

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Teacher recruitment, training and retention](#), HC 1207

Tuesday 20 June 2023

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Mr Robin Walker (Chair); Caroline Ansell; Mrs Flick Drummond; Anna Firth; Nick Fletcher; Kim Johnson; Andrew Lewer; Ian Mearns.

Questions 1 - 57

Witnesses

[I](#): Dr Mary Bousted, Joint General Secretary, National Education Union; Professor Dame Alison Peacock, Chief Executive Officer, The Chartered College of Teaching; and Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary, NASUWT.

[II](#): Paul Whiteman, General Secretary, NAHT; Julie McCulloch, Director of Policy, Association of School and College Leaders; and Jenny Sherrard, National Head of Equality and Policy, University and College Union.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Mary Bousted, Professor Dame Alison Peacock, and Dr Patrick Roach.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to today's session, which is the first session of the Committee's inquiry into teacher recruitment and retention. We are very pleased to be joined this morning by a strong panel, composed of Dr Mary Bousted, General Secretary of the National Education Union, Dame Alison Peacock, Chief Executive of the Chartered College of Teaching, and Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary of NASUWT. Welcome all.

I will start by asking each of you to give us an overview of the current extent of the challenges in the teaching workforce. Are these challenges primarily caused by too few new teachers joining the profession, or too many teachers leaving the profession, or both?

Dr Bousted: Thank you very much for the question. I think we now have a crisis in teacher supply and, to answer your question directly, it is a crisis of both recruitment and retention. We are not recruiting enough new teachers and we are not retaining teachers in the profession.

You will have seen the stats surrounding that, which are alarming. Particularly alarming is the National Foundation for Educational Research's prediction this year, based on current recruitment trends, that the Government will miss their secondary targets by over half. Of course, this compounds missing its secondary target by over 40% overall last year.

As a result of the National Audit Office review into teacher recruitment in 2018, the way that teacher vacancies are calculated was changed. What used to happen was at the end of each year they used to go back to zero and then you would put a target in. Now the target gets bigger and bigger to take into account the previous year's failure to recruit. Although the Government will say we have more teachers in the classroom than ever before, what they don't say is that there are 1 million more pupils in the classroom. There is a 6% rise in teacher numbers and an 11% rise in pupil numbers. The particular problem now is that that bulge in the pupil population is moving from primary into secondary, and there it gets much more difficult. It is much easier to put a teacher in front of a primary classroom than it is to find the right teacher with the right qualifications for secondary classrooms.

I will finish with my subject, which is English. I trained as an English teacher. My practice was as an English teacher, head of English, then I trained teachers in three universities. In the first university, the University of York, I ran the PGCE English course. I used to be able to fill that course with good-quality graduates by the October half-term; the course would close then. Last year the Government missed its teacher training targets for English, which is a core subject that has to be taken by all pupils, by 18%. There was a report in the *Observer* on Sunday



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about the dearth of English teachers. That is replicated across the range of secondary subjects, but when it gets to a core subject like English, which is taken by every pupil, the only way that heads can deal with that is by an influx of teachers, who are not trained in English, taking those classes.

We are seeing—and we have NEU stats to back this up—a massive rise in the use of cover teachers who generally will not be trained in the subject that they are teaching, will not know the pupils, do the best job that they can, but cannot provide continuity.

Q2 **Chair:** And cost more.

Dr Bousted: And cost a huge amount, although they are not paid enough—a lot of money goes to the employment agencies, supply agencies. We are also seeing a massive increase in teachers teaching out of their subject area. That compounds the problem for teachers who remain in the profession, because if you are head of English, as I was, and three of your eight teachers are not subject specialists, your workload is immensely increased because you have to provide so much extra support for the teachers who are teaching a subject they are not qualified in.

Chair: That then probably has an impact on retention as well. Dame Alison, can I bring you in on this?

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: Yes, thank you. Following on from what Mary Bousted said, the stats really look incredibly bleak and, frankly, it costs the Government a lot of money to constantly be retraining teachers. We need institutional wisdom in our schools, so it is not satisfactory to have the level of turnover that we do.

There has been an 11% rise in pupil numbers during the time that we have missed secondary school teacher recruitment targets, for nine out of the past 10 years. Last year, 8.8% of the sector left state schools for reasons other than retirement, and that was up 7,800 on the previous year. This exodus cannot continue.

The reality in schools is that teachers are problem solvers, teachers are constantly ducking and diving and doing the best they can to make everything work, because they care about the children. However, we are getting to the point where, if you cannot even find a supply teacher, if there isn't even someone that you can phone up who can come in, it gets to desperate straits. Then you start to think, "Can we have a cover supervisor that can carry that class over?" That then leads to a decline in standards, so we have a very real problem. It is not something that we are just moaning about round the edges. This is becoming absolutely front and centre for schools.

