Voice Section Council are most grateful for.'

'I will miss Sue's wise advice and extensive experience enormously, as will her team.'

'We wish her all the very best for a long, happy and healthy retirement with her family!'

WELCOME BACK ...



Helen Osgood has rejoined the team as Community's **National Secretary for Education**. She previously worked for Voice in 2019, as Professional Office (Casework). In her new role, she will work alongside Deborah Lawson until Deborah's retirement, and lead the Voice Section going forward.

Passionate about lifelong learning as a force to change lives, she established Voice's network of Union Learning Reps, and previously read education at Manchester University whilst teaching trade union studies.

Helen has extensive union experience and has worked for a number of unions as a learning organiser, education officer, equalities officer and senior organiser.

She said: 'I am looking forward to working with the team, as they

help Voice Community education professionals secure improvements to working conditions in schools, colleges and early years settings.'

One of Helen's sons is a drama teacher, and having supported teachers for a number of years, she knows first-hand the issues and challenges that many of our members face.

DERBY OFFICE MOVE



After over 30 years in Friar Gate, Voice Community will be moving to new premises in Derby.

The current building is no longer suitable for our needs and so it is being sold. Details of the new address will be published in due course.

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/contact-us

VOICE COMMUNITY NEWS

END OF AN ERA

By Teresa Bottomley, member of Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland Federation Committee and Vice President of Community's Voice Section

It's the end of an era for Leicester City, Leicestershire and Rutland Federation, after Bob Gale retired from his voluntary roles at the end of September.

Bob joined PAT (later Voice) in 1981, and since then has been a conscientious Federation Secretary, tirelessly representing us on trust and local authority committees whilst also being a friendly Field Officer, supporting local members with good humour and sound advice.

He also served as a member of staff from 2004 to 2019 – as a Professional Officer at HQ and then Regional Officer (East Anglia) and RO (East Midlands).

Grateful members said:

Thank you, Bob, for all of your support and advice. One in a million!

'Thanks for all your support and hard work. Happy retirement!'

'Bob's quiet demeanour and wonderful pool of knowledge has helped me many times – nothing is too much trouble, and his phone calls a great comfort to realise that he cares. Happy retirement and thank you to your wife for lending you to us!'



'Thank you. You have always been there. Words cannot convey what you have done for all of us over the years. Your knowledge, wisdom, support and demeanour will be sadly missed. What a gem you are! Enjoy your retirement!'

'Nothing has ever been too much for Bob, whenever I've called on him for support. Thank you so much.'

'Bob saw the crucial importance of the role of the nursery nurse within early years education. For this I will remember him, and Voice for speaking up for us.'

'I've been around in Voice for a long time – the person to 'blame' is Bob, for his enthusiasm!'

'Thank you for all your hard work and excellent advice over the years. We will miss you.'

'Bob was always on hand to give advice and support at our restructure – an amazing person!'

Bob was not only well known locally, but at national level as a conference orator and fair-minded professional negotiator.

I shall miss his contagious enthusiasm and strong belief in our values. Thank you so much, Bob.

FROM THE BLOGS

Working with Community for a better future

By **Abena Oppong-Asare MP**: ...I was once told that the chances of someone like me getting a job in Parliament were very slim, and to not even bother trying. The unfairness I felt about this drove me to challenge the barriers that I faced as a black woman...What brought me to Community is that they are a trade union for an ever-changing world: <https://community-tu.org/working-with-community-for-a-better-future>

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY'S VOICE

ALL CHANGE

By Deborah Lawson, Assistant General Secretary (Voice Section)
(DLawson@community-tu.org)

COVID-19

With the first term or half term of the new academic year complete, you should all be congratulated for embracing the many changes it brought following the lifting or partial lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

While many nurseries, schools and colleges chose to retain, or reintroduce, some mitigating measures, it is clear from high and rising levels of pupil and staff absences, and National Audit Office statistics, that most transmission currently occurs in the 12-19/25 age groups.

Voice Section Council debated vaccinations for 12-15 year olds in September. It was recognised that while most members who had been in contact were in favour of pupil vaccination, some had expressed concern about it, and their possible involvement (see page 16).

Following a full and thorough debate, which explored all sides of the argument, Voice Council voted to support the vaccination of pupils aged 12-15 years old in order to keep members safe and reduce potential for further disruption to children's learning.

- > www.voicetheunion.org.uk/statement-vaccination-children
- > www.voicetheunion.org.uk/coronavirus

Political change

September saw a Cabinet reshuffle, with an almost completely new ministerial team at the Department for Education (DfE) in England, and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan becoming Minister of State for Higher and Further Education.

General Secretary Roy Rickhuss and I have both worked with new Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi in previous ministerial roles, and aim to develop a productive and collaborative working relationship with him. Robin Walker MP took over from long-standing School



Standards Minister Nick Gibb. Will Quince is Minister for Children and Families, and Alex Burghart Minister for Skills.

Cabinet changes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were announced earlier in the year, following elections, and initial meetings with new ministers Shirley-Anne Somerville (Scotland) and Jeremy Miles (Wales) took place before the summer break. We seek to engage with ministers in all home nations, to ensure we convey your thoughts and concerns on policy development and implementation, and pursue those issues most important to members.

Early Career Framework (ECF)

The statutory induction of new teachers in England was introduced from September. The early career framework (ECF) reforms (www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-career-framework-reforms) extend induction to two school years, with all early career teachers entitled to training and support, including increased PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time.

Voice Community worked with DfE officials and other unions on the ECF, and we're keen to know how it's working so we can give feedback to the Department.

If you started teaching this year, or mentor an early career teacher, we want to hear your experiences of the ECF:

- > what's working;
- > what's not;
- > if it's proving beneficial; or
- > if there are issues.

Please let us know at EducationPolicy@Community-tu.org.

Internal change

As you may have read on page 2, I will retire in Spring 2022. When elected for a second term as Voice General Secretary, it was always my intention to hand over at the end of that term. I'm delighted **Helen Osgood** has been appointed as National Officer to lead Community's Voice Section. Helen comes with a wealth of education and trade union experience and, having worked for Voice a few years ago, was able to hit the ground running in September.

The handover period provides Helen with time and space to look at where we are and make plans for the remainder of the transition period, which will see Voice Section members and staff fully integrated into Community. I'm sure you will join me in welcoming Helen back to Voice Community.

COMMUNITY FOCUS



FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

By Roy Rickhuss CBE,
General Secretary



Voice Community one year on

1 October 2021 saw the first anniversary of Voice's transfer to Community Union to become its education and early years section. As the post-transfer integration process continues, the union is coming together, and the Community team are working closely in the interests of all our members.

Voice Community members are already seeing the benefits of being part of Community, with:

- > a larger network of staff and volunteers backing up the dedicated Voice Community team supporting members;
- > a wider range of membership benefits (see page 7); and
- > a greatly expanded programme of campaigns and events (see pages 1 & 6).

As you may have seen, Assistant General Secretary **Deborah Lawson** will be retiring next year. She has played a huge role in overseeing the transfer, safeguarding the future of Voice as part of Community, and she will continue to do so into 2022, working with new National Officer **Helen Osgood**. I would like to extend my thanks to Deborah on behalf of all of our members for her

work over the years in the interests of working people across the country. At the same time, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Helen who I am sure will excel in her new role.

As the transfer period continues, we are working to align and improve our services and the way members can access them. I wanted to take the liberty of this column to update you on some of these improvements and to ask for your feedback and comments:

New Community website



A key part of our coming together process is the development of a new Community website (www.community-tu.org). This website is now live, giving you easier access to all of the benefits and services you are entitled to as a member of Community. Go to www.community-tu.org/log-in to access your own personalised member's area.

There are a number of new and exciting features within the members' (www.community-tu.org/mymembership) and reps' (www.community-tu.org/repcentre) areas of the site including:

- > an **advice centre** – where you can access advice on lots of different topics, from career planning to understanding your contract and grievances at work: www.community-tu.org/mymembership/advice-centre;
- > an **education hub**: www.community-tu.org/repcentre/education-hub; and
- > your own **personalised training and development record**: www.community-tu.org/mymembership/my-training-record;

plus:

- > **Community Offers**, with savings on everything from Apple products to your weekly shop: www.communityoffers.org.uk;
- > legal support from UnionLawyers with personal injury, wills and more: www.community-tu.org/mymembership/union-lawyers;
- > **FAQs**: www.community-tu.org/join/frequently-asked-questions; and
- > **other benefits and services**: www.community-tu.org/how-we-help.