I am speaking to colleagues who are headteachers, senior leaders, who are saying, "We have never known it this bad. We don't know how we are



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going to fill our posts,” and talking to governors who are saying, “We don’t know how we are going to fill this headship vacancy, this leadership vacancy.” This is collected with an overall sense from the teaching profession, which I hear a lot, which is one of feeling undervalued. There is a real sense that teachers do not believe that the Government support them. That is a terrible situation to be in.

If you think about the pandemic, it was our public servants who did so much to lead us through a very difficult time. I think our teachers, and particularly our headteachers, were amazing during that time. I was listening to what was going on with people, and as an ex-primary headteacher myself, I think if I had been in that situation, leading a school, I would have done everything I could to carry my community through, and then I would have wanted somehow to feel, “Yes, I have been recognised for this. I have been valued for this, and now I have enough energy to carry on to the next phase.” I think people are ducking out.

Q3 Chair: I recognise that picture, absolutely, and yet when we did our inquiry on childcare in the early years we heard from people that there is a view that they thought teachers had been valued, and their work had been celebrated but theirs had not. It was interesting that we had that very strong feedback that the early years sector felt undervalued because they had heard teachers being praised and thanked and they had not got that message necessarily themselves. It is an interesting challenge, I think.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: It is probably worse for the early years sector, because I think they find it very difficult to gain any kind of public voice. I think the feeling is real. Even if the perception is other than that, I think the feeling is real that teachers and school leaders feel undervalued.

Dr Roach: Just to come in on that point, clapping for teachers is one thing; valuing teachers is something else. Let’s be clear about that. Our members are very clear that external expressions of gratitude for the contributions that teachers make—and we hear that from the Secretary of State all the time—needs to be matched with a commitment to invest in the profession, and frankly that has not been seen.

You asked about the recruitment and retention situation. It is both. It is a crisis. The Government have to acknowledge the scale of the challenge, even if they do not want to use the word “crisis” to describe the current situation. To add to what colleagues have already said, the Government’s own data suggests that it is not beyond the bounds of credibility to suggest that within the next 10 years we will have to recruit the entire stock of teachers again, given the numbers that are leaving the profession, with a record number—40,000—leaving last year alone.

This Committee has previously identified the extent of the problem. This Committee has said that the Government have failed to get a grip of



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retention, but also of recruitment. The Government have published their teacher recruitment and retention strategy. Has that resolved the problem? No, it has not. The problem has got worse since 2019, and the fact that since then we have had six Secretaries of State has not helped. The question, "Have Ministers taken their eye off the ball?" is possibly entirely apt, but it does not engender confidence and it does not suggest that Ministers at the very top have the command of strategic leadership and oversight that they need in this area.

For the NASUWT, the issues relating to recruitment and retention reflect systemic challenges. My colleagues have already touched on some of those systemic challenges. Fundamentally, it requires the Government to put the workforce at the heart of any programme for reform and for school improvement. Frankly, that has not been seen.

One of the first of what I have to say were very damaging and destructive acts of government was the abolition in 2010 of the school workforce social partnership. That sent a ripple right through the system about the importance of national pay and conditions of service. It sent a ripple through the system in respect of the rights and entitlements of the workforce, and it sent ripples through the system about what was going to be expected of teachers and headteachers over the course of the next 13 years. We have seen more and more pressure being heaped on to beleaguered teachers and headteachers, which has frankly made the job unsustainable, undoable and certainly unattractive: 73% of teachers say that in the last 12 months they have seriously considered leaving the job altogether. This is not scaremongering on our part. This is very real.

I say it is systemic. I say that the Government need to be clear about a long-term plan, and not just to recruit and retain, because if we are not careful we will apply sticking plasters to the problem. We need to get under the lid of the problem, where there are the issues of unsustainable workload and working hours and deteriorating real-terms pay for the profession. We say the Government need to be much more ambitious and need to back their ambitions with investment.

Q4 Chair: Thank you. I think you have answered the question about the extent you think the teacher recruitment and retention strategy is addressing the issues. From what you are saying, I think you feel that it is not and that it is out of date. Given that it was published in 2019, do you think it is time for a rewrite of that strategy and for something different to be brought forward on that front?

Dr Bousted: When the latest teacher figures were put out, the Department for Education put out a tweet with a clap saying, "The biggest number of teachers ever, the greatest number of teachers, over 6%," It was ridiculed. There is an 11% rise in pupils.

Just to give the scale of the problem, we have done some stats. It wasn't me; I have not done the stats but somebody clever in the union has done the stats. The number of teachers has increased by just over 27,000



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since 2010, but the number of pupils has increased by nearly 1 million. That is 37 extra pupils for every extra teacher. There are now more than 1 million pupils taught in classes with more than 30 pupils, with one in seven pupils in secondary schools and one in eight primary pupils taught in a class of more than 30. Primary and secondary class sizes increased this year and now they are among the highest in the OECD. For primary we have the fourth highest class sizes after Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, and for secondary schools we have the fifth highest class sizes after Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and Chile. I don't think it is putting our education system in a good light to be on a par with countries that are much poorer than us and have a much less developed education system, but that is where we are now.

The other stats we can give you are about the massive rise in cover teachers, which hides the problem, and the number of children now being taught by teachers teaching out of their subject area. One in six teachers teaching English does not have a degree in that subject, one in five maths teachers, one in five history teachers, one in four chemistry teachers, one in four French teachers, one in four digital technology teachers, and two in five physics teachers. The number of teachers teaching out of their subject area in secondary has reached an industrial scale, and that will get worse.

Q5 Chair: It is interesting that you can include history in that because history is one area where the Government have consistently hit their target.

Dr Boustead: Yes, but they are not staying.

Q6 Chair: They are not staying. What other sectors have you looked at for comparators in retention? I think we all recognise that there is no career in which there is 100% retention; people do change careers and in many respects, for something like teaching, which is a calling, it is something that you want people to be passionate about, so some people leaving may not be a bad thing. What do you think is a sensible level of retention to be looking for and what are the comparators for equivalent graduate professions that we should be looking at when it comes to retention?

Dr Boustead: I do not have comparators but I can get them.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: Thinking about retention, we need to recognise that when you become a teacher it takes at least three years before you can start to feel fully confident in the classroom. If too many teachers are leaving only six years post-qualification, it means that the expertise that is building is constantly being replaced by novice teaching. Our young people deserve to have teachers who have expertise at their fingertips.

We talk about teachers teaching beyond their subject. Specific subject teaching is absolutely vital here because the way that you teach chemistry is very different from the way that you might take an English



class and so on. The skills that our teachers have—building over time, mentoring and supporting new colleagues coming through, advising leadership teams within their schools about the best way of developing our curriculum, the best way of doing the best we can for our children—we are losing that expertise.

A particular group is subject to what is known as the motherhood penalty—a group of women who find it very hard to embrace the extreme rigidity of teaching in term time—so a look at flexible working could make a massive difference to the workforce. I heard about a physics specialist, for example. She wanted to return to work from maternity leave but she could realistically only work between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm. If I was a timetabler in a secondary school and I did not have a physics teacher, I would make my timetable work between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm to have that specialist, but we have too much of, “This is how it has always been. You have always taken the tutor group. We have always worked through until 4.00 pm”. We need to be much more flexible in our imagining about what can happen and embrace the expertise that exists.

Dr Roach: We cannot afford the current levels of wastage in the profession. To come directly to your question, I am not going to put a number on it but it certainly isn’t the current level of wastage. The public purse cannot sustain that. The warnings we are giving about the perilous state of retention right now are to get the Government in a position where we do actually have a compelling, coherent and effective strategy, not only to recruit but to retain teachers and headteachers in the profession.

The reality is that if we are going to address the question of retention, we have to look at what is driving teachers and headteachers out of the profession in the first place. We cannot duck that issue. Any good employer will say, “People are leaving my organisation. I want to know why. Why are they leaving my organisation? Perhaps I want to take a few exit interviews.” It is what organisations do all the time. We ask our members, “Why are you leaving your job?” or “Why are you leaving the profession?” What they cite is unsustainable working hours and deteriorating real-terms rates of pay. These are matters that the Government, frankly, have not addressed.

If you want to benchmark, I would not necessarily benchmark against all parts of the public sector, because actually we have a bit of a workforce challenge right across the public sector. If we look at retention rates in other occupations and industries employing graduates, we see a far better and healthier picture in respect of retention than what we are currently seeing in the teaching profession.

Q7 **Chair:** Which industries would you point toward in particular? That is partly what I am genuinely interested in: understanding what you think are the sensible comparators.

Dr Roach: Well, you can benchmark with the private sector for starters.



You can look at retention rates in accountancy, in banking and finance, in the pharmaceutical industries. You can look at them and you can ask the question: what are those companies? What is the benchmark rate of exit from not just those occupations but from those professions? It is far lower than we are seeing in teaching at the present time.

One in 10 teachers leaving the profession last year is, frankly, a woeful statistic for Governments to have to deal with, and it is something that Government will have to deal with by addressing those underlying causes.

Dr Boustead: There was a really good quote—I will find it and send it to you—saying that in the private sector, if there is a problem with recruitment and retention, employers do something to make the job more attractive. In the public sector, in teaching, there is a problem with recruitment and retention and what happens is those who are left get more and more stressed and get more and more work. That is the problem. It is not just that we are not recruiting and we are not retaining. As Alison Peacock said, that is the problem because so much of the training of beginning teachers is now done in the school. Who does it? Also, it means that the teachers who are left are just having to pick up the slack, on top of working weeks that approach 50 hours anyhow.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: I think there is a problem internationally. It is not just here. Internationally there is a problem post-pandemic. I think it means that we need to regain the heart of the profession. We need to work with the profession to make this a job that is difficult and challenging, but one we want to stick at. I am privileged in the work that I do with the Chartered College of Teaching to meet many hugely talented, brilliant teachers. By definition, they are the ones that want to pay money to join a professional body; they are the ones that want to come and learn to be chartered teachers. It is important that we listen to them, that we understand that, because we always put on a good face when Ofsted comes to call. If you were to come to visit any of our schools, people would put on the best face they could. They would show you the best school they could, because it is like showing someone around your home. You love it so much; it matters so much. That does not stop the fact that, actually, it is becoming more and more difficult to make ends meet. It is more and more difficult to service the needs of our children. We try our best, but it is becoming increasingly hard, and I think we need to work on this collectively to do the best we can for our children.