While you're checking out our new website, please make sure your contact details are up to date. This helps us to stay in touch with you on important issues and tailor our services to your needs. You can update your details at www.community-tu.org/update-your-details.

Your Voice

Your Voice is your magazine, and we want to know what you like about it, what you wish to see included, and what you think about its design and format, so we can improve it for the long run.

Please take part in our readers' survey at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/3LD5BNT.

National Executive Council elections

Our National Executive (which includes representatives from Voice Community) is democratically elected by our members and helps to guide and govern our union as we strive towards a better working world for our members.

Following the nomination period, elections to Community's NEC are currently underway. Results will be announced on 15 November.

www.community-tu.org/who-we-are/our-people/the-national-executive

COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNS

MENOPAUSE IS A TRADE UNION ISSUE

By Maya Ilany, Community
Campaigns and Political Assistant

18 October 2021 was World Menopause Day. At Community, we are proud to support members going through the menopause with practical tools and help in the workplace, as well as campaigning nationally for a #MenopauseRevolution.

During a recent roundtable we held with Community members and Community MP Carolyn Harris, who is leading the charge in Parliament on menopause legislation, our members shared personal stories, explaining their struggles going through menopause at work.

One member said that she has struggled with symptoms for more than a year, and this really knocked her confidence and ability to do her job. Another said she didn't know how to bring up the fact that she is struggling with fatigue and brain fog at work. One member shared a painful story about his mother, who suffered from severe depression while going through the menopause. She received no support at her workplace, which sadly resulted in her taking her own life.

These experiences are, sadly, not unique. The data show that suicide rates among women in the UK spike between the ages of 45 and 49 years old, right round the average age that menopause starts for many women.

There are over 30 known symptoms of menopause, including hot flashes, memory issues, difficulty sleeping, and brain fog. And while not all women will experience symptoms, three in four women will.

Working with members and employers

There are over 3.5 million menopausal women working across the UK – the fastest growing part of the UK workforce. As a trade union, we refuse to accept this reality where workers going through the menopause are not receiving the support they deserve. That's why we are fighting for changes in the workplace and beyond. We know that, with the right support in place, menopause can be managed and those suffering with it can be supported.

In workplaces, Community reps and members are working with employers to introduce menopause policies and change organisational culture to support workers going through the menopause. These policy changes include:

- > flexible working;
- > changes to uniform policies; and
- > organising awareness training to staff and management.

The NSPCC is a leading example of implementing policy changes to support women going through the menopause. Community worked together with the employer to produce a tailored menopause policy that delivered real change for menopausal workers.

We are proud of the difference we make in workplaces. However, we know that there's much more that needs to be done outside the workplace, too. That's why we are delighted to work with Community MP Carolyn Harris on introducing new laws that will bring the #MenopauseRevolution to all areas of life.

Carolyn's new Menopause Private Members' Bill will exempt Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) in England from NHS prescription charges, as is already the case in Wales and Scotland. The Bill will also take in broader issues around menopause rights, entitlements and education.

Find out more

Support the campaign and find out more here:

www.community-tu.org/campaigns/menopause-at-work



Offers to help make winter easier

Through Community Offers, we have a range of wellness offers available to help make self-care easier and affordable this winter. Highlights include:



Save an extra 12% on winter escapes with Away Resorts*

Community members can get discounts at Away Resorts' award-winning holiday parks, with fabulous entertainment and facilities. Fall in love with a new type of holiday. Away Resorts' parks are jam-packed with fantastic facilities, from on-site restaurants and bars to indoor and outdoor swimming pools. As for entertainment and events – well, there's something to keep every member of the family grinning from ear to ear.



life:style
Your life. Your style

6% discount at the UK's top retailers

Shop online from over 120 of the UK's top retailers and brands

6% Discount at over 120 of the UK's top retailers

Lifestyle vouchers offer the recipients a choice of everyday treats to make sure you feel good from within, as well as pamper essentials and winter fashion from the high-street, with over 120 of the UK's biggest brand names. Lifestyle vouchers can be redeemed online, in-store or both dependant on the retailer. This gives you the full flexibility to choose your redemption method while also maximising your savings*.



Winter warmers sorted with meals from The Cookaway

Do you need inspiration for healthy, yet warm and delicious food? Community members can get 25% off* with The Cookaway. Learn to cook a new world cuisine with top tips from Expert Chefs guaranteeing you a delicious and rewarding cooking experience.

There's no subscriptions, no commitment and free national delivery.



Fun in the fresh air - 10% off Go Ape outdoor experiences and activities*

Looking to discover some seriously adventurous things to do outdoors this winter? Go Ape offer outdoor experiences and activities across 35 locations UK wide, including the newest venue in Edinburgh. From zip wires, to super-springy trampoline nets in the trees to off-road Segways and axe throwing, Go Ape has an adventure for everyone to enjoy! Members can get 10% off their next adventure.

Take a look at your Health and Wellbeing Hub for Community members

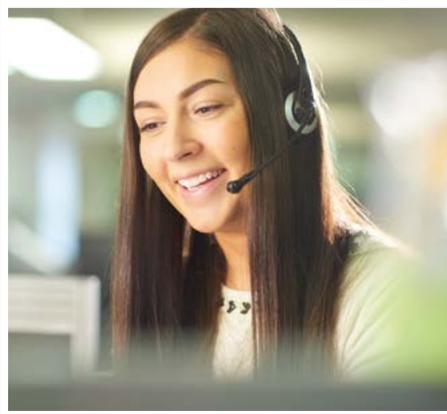
Health and Wellbeing, both mental and physical, are fundamental to everyone's lives. Through Community Offers, you can access a free Health and Wellbeing hub, which provides you with advice and information about important topics such as stress management and financial wellbeing. This month's themes are National Fitness Day and National Work/Life Week!

TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE AND OTHER FANTASTIC DEALS VISIT WWW.COMMUNITYOFFERS.ORG.UK TODAY!

*Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. See website for details. Offers subject to change without notice and correct at time of print. Holiday Homes (in Parks) - Save 12% on all breaks. Offer can be booked via our website at awayresorts.co.uk or by calling our Holiday Heroes on 0330 053 7000 and quoting your exclusive promo code. Discounts are applied to the latest self-catering offers shown on our website at awayresorts.co.uk. Offer does not apply to tenting and touring. Offer does not apply to bookings over 5 units. Offer does not apply to Boston West. Discounts cannot be used with any other offer, discount, third party promotion or voucher. Discount codes must be quoted at the time of booking and cannot be added retrospectively. Offer applies to new, direct bookings only and are subject to the full booking Terms and Conditions as stated on the website. Discount codes have no cash value, are not for re-sale and cannot be distributed without prior written approval from Away Resorts. Facilities and accommodation vary by park. All details correct at time of being published, are subject to promotional rate availability and can be withdrawn or reduced at any time without notice. Offer ends 4 February 2022. Cookaway - 25% is for your first order. Going forward you can get 10% all subsequent orders with the code PH10. Go Ape - Excludes Saturdays, bank holidays, Nets Kingdom, gift vouchers and corporate bookings. Axe Throwing is currently only available at the Coventry and Matfen sites. Community Offers is managed and run on behalf of Community by Parliament Hill Ltd.

LEGAL SERVICE FOR MEMBERS

Pattinson & Brewer provide legal support and representation to Voice Community members and their families for non-workplace related issues.



Established in 1890, Pattinson & Brewer have always been firmly on the side of working people, helping them to fight for justice. With an ethos that access to justice is a basic human right, Pattinson & Brewer are proud to defend it.

Their teams of lawyers are leaders in their field supporting members with:

- > personal injury, union members keep 100% of their personal injury compensation;
- > clinical negligence;
- > wills, probate and elderly client issues;
- > conveyancing and matrimonial problems; and
- > 24/7 free non-employment free legal advice.

Pattinson & Brewer's lawyers want to work with trade unions and help people like Voice Community members and their families, and are ready to 'go the extra mile' to help.

As a matter of fundamental principle, Pattinson & Brewer do not act for employers or their insurers and are 100% committed to being on the side of working people. With offices in London, York and Bristol, and close partnerships in Scotland, they provide a truly national service.

They promise that everyone who needs help will be treated as a valued individual, each one a personal client not a file name or number.



To contact Pattinson & Brewer today



0800 3077980

For wills



VoiceWills@pattinsonbrewer.co.uk

FOCUS WELLBEING



WORKLOAD & WELLBEING

An edited version of this article appeared in SecEd in October 2021

By Martin Hodge, Senior Professional Officer (Policy)

As we come out of the pandemic, one message that has sounded loud and clear is 'be kind'.