Q8 Ian Mearns: I want to do some more in-depth questioning on this retention situation. Patrick, you did not want to answer the Chair's question, which I will couch in a different way. Is there an optimum attrition rate for teachers to leave the profession within the first 10 years? What would be the optimum be after one year, five years, 10 years? We do know that some people do train to be teachers and then, when they get in there, they find it is not for them. Is there such a thing



as an optimum rate because, at the moment, according to DfE's own figures, after one year it is almost 13%, after three years it is almost 26%, after five years it is 31.3% and after 10 years it is over 40%. I think that is well above what would be the optimum from my perspective, given how much it costs to train a teacher in the first place.

Dr Roach: Since I didn't answer Robin Walker's question, I will not be partisan about it so I won't answer your question directly either. I think it is what I have said. It is what Mary Bousted has just said. We have to look at the factors that are driving teachers and headteachers out of the profession. You are absolutely right that some graduates will come into the profession and then figure out it is not for them. Those are not the 30% to 40% that you just quoted, so we have to ask the question of those who are leaving the profession, "Why is it that you have decided to leave?"

If I see that my cohort of graduates when I left university are on significantly higher salaries than I am, or that they have a career structure that they can access, promoted posts, and have the confidence that they will be able to do so within the next five or 10 years, or, frankly, that they have a weekend to themselves or they are able to go out for a night once or twice during the working week—these are factors that our members continuously cite as driving them out of the profession.

Again, I don't want to get to an arbitrary figure and say, well we should be looking at 2%. Certainly, I am not going to be suggesting any arbitrary figures. What we have to understand, unpick and unpack is what is driving teachers out of the profession and how can we fix it, and that is not about leaving it to individual schools to fix the problem, by the way. What I said earlier I meant. These are systemic challenges. Frankly, there isn't a school in the country that is not impacted by the current recruitment and retention crisis. It requires a systemic set of solutions to address it, but that begins, first and foremost, by listening to what teachers are saying about why they are quitting the job.

Dr Bousted: Patrick has talked about systemic issues and he has named them, so I would just like to give some data around them because that again is quite shocking. Look at pay. In 2010 teachers' average pay was 64% higher than average weekly earnings. Today it is virtually half that. That is unprecedented. It is the longest sustained decline in teachers' relative earnings since the Second World War.

Pay is clearly an issue and Patrick's union, my union and both headteacher unions are in a long-running dispute over pay with the Secretary of State. That is a massive issue, but it is combined with working time. Using the Teaching and Learning International Survey 2018, England's teachers are at the top of the OECD league table for work done outside the classroom, which doubles their teaching time. They are the highest for primary and the second for secondary. I think that is right. I will have to check and get back.



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Teachers' average working week teaching is about 21.5 hours a week, but they double that with their admin. That is a second issue: excessively long hours and workloads, which means that you are regularly working longer than the Working Time Directive says you should.

There is a third issue that isn't raised as much as it should be, and the NEU is just going to publish an independent study on it led by Francis Green, who has been leading the British Skills in Employment Survey since 1997. It is an important survey because it benchmarks different professions and there is enough data now to take out teaching. That survey finds that work intensity for teachers has doubled in the intervening period since 2003. What work intensity means is the pace at which you have to work, the quality control measures you are subject to and how relevant you think they are, and the intellectual challenge of the tasks you have to do. Teaching is characterised as being very, very high pace, having inappropriate quality control measures, and having too much of the work that teachers are asked to do not being work that they consider to be valuable. In other words, it is work that in their view is done for a purpose other than teaching and learning.

Francis Green produced that paper two years ago because he was able to extract the teacher data. The NEU paid the Institute of Education and Swansea University to do another cut of the data and do interviews with teachers. That is coming out in the next few weeks and of course we will send that to the Committee.

Chair: Thank you. That will be appreciated.

Q9 Anna Firth: Just a very quick question about those teacher pay figures and the decline that you have just talked about. Does it take into account the pension contributions that teachers get? We know that at the moment the average teaching salary is £39,500, plus a 23% index-linked pension contribution. We know pension contributions in the private sector have declined in recent years. Do those figures take into account pension contributions?

Dr Boustead: I don't think they do, but I will get back to you on that. Teachers work so hard and pensions used to keep them in the profession. A good pension used to be why teachers would stay until their 50s and so on. The fact of the matter is that that is not working now.

Q10 Nick Fletcher: We are aware of the ongoing discussions regarding teachers' pay at the moment, but are there any other reforms to teachers' pay that we could look at that would help retention? Yes, straight to you, Dr Roach.

Dr Roach: Both our unions, the NEU and the NASUWT, are in dispute with the Government over teacher and headteacher, pay as are the NAHT and ASCL. The reality is that teachers' pay is an issue. The quantum of pay is a major reason for the issues that we have already cited. You can see that in our written submission to this Committee. The quantum of



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teachers' pay in real terms has declined substantially over the course of the last decade or thereabouts—25% is a roundabout figure of describing that.

When we look at the competitiveness of teachers' pay compared with other postgraduate occupations, teachers' pay is lagging behind. We commissioned Income Data Research to undertake the analysis for us. Looking at the latest data in 2022, it identified that secondary teachers' pay was lagging behind 12% with comparable non-teaching occupations. Primary teachers' pay is lagging behind by 29%. We have to do something to raise the quantum of, if you will, baseline pay for teachers.

Your question also raises a wider set of issues about the pay system and how it operates. Since 2013, when the last major reforms to the pay system were introduced, the situation has become worse for many teachers rather than better. The profession was told that the pay reforms were designed to pay good teachers more. There is little evidence that that is what is actually happening. If we take the issue of who wins—who are the winners and who are the losers—we are seeing a widening gender pay gap within the teaching profession. Prior to 2013, the pay progression rates of the upper pay range was broadly similar for women and men. Within five years, that gap had opened to 10% and that trend has continued since then. The pay reforms that were introduced, the introduction of a form of performance-related pay rationing in the system, has contributed to greater unfairness in the system. Again, that has not helped this issue of recruitment and certainly not of retention.

There are issues with reforms that were introduced that remove the right to pay portability for teachers. You cannot guarantee what you will get paid if you leave your school and move to another school within the system. That is rank unfairness and teachers have said, "If I cannot put up with working in this school, I may as well not bother working anywhere and get a job somewhere else." We have to look at the mechanics of the way in which the pay system operates as well as the quantum of pay that teachers are able to achieve. It is not seen to reward teachers sufficiently and, in its operation, it is not seen to reward teachers fairly either.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: I will also add that we used to have an advanced skills teacher status that rewarded teachers for staying in the classroom. It rewarded teachers at this crucial point of six years, when we lose a third of our teachers. After six years within the profession, a third of them are lost. It rewarded them for staying in the classroom, building their subject expertise and becoming future leaders. I think that we need to build that back. We need to reform.

This report was published last week. I do not know if you have seen it. I will leave a copy for you. Flick has certainly seen it. It calls for a review of the pay standards—the way that everything is defined—which was set in the 1970s. It is now 50 years later. We need to make sure that



everything is fit for purpose. As Patrick and Mary say, of course the amount of money that is available is important and we need to reward our teachers, but we also need to provide those incentives for staying in the classroom and being proud, not to feel that you have to move out to become a leader in order to keep your pay going up. You need to be proud to be a teacher, staying and doing what you do best in many cases.

Q11 Kim Johnson: Good morning, panel. Mary, you have provided some startling data on working time directives and the fact that both primary and secondary school teachers here do more work outside of the classroom than in any other country. How big an issue is workload for teachers at the moment, and how effective has the school workload reduction toolkit, which was issued by the Government, been in dealing with teachers' workload? You mentioned that workloads and pay are the major issues in retention at the moment.

Dr Boustead: If you had asked me two years ago, I would have said that workload is clearly the major issue. We do a state of education survey before conference. It is a huge survey: it gets about 40,000 members responding to it, and it is a long survey as well—they have to sit at it for over 20 minutes—so they increase their workload by doing the survey, but it is an important benchmark. Workload always came out, but pay now vies with workload, so it becomes extremely toxic. Clearly, workload is not going down. In fact, the pandemic workload went through the roof and it has not come down. The Government will say, "Before the pandemic, it was working," and there were some very modest reductions in the hours teachers were recording, but they were modest.

Clearly, the workload reduction toolkit is well-intentioned. We put our logo on it and we were prepared to support anything that would help teachers and leaders to reduce their workload. The problem is that, while it is well-intentioned and there are some good ideas in it, we have a profession where there are increasing class sizes, and we have had a long period of austerity where school funding declined by 9% in real terms between 2010 and 2018—rising class sizes and declining funding. The other thing that is happening with teaching is that it is not just the admin, it is also that the austerity decimated the services that local authorities could provide.

When I have talked to teachers on picket lines and marches—I always walk down the march. I start at the front and then walk down the march. On those marches of 50,000 teachers, I must have talked to about 400 teachers on those days. They will very quickly get to the helplessness and hopelessness that they feel. They have a child who has severe mental health problems, who cannot get a counsellor appointment. They have children who have dysfunctional families—there are no family support officers.