As Ofsted inspections resume, as the Government introduces new primary assessments, and as we once again prepare for exams, you could be forgiven for thinking that nothing has changed, but maybe there is hope on the horizon and maybe there are things we can learn from the past.

In March 2021, Voice Community reached out to our members to understand more about their experiences in education and the early years – particularly during the coronavirus pandemic – and also to ask them about their hopes and fears for the future of work and education.

Sadly, it came as no surprise to confirm that morale is low, and recruitment and retention is poor across the sector. 22% of Voice Community members surveyed plan to leave education within the next three years, and it's mostly because of workload and pressures of the role. One member highlighted that many staff are leaving 'because the job itself is challenging enough but the way we have been treated throughout the pandemic has been shocking'.

The most recent School Workforce survey for England (www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-workforce) concurs with our findings, with 3,200 qualified teachers leaving the profession between 2018

and 2019. And of new starters, just 67% remain in teaching after five years.

Furthermore, Education Support's annual Teacher Wellbeing Index (www.educationsupport.org.uk/about/research/teacher-wellbeing-index) found the wellbeing of education staff working in the UK was consistently lower than the general population. High workload was a key factor and stress levels remained high, with 62% of education staff and 77% of senior leaders describing themselves as stressed.

We have a problem – what's the solution?

We need to work together. We need to listen to each other and support each other to achieve great things. Don't try to do everything on your own, and leaders should not try to implement workload reduction strategies without discussing them with their staff first.

For example, it might sound like a great idea to tell all staff they must go home at 5.00 pm. But instead of reducing workload as intended, this may have the opposite effect if staff then take work home. And what about those who go home earlier to spend time with young families but work later at home; do they now feel obliged to stay until 5.00?

Throughout the pandemic we have seen technological solutions really come to the fore. They do not hold all of the answers and can be a burden, particularly in our 'instant response' email culture, but with sensitive and considered implementation, and a right to 'switch off', technology can be useful in reducing workload burdens.

For example, technology can enrich learning in the classroom and extend learning into the home, allowing students to revisit and consolidate their learning at their own pace, and engaging parents. Many of these tools adapt to the skills and abilities of the learners and provide feedback to the teacher to help with planning and assessment, and, critically, they do this without increasing workload.

The Wellbeing Charter

Due to be launched formally later this year, the DfE Wellbeing Charter (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/education-staff-wellbeing-charter) commits the Government to reduce workload and bureaucracy by considering the impact of policy changes on staff wellbeing, improving data collection, building staff wellbeing and mental health into the recruitment and retention strategy, breaking down the stigma around mental health and embedding wellbeing into training and professional development.

And Ofsted – for so long a recognised workload driver – must now take staff wellbeing into account in coming to its judgements, including whether its framework is having inadvertent impacts on staff wellbeing.

FOCUS WELLBEING



Workload

Back in 2016, the Department for Education published three independent reports into workload, focusing on planning, marking and data, which recommended practical ways to manage workload.

Planning

There is a key distinction between the daily lesson plan and lesson planning. Lesson planning is necessary, but creating detailed plans can become a 'box-ticking' exercise and create unnecessary workload. Whilst for early career teachers (ECTs) it may be necessary to plan each lesson, for more experienced teachers this can become a crutch and take time away from really planning on what pupils need in order to have a vibrant learning experience. Detailed plans do not prove effective planning for pupil progress and attainment. The bottom line is **do plan effective lessons; don't plan to prove it.**

Marking

Assessment is a vital element of teaching, but it must be effective. Should teachers provide extensive written comments on every piece of work? What about writing down the verbal feedback that has been given?

Perhaps, there is a cultural challenge here? In many cases teachers themselves feel that they must spend hours marking to be a good teacher.

Marking should be **manageable** for you, **meaningful** to the children, and **motivating** so that they want to improve.

Teachers' Standards state that teachers should 'give pupils regular feedback, both orally and through accurate marking, and encourage pupils to respond to the feedback'. This does not mean didactic marking where pupils provide a written response to feedback: simply that pupils should act on the feedback in subsequent work.

And remember, **no government or Ofsted guidance or policy has deep marking as a requirement.**

Data

The work of the independent review group on data states 'excessive data collection and processing takes teachers, school leaders, and officials away from more productive tasks'. It advises that schools should not routinely collect formative assessment data, and summative data should be collected only as frequently as essential on agreed data collection points.

Finally, **be prepared to stop collecting data if the burden of collection outweighs their use.**

What needs to happen?

1. Teachers, schools and colleges need adequate resources and funding to perform their duties.
2. PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time needs to be increased.
3. Mental health and wellbeing must be at the heart of all education policy decisions.
4. The current accountability system must be reviewed.
5. Follow the recommendations of the workload groups.
6. Consider the question '**if it does not improve the outcome for children, and it increases workload, why are we doing this?**'

Be kind to each other, be kind to the children, be kind to yourself – just be kind.



STUDENT FOCUS



EXTENDED STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

As a student, you are covered throughout the duration of your course by our FREE student membership. However, in addition to your studies, you may take up a part-time job to supplement your income and student loan.

For most students who take up work during their undergraduate studies, any part-time work is likely to be in non-unionised environments, for example, bars, restaurants, cafes, shops or factories, often as casual labour, as well as in the gig economy for delivery companies. Because these workplaces are largely non-unionised, employment practices and health and safety can be more ad hoc. This means that you are far more likely to have problems at work in workplaces where there is no union presence and often no HR presence.

There are a number of types of issues that might arise, including:

- > problems with your pay;
- > either non or part payment of wages;
- > discrimination; and
- > breaches of health and safety.

See voicetheunion.org.uk/extended-student-membership-potential-work-issues

Because things can go wrong in this type of work, we are offering you **the opportunity to be covered under our Extended Student Membership for just £1 a month.**

This extended coverage entitles you to the same cover for your part-time employment that you will receive as part of your Voice membership once you enter the education workplace, such as employment advice and representation.

Don't go it alone

Extend your Voice membership and make sure that you have our support in your corner, not only for your placements, but also for your part-time, casual work. Find out more and extend your membership today: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/who-we-support/students/extended-student-membership

Terms and conditions apply

Assistance is offered to students who are employees or workers. We are unable to offer assistance to self-employed students. Employment must be based in the UK. Voice cannot represent members with issues that arose prior to extending their membership. Once membership is extended, payments and coverage will continue until 31 August 2022 and for each year it is renewed unless the member contacts Voice in writing to cancel. Only available to Voice Student members.

STUDENT FOCUS



TYPES OF SCHOOLS AND NURSERIES

You're studying to enter a teaching or early years position, but what type of employer do you want to work for once you qualify? In England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland there are many types of schools and nurseries for you to think about once you are qualified and looking to enter the workplace, and it's important to consider which you would prefer before you start your job hunt.

This job search happens at different times for graduates in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, but we advise students to give it thought as early as possible.

SCHOOLS

State maintained schools In England, Wales and Scotland

Maintained schools (such as local authority-controlled 'comprehensive' or 'community' schools) are government funded, so parents don't pay fees. Most children attend them and follow the national curriculum.

Maintained schools follow the School Teachers' Pay & Conditions Document (STPCD for England/STPC(Wales)D)/ Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) which set out guidelines for schools.

For example, as an early career teacher (newly qualified teacher (NQT)) in England, you should follow the two-year early career framework (ECF) (www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-career-framework-reforms)

induction process, with its entitlement to professional development, training and support. This includes 10% PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) time, plus an extra 10% for CPD (continuing professional development).

Grammar schools, which exist in some parts of England, unlike most schools, select all or most of their pupils based on academic ability and there is often an exam to get in.

Academies In England only

Academies are also publicly funded but are run by an academy trust that employs the staff. However, NQTs will still receive the statutory induction period which applies to all schools. Academies don't have to follow the national curriculum and can also set their own term times. They can also set their own pay and conditions for staff and don't have to follow the STPCD, although most do. However, they must still abide by the same rules on admissions, special needs students and exclusions as state schools. Academies can also be sponsored by businesses, universities and other schools, which are responsible for improving the performance of the academy.

Free schools In England only

Free schools are funded directly by the Government and are not run by the local authority, so have more control over how the school is run. They set their own pay and conditions for staff, don't have to follow the STPCD or national curriculum – although some do – and

can change the length of the school's terms and days.

They are run on a not-for-profit basis by organisations such as charities, other teaching institutions and even parents and teachers. The curriculum at a free school tends to focus on specialist subjects, such as engineering and construction, and are usually supported by an organisation running the school and offering work experience. Free schools also include **studio schools** and **university technical colleges**.