The Chief Inspector—in one of the very rare times I agree with her—wrote in her latest Ofsted report in December of children who are so



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vulnerable that they need social workers, who are meeting their social workers online because local authorities cannot recruit social workers. Teachers have had the lowest postgraduate pay apart from social workers over the last 12 years. We are right at the bottom of the table. They cannot recruit social workers so local authorities are paying agencies to have social workers for these extremely vulnerable children who they meet online and who do not know their area, do not know their school and do not meet them in person.

Look at youth clubs and youth services. There was a 40% cut in central Government grants to local authorities between 2010 and 2018. This means that the whole range of support services that used to be around the school are gone, and the 23,000 schools in England and Wales are the last public service institution that is standing. Teachers and leader support staff become breakfast club givers, they find money for free school lunches, they become uniform washers, family counsellors, children's counsellors and quasi-social workers. They are the ones on a Friday at 5.00 pm with a child who they have identified with acute safeguarding concerns that the local authority cannot find a children's home place for. They have to stay there with that child while they are waiting and desperately looking around for places.

The other issue—apart from the admin that the teachers workload strategy does not touch the sides of—is that there is a massive increase in child poverty. Nine children out of every class in an average class of thirty across England is living below the poverty line. Those children bring into the classroom massive social and personal problems, and there is no one else there to deal with them. That is another massive increase in workload.

Q12 Kim Johnson: Thanks, Mary. You paint a very broad picture of the role our teachers played, particularly during Covid-19, and continue to play now. Dame Alison, you wanted to come in?

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: Thank you. I completely agree with everything that Mary has just said, but I think that an additional pressure on teachers comes from the accountability regime. I think that school leaders are constantly looking over their shoulder wanting to make sure that they are preparing their school in the best way that they possibly can, looking at the Ofsted framework, trying to second-guess what they need to do. That pressure percolates down to teachers. It means that teachers are required to do things that otherwise they might not need to do, but do just in case someone comes and looks.

An example would be a teacher writing a comment in a year one book. The child cannot read the comment by the teacher, but the teacher writes a comment in the book so that the Ofsted inspector, if they were to walk through the door, could read the comments to show that feedback is being provided. I mean, that is nonsense. It is lunacy, but the pressure is very real. I think that the current debates around Ofsted and how we change some of the focus away from this sense of checking up on schools



to a much greater sense of developmental process is a welcome debate. I hope that we see some consequences that alleviates some of the pressure. The pressure is untenable.

We were talking earlier about early years. I had a comment from one of our members who talked about the fact that in early years settings the pressure is immense when they get a visit from the inspectorate, because there are not enough people who are trained and everything feels challenging. It is no wonder, I think, that people are looking elsewhere.

The other thing to say, alongside all of the class sizes and the lack of support services that Mary was talking about, is that we are also losing teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are finding that they can get paid better to work in Aldi than if they work in the classroom. That is becoming problematic for schools.

Dr Roach: My colleagues have eloquently set out many of the systemic challenges that drive the workload issues for our members. Workload is no doubt a major issue for teachers, allied to the question of working time. The job is no longer seen to be doable. It is not sustainable. One of the impacts of the pandemic, whether we like it or not, is that it changed the outlook for many working people. People are exercising choice about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

Can I say one thing that I think needs to be recognised again here? It feels like a broken record from me. It is about systemic challenge and leadership from the top. Much of what Alison and Mary have described is about political choices on the part of Government—what has been dismantled and what has been put into the system, and the negative impacts of those on the working conditions of teachers and headteachers. For example, you asked about the workload reduction toolkit. We have the wellbeing charter and we have the recommendations of the teacher workload reduction groups—all reasonable in their contribution. If Government felt that this was an important priority, Government would make the choice to insist that schools followed the product of that work. The Government has made the choice not to insist that that is followed. One has to ask why.

Government has not been prepared to invest what it takes to deal with the consequences of the pandemic or to deal with the demands that are on the system as Mary has already pointed to—not just the resource challenges within schools, but the resource challenges around schools, around the services that schools, children and young people rely upon, which is leading to schools having to pick up the pieces.

Q13 Kim Johnson: I agree that poverty is a political choice. Thinking about a solution to the problems, would you say that the Government enforcing some of those poverty drivers would be a way of reducing workload issues?



Dr Roach: Absolutely. Government has a choice to enforce or not to enforce. I seem to have a recurring nightmare of a conversation with Ministers about the importance of enforcement—"Well, no, no, we do not want go there." Meanwhile, the system is being reduced to chaos. Enforcement is definitely part of that.

We talk as a union about the nature of the teachers' contract. Imagine you have a contractual framework that is clear about the quantum of time that a teacher is available for. When I meet to get the services of a lawyer, they charge me for it; they charge me every 10 minutes of their time. Would that be the case for teachers? The Government does not have to rely upon that because it can rely upon a framework of contractual terms and conditions that says that teachers' time is limitless. That is what the contract says, that teachers and headteachers have no limit to their working time. Yes, we have a notion of directed time, but it says in the contract that teachers must continue to work as long as it takes to get the job done. More and more is heaped upon schools, and more and more time has to be invested by teachers and headteachers.

In talking about enforcement, one of the things that we are trying to get the Government to do is to wake up and to say, "Actually, we need to address what the real resource needs in schools are and how we can ensure that those resource needs are properly met." Nobody wants to see children missing out on valuable education and valuable support. Teachers least of all want to see that, but we cannot continue to expect teachers and headteachers to deliver more and more and more again.

Q14 **Anna Firth:** Prior to this session, I was invited to a roundtable of secondary headteachers in Southend. I totally empathise with the points that you are making, the three issues of funding, recruitment and retention, but I want to focus in on retention, which was one of their biggest concerns. Of course, the 35% of teachers leaving by the end of five years and biggest dropout rate being among women in their 30s, but they were focused on solutions. The flexible working idea and making teaching more flexible was discussed—the analogy is with GPs, who have chunked up the week into sessions and women stay being GPs and are able to have a session—because what is important is the quality of the product when the teacher is in front of the children. I am interested to hear more about that. The other thing that was discussed—which was one of my ideas—is, what about forgiveness on student debt for teachers that stay in the profession for five years? Those are two practical points I would like your thoughts on.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: I would love to speak more about flexible working. Maybe student loans is something that the unions could pick up on. I think that we should be an intellectual profession with enough wit to be able to look at our workforce and deploy them as effectively as possible. There are organisations that we work closely with, such as WomenEd, who are completely committed to not only flexible working, but also to reducing the gender pay gap, Patrick. It is so



important. If we have that workforce, women who have children or have a caring responsibility, but who are able nevertheless, to be able to chunk up their working week, as you say, being able to work in a way that fits around everything else, we then maintain their professionalism and their motivation to stay with the profession they love. Ultimately, when they are able to, they come back full-time and become our next leaders of the future. It seems important to me that we provide role models and examples of how this can work for timetablers in schools who might not see it.

Q15 Anna Firth: Can I push you there? Some teachers leave the state sector for the private sector. They are not looking for more pay, but they are looking for the flexibility that they get in the private sector. What are the practical steps that you would recommend, and what resources do schools need to implement them?

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: One of the things that we recommended in this report last week was HR specialism. We look at what might be possible to do within a working week that could mean that you could cover your key classes and also have your teachers teaching them in a way that means that they can be flexible in their timing. There are examples, but we need to be much more confident about sharing examples about how we can enable that flexibility to work within the school day. It could be things like, as I mentioned before, does it have to be every teacher running a tutor group? Is that really necessary that beyond your subject, you supervise children for n numbers of hours in the day? Or could it be that we look more intelligently about where the expertise is and how we deploy it? We need teachers teaching. That is the most important thing that they can be doing.

Anna Firth: What do you think about my second point?

Dr Boustead: I have some figures about flexible working. I will go to your second point, but we think that employers should be required to consider flexible working options for a post before they start recruitment. At the moment, there is a delay on the right to request flexible working. You should be able to request flexible working right from when you apply. Particularly, women between 30 and 39, who make up a fifth of the profession, are the demographic most likely to leave. I do not think it is difficult to work out why. That is the time when women have children. Women make up 75% of the profession. Having a job with the longest working week of any job, combined with young children, with women still disproportionately much more likely to be doing the caring, then we need to get flexible working.

To move to your point about incentives, the budget for financial incentives for initial teacher training is worth £181 million this year. That has gone up from £52 million compared with last year. We can send you a paper on this, because I will not read out what I have here in front of me. It is better if I send it to you. There is a teacher student loan reimbursement scheme which allows physics, chemistry, biology,



languages or computing teachers in 26 local authorities to claim back student loan repayments in the previous financial year for up to 11 years. I suspect those 26 authorities are authorities where there are acute teacher shortages.

A lot more money is going into various tuition fee loan, maintenance loan, tax reversals of various different amounts, postgraduate bursaries, undergraduate bursaries and bursaries for full military personnel. The Government are spending three times as much this year as last year. The fact of the matter is, because graduates are in short supply, even though you are putting a lot more money into making those early years attractive, if the job is not seen as sufficiently attractive over the longer term, there are other choices that graduates can make. There is another interesting stat as well, that when graduates are looking at jobs, they will price in 8% of salary for the ability to work at home for some of the week.

Anna Firth: Interesting. Thank you. That is very interesting. Because we are running short of time now, are there any comments you want to make on this point, Dr Roach, very briefly? We have one more question we would like to ask.

Dr Roach: Yes. Two very quick points. First, to pick up on the point about student loan forgiveness, I think that we have to see that in the context of the suite of other financial incentives to attract graduates into the profession. The fact is that we are not seeing evidence of that having the desired impact in boosting retention. The Government has also added in a new programme to incentivise overseas trained teachers to the UK. Fix the underlying issues. Fix the issues of pay, workload and working hours if those incentives are to bear fruit.