Faith schools In England, Wales and Scotland

Faith schools are funded by the local authority and a faith group. They are run like state schools, following the national curriculum, but have a religious character or formal link with a religious organisation. They will also teach about other faiths. The term is usually applied to state-run schools, but can also apply to independent schools and academies. They do, however, differ from other state-run schools in terms of admission criteria and staffing policies.

In Scotland, most faith schools are local authority operated and funded.

City technology colleges In England only

City technology colleges are independent schools in urban areas that are free to attend. They're funded by central government – companies can also contribute. City technology colleges emphasise teaching science and technology.

STUDENT FOCUS



State boarding schools In England and Wales

State boarding schools provide free education, but charge fees for boarding. Most state boarding schools are academies, some are free schools, and some are run by local councils. State boarding schools give priority to children who have a need to board, and will assess children's suitability for boarding.

In Wales, there is only one state boarding school, St. Brigid's School in Denbigh.

Independent schools In England, Wales and Scotland

Independent (or 'private') schools don't follow the national curriculum or the STPCD/STPC(W)D/SNCT and can set their own pay and conditions. Independent schools which are registered for newly qualified induction will carry out the same process as in the state sector.

However, you do not have to be a qualified teacher to teach at an independent school. Teachers at independent schools have more freedom over what they teach.

Independent schools are paid for by the parents of the students that attend them, therefore are run on the fees paid.

Special schools In England, Wales and Scotland

There are both state and private special schools. They provide for those with a need which might not be met in a mainstream setting.

Schools with pupils 11 and older can specialise in areas such as:

- > communication and interaction;
- > cognition and learning;
- > social, emotional and mental health; and
- > sensory and physical needs.

Legislation in Scotland means that all children and young people have the right to be educated alongside their peers in mainstream schools, unless there are good reasons for not doing so.

However, the needs of some children and young people will be better met in specialist settings rather than in mainstream schools. Approaches differ between local authorities. Some local authorities offer specialist settings within mainstream schools, others have no special schools.

There are around 2,000 primary schools, 360 secondary schools, and 140 special schools/SEN (Special Educational Needs) units in Scotland.

Other forms of teaching

Alternatively, if you're not interested in working for one school, you could look at working as a supply teacher, giving private tuition, or teaching peripatetically, for example, as a visiting music teacher. These options come with variations on contracted hours, pay and conditions of service.

Schools in Northern Ireland

Most schools in Northern Ireland are grant-aided, follow the revised Curriculum and are regularly inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

Children normally start primary school at four years and leave at 11, moving on (transferring) to a post-primary school.

Controlled Schools

Controlled schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority (EA) and are supported by the Controlled Schools Support Council. Controlled primary and secondary schools are governed by representatives of transferors – primarily the Protestant churches, along with the EA as well as representatives of parents and teachers. Controlled nursery, grammar and special schools are governed only by representatives of parents and teachers. There are also several Controlled Integrated schools and Irish-Medium schools (see below).

Integrated Schools

Integrated schools invite both Protestant and Catholic traditions to come together with other traditions to improve their understanding of each other's culture, religion and values. Each of these schools is managed by a board of governors, which consists of trustees, foundation governors as well as parent, teacher and Department for Education representatives.

In grant-maintained integrated schools, the board of governors are the employing authority for the school, responsible for the employment of staff. Integrated schools are funded by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE) which promotes the development of integrated schools and provides advice and guidance for integrated schools.

Irish-Medium Schools

Irish-Medium schools focus on providing education in an Irish speaking environment. There are both controlled and maintained Irish-Medium schools. The maintained schools are owned by trustees and are managed by a board of governors.

STUDENT FOCUS

The Department for Education in Northern Ireland has a duty to assist and encourage development of Irish-Medium education, with the Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) being a representative body which aims to facilitate, promote and encourage Irish-Medium education in Northern Ireland.

Catholic Maintained

Catholic Maintained schools are managed by boards of governors nominated by trustees who are primarily Roman Catholic, along with parents, teachers and Education Authority representatives. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) is responsible for managing the Catholic Maintained sector and is the employment authority for teachers throughout Catholic Maintained schools.

Voluntary Grammar schools

Voluntary Grammar schools are managed by boards of governors constituted in line with each school's scheme of management – usually representatives of foundation governors, parents, teachers, the Department for Education and, in most cases, Education Authority representatives – and responsible for employing all staff in Voluntary Grammar schools. These schools vary in the rates of capital grant they receive, depending on the management structure of each school, with most being entitled to grants of 100 per cent.

Special Schools

Special schools are Controlled or Voluntary schools providing education for pupils with special educational needs.

Independent Schools

Independent schools provide full-time education for students from 4 to 16 and are not grant-aided. They are responsible for setting their own curriculum and admissions policies, and are funded by fees paid by parents as well as income from investors. Each independent school must be registered with the Department for Education and are regularly inspected by the Education Training Inspectorate.

NURSERIES

Day nurseries

Most day nurseries operate between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm (although children can be dropped off and taken from the nursery any time between those hours) which makes them a great option for parents who work, as they will look after children from the age of three months up until when they are ready to go to school.

Day nurseries usually follow a schedule of activities to support children's development and learning as well as naps, meals and playtime.

Pre-schools and playgroups

Pre-schools and playgroups are typically designed to ease the child out of being at home into socialising in a fun environment and encouraging them to interact with other children through play.

Children can attend these from the age of 2.5 years old, and parents are often encouraged to take part in sessions, which makes the environment less daunting for children who are socialising for the first time. This is also good for those who work in the pre-school or playgroup, as they can get a better understanding of the children in their care.

Nursery schools

Nursery schools are more structured in their approach, focusing more on age-appropriate activities which promote all round development and prepare children for school, including socialising and independence. Nursery schools will take on children who are 2.5 to 3 years old, and are often smaller so that it makes learning and socialising easier for the children who go there.

Nursery classes in schools

This can be an excellent option for children who are ready for school as they are structured around educational play. Unlike day nurseries and nursery schools, nursery classes in schools are typically run in short sessions, often only a couple of hours long.

Classes that take place in independent schools are more likely to be run for a full day.



Workplace nurseries

Some workplaces will offer childcare services for their employees, having nurseries on site to give their parents easy access to childcare.

Montessori nurseries and Steiner schools

Montessori nurseries are focused on fostering teaching based on children's in-built curiosity for learning, where the children choose what activities they want to do from a broad range on offer, through sensory materials that are used to provide intellectual, physical and psychological stimuli to improve a child's personality.

Steiner schools use play and social interactions and play time to foster imagination and creativity within the children that attend them. Young children who attend Steiner schools won't be introduced to any form of formal education until the age of 6.

Pay and conditions

Pay and conditions may vary between employers as there are no national pay and conditions for early years staff, unless they are teachers employed under the relevant national pay and conditions document or regulations.

EARLY YEARS (ENGLAND & WALES)

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EARLY YEARS CONTRACTS



By Letitia McCalla, Professional Officer (Early Years)

Talking about employment contracts might sound a bit boring – something you sign when you start work and forget about – but it's really important that you have one, and understand what's in it and what it means.

You should fully understand what's in your contract before signing it, because once it's signed, it becomes legally binding on both you and your employer.

If you don't, you could find yourself in a very difficult position if your employer tries to get you to do things you've not been trained for or don't feel comfortable with. You could even find yourself being obligated to pay for things you didn't even know were your responsibility.

Voice Community has supported many early years members with concerns over their contract. Time and time again, we see cases where someone has signed a contract that they do not fully understand and by the time they realise its full implications, they are in a very difficult predicament.

We at Voice Community are always there to support you, as a member, but there are some things that cannot be undone because you have already signed and agreed to them. This is a particular issue for both our early years

practitioners in the private sector and for nannies, whose contracts are largely constructed to support the employer (private owners and parents) rather than the employee.

On 21 October, we held a webinar, **Early Years Contracts – All you need to know**, hosted by myself and Urtha Felda, Senior Professional Officer (Wales). It included:

- > the key things you need to check before signing a contract;
- > good contracts and hidden nasties;
- > how to negotiate unwelcome changes;
- > questions and answers;
- > exploring a case study; and
- > support that Voice Community offers.

A recording of the webinar will be made available at www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/all-you-need-know-about-early-years-contracts.

Further information

Understanding Your Contract (Voice Community): www.voicetheunion.org.uk/publications-resources/understanding-your-contract

A right to request a predictable contract (Community-tu.org): www.community-tu.org/a-right-to-request-a-predictable-contract

No way to plan a recovery...

Extract from an article by Assistant General Secretary Deborah Lawson in Headteacher Update, September 2021.

'We are an undervalued, underpaid sector that clearly no-one cares about.'

'Early years staff will leave the sector in droves. We are unsupported, unprotected and furious.'

These are the views of some Voice Community early years practitioners, primary teachers, headteachers and support staff members who took part in our recent survey on the future of education (*The Future of Education: www.community-tu.org/campaigns/the-future-of-education*). Their evidence is clear:

- > The early years workforce does not feel valued.
- > We cannot return, post-COVID, to how things were. We need to move forward differently.
- > Education must focus on long-term recovery and mental health, not short-term 'catch-up'.

No longer should learners be forced to meet the needs of the system – the system must now meet the needs of our learners.

No longer should early years practitioners be underpaid and undervalued – they should receive appropriate pay for the incredible work they do.

No longer should the early years sector scrape by on the funding that is provided. Appropriate funding should be received so that they can implement the measures necessary for the long-term recovery.

Read the article: www.headteacher-update.com/editorial-comment/no-way-to-plan-a-recovery-covid-19-pandemic-catch-up-primary-education-early-years/240314

EDUCATION ENGLAND

COVID SAFETY UPDATE

CO₂ monitors

Following the Government's announcement that CO₂ monitors will be provided for all state-funded schools in England, delivery has begun, starting with special schools because of their higher-than-average numbers of vulnerable pupils.

Non-dispersive infrared (NDIR) CO₂ monitors are being issued because 'good ventilation can help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus'.

Government guidance states 'a focus on improving general air flow, preferably through fresh air or effective mechanical systems, can help to create a safer environment for staff and students'. It also recommends opening windows and doors, despite being advised that many schools – particularly special schools – cannot do this because of a lack of opening windows, or the need to maintain a higher ambient temperature.

'CO₂ levels as measured by monitors are a proxy for good ventilation', but 'it is important to remember that **CO₂ monitors are an indicator of ventilation status and not infection risk**'.

Schools will eventually receive a supply of CO₂ monitors – roughly one for every two classrooms – which they will be able to move around to test:

- > teaching spaces;
- > indoor play spaces (such as rooms in nurseries); and
- > staff rooms, large offices or meeting rooms.

Large spaces such as atriums, and well-ventilated spaces such as gyms, are less likely to need monitoring.

- > **A consistent value under 800ppm does not require any action** and implies that a space is particularly well ventilated.

A CO₂ monitor looks like this:

(Source: Department for Education)



In the box with the monitor you should find the following:

1. CO₂ Monitor Unit
2. USB Cable for Power
3. User's Manual
4. AC Adapter (Optional)



Or relevant
QR code

- > **A consistent value of over 800ppm should be seen as an early indicator to increase ventilation.**
- > **A consistent value of 1500ppm CO₂ concentration in an occupied space is an indicator of poor ventilation.** (This will also be indicated by a red light on the CO₂ monitors supplied by DfE.)

Whilst there is no immediate need to stop using the room, **action must be taken to improve ventilation where CO₂ readings are consistently higher than 1500ppm.**

Vaccines

The Department for Health and Social Care has confirmed that healthy school-aged children aged 12 to 15 will primarily receive their COVID-19 vaccination in their schools through the schools-based vaccination programmes – the same system used for vaccinations such as HPV and diphtheria, tetanus and polio (DTP). Parental, guardian or carer consent will be sought by healthcare staff prior to vaccination, in line with these existing programmes.

We believe that vaccination will help to keep members safe and reduce the potential for disruption to children's learning, including school closures.

It is our responsibility to ensure that we give members the best advice we can based on the latest available guidance. Some members have raised concerns about the vaccination of children. It is

important to note that:

- > **schools may host immunisation services but are not responsible for securing parental or child consent.**
- > **Legal accountability** for offering COVID-19 vaccines to children and young people sits with the schools-based health teams and DHSC, not with the school.
- > The **administration of vaccines will be undertaken by trained teams.**
- > **Teachers and support staff cannot be required to undertake vaccination,** or anything for which they are not suitably qualified or resourced – this must be undertaken by the schools-based health teams.
- > School staff should '*observe proper boundaries ... show tolerance of and respect for the rights of others ... [and] ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit pupils' vulnerabilities*' (Teachers' Professional Standards: www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards). Therefore, **we advise members not to share their views about vaccination with their pupils.**

As the following duties fall within the remit of school staff, **it is reasonable for you to be asked to supervise:**

- > **a line of pupils waiting to be vaccinated;**
- > **children off site;** or
- > **children in class,** or to **cover for colleagues.**

EDUCATION ENGLAND

TEACHERS' PAY UPDATE

By Martin Hodge, Senior Professional Officer (Policy)

In the face of the Government's decision to freeze their pay for 2021/22, teachers and school leaders and all those who work in education continue to support the country's response to the pandemic.

Despite stating just months ago the 'vital role' and 'remarkable commitment' of public sector workers, including those in education, and the 'dedication' shown by teachers and school leaders, the Government decided to freeze teacher pay, despite vigorous evidence from Voice Community and all teacher unions to the contrary. *(However, it was announced in the Budget that the pay freeze would be lifted for next year's pay round, although there will not be a pay rise until evidence has been gathered by the pay review body, recommendations made to government and approval given: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/budget21-pay.)*

With interest rates rising rapidly, and average wage rises for many industries exceeding 8%, even the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) expressed concerns that the freeze would have a negative impact upon the competitiveness of teacher pay. When all of this is coupled with the recently announced rise in National Insurance contributions, it is clear that those teaching in schools are going to feel a pinch in their pay packet.

We are concerned that the pay freeze will hit living standards hard, damaging teacher morale and further reducing the ability of the profession to recruit and retain. But it will also have an impact on the public perception of teachers and the esteem in which they

are held. Education professionals are key workers who have contributed enormously to the pandemic response and will be equally important to the country as we recover from the pandemic, and it would be a pleasant change for this to be widely recognised.

Evidence

In our evidence to the STRB, Voice Community noted that there is growing concern about appraisal and **performance-related pay**. We have



been closely working with a number of academy trusts that have begun to separate pay and appraisal, and this is something we would encourage more employers to do.

We also highlighted the issue of **workload** as well as pay, because members have repeatedly stated that they do not have enough time to undertake basic planning and assessment within their working day, often taking work home to finish in their own time.

This is why we suggested PPA (planning, preparation and assessment time) be increased to 20% of the working week – and for staff to be able to take it at home if that would be a more efficient way of using their time.

There is an urgent need to reflect on **wellbeing** and workload – especially because of the pressures of the pandemic, and the increase in contact time, virtual teaching, cleaning, and break-time supervision. This reinforces the need to undertake the holistic, objective and evidence-based review of a teacher's role, and for the Government to provide the necessary resources so that this role does not increasingly expand.

Pay guidance

The unions have provided joint pay guidance documents, which are being posted into all schools across England, as well as being available for download from our website:

www.community-tu.org/joint-advice-on-school-teachers-pay-in-england-2021-22.

Get involved

If you would like to get involved in the conversation for next year's teacher pay negotiations, please get in touch at EducationPolicy@Community-tu.org.

EDUCATION ENGLAND

ITT MARKET REVIEW

By Martin Hodge, Senior Professional Officer (Policy)

Last year, for the first time in almost a decade, applications for initial teacher training (ITT) exceeded government targets. The pandemic highlighted the stability of teaching as a career and people signed up in large numbers. Unfortunately, the boom already seems to be over...

Recruitment and retention is a huge issue for the profession. Recruitment because there needs to be a steady supply of high-quality new teachers, and retention because 33% of those new teachers will have left the profession within five years.

Behind the scenes, the Government undertook a market review of initial teacher training. Led by Ofqual Chair Ian Bauckham, it made a series of recommendations for how ITT should be reformed – overstepping the remit of a market review.

This review did not sit comfortably with trade unions or ITT providers, with some universities, including Cambridge, criticising the plans. No one would argue against the aspiration for a highly trained workforce, but as we stated in our joint letter to the Department for Education (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/ITT-market-review) we don't understand the problem



this review is seeking to address.

We also have issues with the doctrinal focus of some elements of the proposed training, as do some of the universities, which have threatened to withdraw from ITT altogether should these proposals be enacted. This is concerning, as we don't believe these proposals do anything to address repeated failures to meet ITT targets.

We would like to see an ITT programme developed in association with universities, ITT providers and unions that prioritises an enquiring mind and the ability to react and respond to pupils' needs – not just someone who can deliver a pre-prepared lesson plan.

Until issues with accountability, workload and teacher pay are properly addressed, teachers will continue to leave the profession in droves. With pay in private employment rising around 8% so far this year, prospective teachers are being attracted elsewhere to jobs with less responsibility and better rewards. Until we can address these elephants in the room, this is not something which is likely to improve and, ultimately, will only harm children.

PENSIONS UK

Reducing your hours

If you are a member of a public service pension scheme, your pension will be affected as follows if you reduce your hours.

- > For those contributing to the **career average** arrangement, pension benefits are based on a proportion of your pensionable pay each year (1/57 for Teachers' Pensions and 1/49 for LGPS) plus index-linking. Therefore, if you reduce your hours, and hence your pensionable pay, you will accrue less pension in your 'pot'.
- > For those contributing to the **final salary** arrangement, with benefits based on salary and service, if you reduce your hours you will accrue less service to count towards your pension benefits, as final salary benefits are calculated using the full-time salary equivalent.
- > Depending on the salary reduction, your pension contributions could also change if your salary moved to a different salary contribution band.

If you have any pension issues or queries, contact Technical Officer (Pensions) Janine Sansom (JSansom@community-tu.org).

ADAPTATIONS FOR 2022 EXAMS

The Government and Ofqual have confirmed GCSE, AS and A level exams in England next summer will be 'adapted to maximise fairness'.

Changes include:

- > a choice of topics in some GCSE exams like English literature, geography and history;
- > advance information on the focus of exams to support students' revision in

subjects where there isn't a choice of topics; and

- > support materials like formulae sheets in maths.

They also confirmed 2022 will be a 'transition year to reflect the recovery period, with grade boundaries to be set by exam boards reflecting a midway point between 2021 and 2019...with results expected to return to the usual grade profile by 2023'.

Assistant General Secretary Deborah Lawson commented: 'We welcome the adaptations to support subjects.

'However, nothing could be more damaging to students than to be told, no matter how hard they work, their grades will be artificially deflated by an arbitrary amount. What message are we sending to teachers and students who've experienced significant disruption, and may suffer more, because of COVID? We'll make this point vociferously to Ofqual and the DfE!'

Read more, plus arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/summer-exams-2022

SUPPLY AND SUPPORT STAFF

SUPPLY STAFF SURVEY

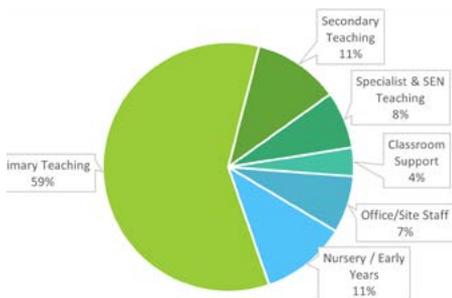
Supply staff are key to ensuring that schools, colleges and early years settings are able to deliver learning safely and effectively when regular staff are absent. Some supply staff are very experienced whilst others use supply work to gain experience before embarking on full-time employment.

We surveyed supply members in summer 2021 about working conditions, pay, and how valued by colleagues they feel.

Respondents

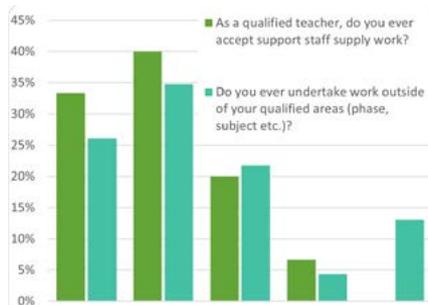
- > 64% engaged wholly in short-term supply work.
- > 28% worked both long and short-term supply, or supplemented permanent work with supply.
- > 12% had never previously been employed full time.
- > Just 8% were looking for long-term supply positions.
- > 60% had been engaged in supply work for 5 years or more.
- > 24% had worked supply for more than 10 years.
- > 20% had only been working supply over the past couple of years.

Respondents were from across the education workforce in England (82%), Scotland (11%) and Wales (7%), with the majority from primary teaching.



Some trained teachers had to take up cover supervisor or other supporting roles because some schools are not recruiting teachers to cover lessons.

Few teacher respondents regularly accept support staff work. A number work outside their specialist areas when undertaking supply work – making their work more challenging, and not ideal for the children.



Expectations

New settings' expectations were made clear to respondents most of the time – usually verbally. However, *'the amount of marking...can be demanding... explanations of lessons...quite vague.' 'I'm running the class, planning, assessing parent consultations reports ... but on supply rate only.'*

68% had been offered CPD.

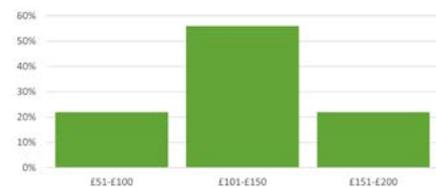
'Supply rate'

Other respondents mentioned 'supply rate'. The School Teachers' Pay & Conditions Document (STPCD) (England) is clear supply teachers should be paid a daily rate based on their pay point. So, a teacher paid on M4 should receive 1/195th of £31,778, or £162.96 per day. Tax, National Insurance and other deductions would need to be made. There are also provisions for supply teachers' pay and conditions in the SNCT Handbook (Scotland) and STPCD (Wales).

- > With 74+% of respondents over 45, we'd have expected more to be paid at higher salary points.
- > 27% felt their pay to be about the same as normal.
- > 18% felt this was more or significantly more than their normal daily rate.
- > 32% felt this was less than, and 23% significantly less than, their normal daily pay.
- > 35% did not feel this was a fair amount for their work.

Once statutory deductions have been made, a daily gross salary of less than

£100 per day begins to look less than attractive.



Pandemic

The pandemic hit supply staff hard, with many ineligible for furlough. Whilst some were supported by their employer, others resorted to Universal Credit.

Supply members can protect themselves:

- > **Ask your agency about CCS contracts.** These are governed by Crown Commercial Services, which publishes transparent rules for agencies. They're also beneficial should the schools want to make you permanent.
- > **Find out about your pay before you agree to work,** and ask about **holiday pay, pension contributions, tax and National Insurance** deductions.
- > **Find out about support and training** if you're employed for an extended period.
- > **Wherever possible, get details and instructions in writing.**

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/supply-survey-2021

Education support staff: your terms and conditions

'The Green Book' covers local authority employees' pay and conditions, and determines those of many non-local authority staff, including nursery and school support staff. **Explaining your Terms and Conditions: a webinar for the Green Book workforce** (<https://youtu.be/GX2MX4Ej6TY>) is available online:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/green-book-updates

VOICE COMMUNITY CYMRU

WALES UPDATE

By Urtha Felda, Senior Professional Officer (UFelda@community-tu.org)

'THE JOURNEY TO REFORM'

The Welsh Government has identified two clear challenges facing schools:

- > responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on learners; and
- > preparing for reform.

These challenges may seem in conflict, as we know well the impact COVID-19 has had on our learners, especially those in socially deprived areas. (Further information on this can be found in the Welsh Government document *Review of the impact of mass disruption on the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people, and possible therapeutic interventions* (www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-09/review-impact-mass-disruption-wellbeing-mental-health-children-young-people-possible-therapeutic-interventions_0.pdf).

The Welsh Government feels that the preparation for reform supports schools in managing the impacts on learners.

The purpose of its guidance, *The Journey to Reform*, is to support schools with a common set of expectations, priorities and supporting information for curriculum design and effective teaching and learning, as they respond to these two challenges.

To support this, the guidance sets out the priorities, the steps forward, a legal summary, a description of the national support available and advice on how to access funding to support learning for 'Renew and Reform'.

Two clear priorities are identified as:

- > **Renew:** adapting and reprioritising teaching and learning to ensure learners progress in light of COVID-19; and
- > **Reform:** preparing for the rollout of Curriculum for Wales.



The Welsh Government is basing the new guidance on two previous key documents: *Curriculum for Wales: The Journey to 2022* and *Guidance on learning in schools and settings: coronavirus*.

The assertion is that 'the fundamentals are the same for both Renew and Reform, and that they are not two competing, conflicting pressures'.

The new guidance adapts the expectations originally set out in those documents to reflect:

- > the changing situation since they were first published;
- > the learning from COVID-19;
- > schools' needs for preparation for curriculum rollout and, in particular, the Minister's announcement (www.gov.wales/oral-statement-curriculum-reform-next-steps) on timing for rollout in secondary schools.

Assessment

The Welsh Government is recommending that schools and practitioners should develop and use a wide range of assessment approaches embedded in teaching and learning.

Observation and discussion are a key feature of assessment and will gain evidence of the progress learners are making.

Personalised assessments (<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/>

reading-and- numeracy-assessments/ personalised-assessments) are still central to acquiring information on skills of reading and numeracy and should contribute to the assessment approach. They will continue to be a statutory element of the assessment process.

- > **Further information:** Curriculum for Wales assessment guidance: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/supporting-learner-progression-assessment-guidance>

Most important for practitioners in schools are the expectations placed on schools around the timelines and implementation.

Timelines:

- > **Primary schools:** roll-out begins September 2022
- > **Secondary schools:** if ready to do so, for year 7, but this is not compulsory until 2023. (Here roll-out of years 7 and 8 together is required.)
- > In the academic year of 2021/22 all secondary should be undertaking preparation in all three phases.

Voice Community is keen to learn from school practitioners if this pressure to begin in 2022 is achievable under the current conditions of learners returning to school under the impact of COVID-19.

This is also at a time when the number of cases is rising across Wales, with some schools implementing the previous mitigation of social distancing, staggered start and finish times, and bubbles, and leaving Alert level 0.

Please share experiences of this in your schools: ufelda@community-tu.org

Further information

Renew and reform: supporting learners' wellbeing and progression: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/supporting-learner-progression-assessment-guidance/>

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/>

VOICE COMMUNITY CYMRU



COVID NEXT STEPS: KEEPING SCHOOLS SAFE AND OPEN

All Wales education unions were represented at this TUC Cymru webinar on 7 October, with 120 attendees in total.

The message was unanimous and clear – **schools are stretched to their limits coping with both staff and pupil absences.** Staff absences mean that people are working across groups and increasing the danger of spreading infection.

All present called for a review of the current framework, and an increased implementation of robust mitigation measures to keep schools and learners safe. A particular concern raised frequently was that children who are household contacts of positive cases were not required to self-isolate. This message will be shared with Education Minister Jeremy Miles.

The Welsh Government, however, given that the national alert level had changed to 0, has said that the new framework, promoting a 'business as usual' approach, provides proportionate guidance for schools: www.gov.wales/local-covid-19-infection-control-decision-framework-schools-autumn-2021-html

Current context for schools

As of 24 September, national attendance rates stood at 85% with 18,478 learners absent through COVID-19 related issues. Year 11 attendance stood at 79%.

A comment was made that:

'The only real mitigation that currently operates in school is that symptomatic children stay home. Staff feel that this is not always being implemented, as there are children in school who are symptomatic. It is PCR tests that are required for symptomatic children and not lateral flow.'

Key asks from joint education unions' communication with Welsh Government:

Framework and mitigations

- > To review the current framework risk levels and mitigation measures to determine whether more stringent measures are needed to maintain the continuity of education, such as grouping of learners, staggered session times, isolating contacts, and mask wearing.
- > Produce clear guidance on expectations for schools to support learners at home due to self-isolation or class/school closures
- > Produce clear guidance for schools on the use of CO₂ monitors and produce a clear strategy on how to deal with issues of poor ventilation when they arise. This should include funding set aside to address any significant issues identified. (Extra funding was announced on 14 October (www.gov.wales/funding-improve-ventilation-schools-and-learning-environments) followed by 'how to use' guidance

(www.gov.wales/carbon-dioxide-monitors-education-settings.)

- > Removing the phrase 'business as usual' from the framework to reflect the situation more accurately in schools
- > To support schools in giving a consistent message to the public that does not put schools in conflict with parents

Your views are key to the success of achieving an effective mitigation policy to keep school pupils and teachers safe. **Any comments on your experience in your school would be a valued contribution to this debate** and will be shared in meetings with Welsh Government:
ufelda@community-tu.org

Watch

Watch the webinar and read participants' comments:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/education-unions-wales-covid-next-steps

Supply staff in education

Voice Community recently conducted a survey of supply staff, which had some interesting results especially around pay. (See page 19.)

We released a podcast at the end of October covering issues for staff working for agencies. Look out for this www.voicetheunion.org.uk/podcast-october-2021 and details of a supply surgery which will be held on **18 November 2021** at 6.00 pm (www.community-tu.org/mymembership/events-calendar and [@VoiceCymru](https://twitter.com/VoiceCymru)).

Your rights as an agency worker: www.gov.uk/agency-workers-your-rights

VOICE COMMUNITY SCOTLAND



COVID STILL LOOMS LARGE

By Dougie Atkinson
Senior Professional Officer
(DAtkinson@community-tu.org)

COVID still looms large in our everyday experience, and schools returned after the summer with mitigations still in place.

In September, Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville and COSLA Children and Young People's Spokesperson Councillor Stephen McCabe, co-chairs of the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group, wrote a joint letter to local authority chief executives and directors of education to pay tribute to the 'outstanding work' done during the pandemic and to reiterate the crucial role they play in helping to reduce COVID-19 risks in schools and early learning and childcare (ELC) settings.

The letter asks for particular attention to be paid to:

- > promotion of asymptomatic testing for school and ELC staff and secondary school pupils;
- > consistent implementation of the latest guidance for contact tracing following identification of positive COVID-19 cases;
- > ensuring strengthened guidance on CO2 monitoring is implemented effectively; and
- > support for school/ELC staff and 16-17 year olds to take part in the COVID-19 vaccination programme, as well as school-based programmes such as the winter flu vaccination campaign.

The Education Secretary also wrote to childcare providers, thanking them for their efforts and asking for their continued support in implementing COVID-19 guidance.

The letter is at www.voicetheunion.org.uk/blog/keeping-schools-and-childcare-settings-scotland-safe

Ms Somerville later confirmed that all current mitigations, including secondary school pupils' use of face coverings in

classrooms, would continue after the October break and be reviewed on a weekly basis beyond then, with a view to removing the use of face coverings as soon as the prevalence of COVID in schools is reduced.

Updated guidance was provided in the information letters schools send to staff and the parents of primary and secondary pupils when they are in low-risk contact with positive cases in schools.

These include a strengthened recommendation to take a lateral flow test before returning to school, in addition to current advice for staff and secondary pupils to take a lateral flow test twice a week, with a few days apart, and record the result before returning to the classroom.

There will be a continued requirement for staff to keep at least a metre distant from each other and from children and young people.

www.gov.scot/news/covid-19-safety-in-schools

Vaccination

Scottish ministers accepted the advice of the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) on coronavirus vaccinations for children and young people. A dose of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is being offered to those aged 12-15 not already covered by existing advice.

Voice Community cautiously welcomed the announcement, as we believe it will help to keep members safe and reduce disruption to children's learning.

COVID and teachers

A piece of COSLA research sought to answer the question: compared to other working-age adults, are teachers at increased risk of being admitted to hospital with COVID-19? It reassuringly concluded that they are not.

You can read *Risk of COVID 19 among teachers in Scotland* at www.publichealthscotland.scot/publications/risk-of-covid-19-among-teachers-in-scotland

Early Learning and Childcare

The suite of childcare guidance has been updated following the changes to policy on self-isolation for children and adults who are close contacts. The rationale for and impact of these changes for schools and registered childcare settings is explained in a self-isolation and contact tracing information sheet.

Other recent changes to the guidance include:

- > physical distancing requirements in settings will be at least 1 metre;
- > parents/carers can visit settings, in a carefully managed way, to support children's transition to a new setting;
- > an enhanced approach with respect to ventilation; and
- > in level 0 and below, groups can be mixed when outside, if this allows settings to maximise time spent outdoors where risk of transmission is lower.

A checklist of mitigations has been developed to help settings familiarise themselves with the updated guidance as quickly as possible, highlighting key mitigations that have changed since the end of the summer term in June.

www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-learning-and-childcare-services

Blether

COSLA hosted an Early Learning and Childcare blether over the summer, which gave staff working in the ELC sector an opportunity to have their questions about the guidance answered by public health professionals and its policy lead on COVID safety in ELC settings. The session was recorded and can be viewed at: www.education.gov.scot/improvement/covid-19-education-recovery/public-health-information

VOICE COMMUNITY SCOTLAND

EDUCATION RECOVERY

Plans to help Scotland's education system to continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic have been published by the Scottish Government.

The **Education Recovery strategy** outlines how almost £500 million has been used to support learners and staff across the country, and sets out how the Scottish Government will continue to provide ongoing support, including:

- > further support for learners sitting exams in Spring 2022, including online revision classes and targeted help;
- > access to in-school mental health and wellbeing support and counselling;
- > recruiting 3,500 additional teachers and 500 support staff over this parliamentary term;
- > expanding funded early learning and childcare for children aged 1 and 2, starting with low-income households; and
- > committing £1 billion to tackle the poverty-related attainment gap and support education recovery.

Education Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said: 'Other initiatives will play a crucial role, such as the provision of free school breakfasts and lunches all year round for all children in P1-7, digital devices for every child, abolition of fees for instrumental music tuition, removal of core curriculum charges, and our extended early learning and childcare offer.'

www.gov.scot/news/education-recovery

EDUCATION REFORM

The Cabinet Secretary for Education announced in June 2021 the intention to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment while also taking forward reform to Education Scotland, including removing the function of inspection from the agency.

Professor Ken Muir, from the University of the West of Scotland, has been appointed to act as an independent advisor to the Scottish Government to consider and advise on the implementation of the reform that will consider all functions currently delivered by both SQA and Education Scotland.

Professor Muir has appointed both an expert panel and an advisory group, the latter comprising practitioners

and stakeholders from across the wider education system, including Voice Community. These groups will support his work, help to explore the current and future needs of learners, practitioners, and other partners, and offer advice and ideas on how we can design our education system to meet these needs.

In addition to consulting with these groups, Professor Muir will be carrying out a broad engagement to seek the views and ideas of a wide range of stakeholders across the education sectors. A programme of twilight webinars has been arranged (www.gov.scot/policies/schools/education-reform) and a national engagement consultation will allow individuals and other interested parties to contribute to this reform work (www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-education-scotland-scottish-qualification-authority-professor-kenneth-muir). It is envisaged that this exercise will take around six months.

ANTI-RACISM SUPPORT

A new package of support materials for teachers and school staff published in the summer will embed anti-racism and race equality into all aspects of school life. Education Scotland's new resource will ensure children and young people see language, content and imagery that reflects the diversity of culture, identities and experiences, including their own.

2021 also saw the publication of guidance from anti-racism charity the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, and a teacher toolkit published by Scotdec, one of Scotland's Development Education Centres, both of which will further support teachers in embedding anti-racism across the curriculum.

- > Education Scotland's **Promoting and Developing Race Equality and Anti-Racist Education: An Overview**: www.education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/promoting-race-equality-and-anti-racist-education
- > Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights: **Guide to Developing an Anti-Racist Curriculum**: www.crer.scot/introduction-to
- > Scotdec's **Anti-Racist Toolkit for Teachers**: www.scotdec.org.uk/resources/anti-racist-toolkit-for-teachers



VOICE COMMUNITY SCOTLAND

1140 HOURS

All eligible children in Scotland are now able to access up to 1140 hours of high quality, nurturing, funded early learning and childcare (ELC).

It is fantastic to see this policy brought to life through the passion, hard work and dedication of everyone in the ELC sector. This would be a phenomenal achievement in normal times, but to make 1140 a reality for children and families across Scotland whilst dealing with the myriad challenges of the pandemic is testament to the commitment of all of our early years practitioner members.

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2021-22

As part of its Programme for Government, the Scottish Government set out plans to provide low-income families with free childcare before and after school and during holidays, and actions to drive forward Scotland's national mission to end child poverty.

It intends to:

- > provide free childcare to low-income families before and after school and during holidays; and
- > expand free early learning and childcare to 1 and 2 year olds – starting in this Parliament with children from low-income households.

www.gov.scot/programme-for-government

SUPPORT STAFF WORKING GROUP

Voice Community Scotland is represented on a new Scottish Government working group that has been established to consider how best we can empower and support pupil support staff, including taking forward action in response to the recommendations of the additional support for learning review published earlier this year.

For the purposes of this working group, which is chaired by Scottish Government officials, 'pupil support staff' is applied to all staff in school settings who provide support to the learning and teaching process and the wellbeing of children and young people.

- > **Remit:** To maintain and improve the quality of pupil support in Scotland to enhance the impact it has on pupils' learning and wellbeing and on reducing teacher workload.

- > **Aim:** To establish a coherent system to ensure pupil support staff in Scotland have access to role-specific professional learning to assist them to reflect on practice, gain confidence from achievements and identify areas for development.

Initial actions

The group will explore:

- > options for carrying out a role and remit review;
- > options for the development of a clear specification for how classroom teacher and pupil support assistant roles interact and complement each other;
- > options for national standards of practice;
- > learning pathways; and
- > career progression routes and remuneration.

Through its involvement, Voice Community will help shape and develop the group's work. **If any of our support staff members would like to get involved**, please email Senior Professional Officer Dougie Atkinson: DAtkinson@community-tu.org



TEACHERS' PAY UPDATE 2021

The Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) Extended Joint Chairs met in August to discuss this year's pay claim. The Employers' Side reported that COSLA Leaders had confirmed an undifferentiated offer of 1.22% across all SNCT pay grades, backdated to April 2021. Whilst the acceptance of the principle of a universal pay offer is progress, the offer of 1.22% is not, being simply a redistribution of the cost of the previous offer.

The Teachers' Side made clear that the offer of 1.22% is unreasonable,

sub-inflationary and fundamentally misjudges the value of the profession. The unions collectively expressed their frustrations on this position and warned that an improved offer needed to be made or the result would be a dispute.

Following the meeting of 30 September, the Teachers' Side declared a formal dispute over the sub-inflationary pay offer.

Latest updates: www.voicetheunion.org.uk/snct-pay2021

STOP PRESS:

GTC Scotland is consulting on its teacher registration rules until 5 January: www.gtcs.org.uk/about-gtcs/our-consultations.aspx

VOICE COMMUNITY NORTHERN IRELAND



CHALLENGES AHEAD!

By Chris Wilson, Chair of the Northern Ireland Executive Committee
(chriswilson@voiceactivists.org.uk)

With the new academic year now well and truly underway, challenges old and new confront us.

COVID and attendance

The first, unsurprisingly, relates to the COVID pandemic. It is striking that whilst some 89% of pupils were in school when the new year started, 11% were absent according to Department of Education figures. These attendance figures include primary, post-primary and secondary schools, but exclude pre-school children. When the data are examined more closely, some worrying developments are apparent.

About 3% of the total number of pupils expected to be in school were recorded as being absent for COVID-related reasons, such as self-isolation or social distancing. However, an additional 8% of pupils expected to be in school were recorded as being absent for reasons not related to the pandemic.

This is a source for concern as each day absent from school affects a child's life-chances. Education remains the best driver for social justice that we know, and its absence has profound long-term consequences. It is also noteworthy that the highest rate of absence was in special schools, again a cause for concern for all education professionals.

Contact tracing

Significantly, the Public Health Agency (PHA) has now taken over primary responsibility for contact tracing in schools, bringing Northern Ireland into step with England, Scotland and Wales. The comments from Health Minister Robin Swann and Education Minister Michelle McIlveen that the PHA will take a 'more targeted approach' are therefore to be welcomed.

It seems that COVID will be both directly and indirectly a continuing source of disruption for children's education for many months yet, although the fact that the majority of pupils were recorded as being absent from school for reasons other than the COVID represents a new development.

Pay and conditions

Meanwhile, education professionals do their best. 'Blended' teaching and learning has placed strain on our members, who have done their utmost to the meet the challenges of these exceptional times.

It was therefore disappointing to hear about the pay freeze for teachers across the water in England. Taking into account inflation, this represents a real-terms pay cut of around 3 to 4%. As Voice Community has observed, this will do nothing to motivate an already hard-pressed profession or to attract new graduates.

The pay award for teachers in Northern Ireland was 2% for 2019/2020 and 2% again for 2020/2021. The situation here continues to evolve, but decisions taken in London may yet affect us here. You will find up-to-date advice and guidance on pay on our website (www.voicetheunion.org.uk/help-and-advice/teacher-pay).

Voice Community Northern Ireland

COVID and pay both represent challenges for the profession. But there are opportunities as well. Voice Community continues to make strong, professional representations on behalf of members, and we now have the advantages that come with being part of a larger and fast-growing union as well.

Our local Northern Ireland Executive Committee is at full strength, and the union is effective in supporting members in need. Still, we are always keen to meet new members at the NIEC.

Please just email me on chriswilson@voiceactivists.org.uk and I will organise an invite to our next meeting, and spread the word about our union. For in the end, it is simple – the more members we have, the better we can meet the challenges in our professional lives.



Latest COVID-19 updates:

www.voicetheunion.org.uk/news-media-issues/coronavirus-information-updated#Northern

I WANT TO BELONG TO A UNION THAT UNDERSTANDS THE CHALLENGES I FACE AT WORK



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Membership benefits:

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- > quality service – putting members first
- > campaigning for members in the education and early years sector.

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