On the question of flexibility, I think that my overarching point is one of capacity. Too often, our members will talk to us about how they have been able to secure flexibility in their working time. "I have gone part-time. Now I get paid for three days a week. I work five, but at least I get my weekends back." That is not flexibility. What it clearly illustrates is the lack of capacity within schools to secure that all-round opportunity for students and the opportunity for the workforce to be able to operate flexibly. If you are trying to cover gaps elsewhere, it puts more demands on your time every day.

Anna Firth: I think I will have to ask you—

Chair: No problem. I will go to Andrew in that case.

Q16 **Andrew Lewer:** Thank you. To Dr Roach and Dr Bousted, what feedback have you had from members who are early career teachers about their experience of the early career framework? What do you think can be done to make teacher training more attractive for potential entrants?



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Dr Bousted: We asked about that, because we have a new professionals group of early career teachers. This is a hot off the press report that they have given. "Early career teachers are telling us a lot of material in the early career framework is very repetitive of what they have done in the initial teacher training." Going over basic concepts, which they feel they already understand. They say that, "the ECF needs more flexibility and needs to give more trust in mentors to make choices on the timing of the topics", because beginning teachers have different needs. Some might need help in planning, others might need help in assessment and others might need help in classroom management. There might be different needs that they need to have help with.

"There is not enough time given for mentor sessions and main provider-led sessions." They are telling us that it increases their own working time, and that the mentor sessions are too fully scripted, which leaves no space for much needed day-to-day, week-to-week conversations. I did teacher training for 14 years. I ran the School of Education at Kingston University. A hallmark of good mentoring is that while you have a syllabus that you need to get through, a lot of that is listening to the early career teacher and getting from that conversation their understanding of where they are at and then introducing the help, the new information that they need. When it is heavily scripted, it becomes one-size fits all.

They say they need, "more opportunity to meet other early career teachers in their area". There is an increase in early career teachers being put on support plans. Because the accountability system is so vicious, if a mentor sees a poor lesson, it can too quickly move on to a support plan. Actually, what you need most of all is a conversation. Of course, Alison has talked about mentors. You start being a good mentor when you have about five or six years of experience because that is when you start being able to articulate your experience to other people. Classrooms are very busy and complex places. In about five or six years' time, you have the experience to be able to see the wood for the trees about how to do that. They feel it is very prescriptive. They are not paid to do their role and they are not given enough time. Given the rate of attrition in the profession, you can see it is difficult to get mentors.

Dr Roach: There is remarkably little I can add to that because that is exactly what our early careers members tell us. It is also what our more experienced members tell us about the challenge of providing mentorship to beginning teachers. Fundamentally, it is about the investment in time and, again, it is a systemic challenge. We were supporters of a concept of an early careers framework, a concept of a structured pathway in the early years into the profession which would help to support teachers to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in the classroom and to continue in the profession for a longer period. There is too much evidence of under-resourcing of the early careers framework. In many respects, I think that the Government is guilty of penny-pinching here.



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If we want mentors to be able to do the job effectively, they need to be given the time to develop their own skills. I do not think that we can take it as read that because I have five years on the job, I would make a good mentor. To be honest, you need to develop and hone those skills in the same way that any teacher, with any level of experience, continues to reflect on their practice and develop their skills going forward. You need to be given the time to do that and you need to give them the time to work with that beginning teacher. That is too much at a premium at the moment.

Q17 Andrew Lewer: You talked about confidence particularly. How much feedback you are getting from members about classroom behaviour and discipline as a major cause of people leaving the teaching profession.

Dr Roach: There is no doubt that pupil behaviour is a significant issue of concern to teachers, regardless of length of experience, it has to be said. We can point to the pandemic and what happened subsequent to the pandemic as having created a spike in behaviour issues and challenges within schools. So much of that is to do with what we have all described during the course of this morning as to do with, frankly, the relative absence of support infrastructure for children, young people and families. Too much is being left at the door of the individual classroom teacher, or indeed school leader, to provide that support. If you are waiting weeks and weeks, months and months, or potentially years to access some of the assessments that pupils require, that means that teachers are engaging in, frankly, a programme of containment rather than of educating children and young people, and that is profoundly unhelpful.

There is no doubt that we are seeing increased levels of disruption. We often spoke about low-level disruption in classrooms but we are seeing increased levels of verbal abuse and aggression and physical abuse and aggression, pupil to pupil but also pupil to staff, and that is a serious concern. Now, the Government, I think, has recognised that there is something happening within the system, but even its own behaviour pilots do not go far enough in terms of how to support schools in addressing that. As I say, you cannot just leave it to schools to find the solutions to the behaviour challenges that exist. We need a workforce strategy that recognises that teachers, support staff in schools and other professionals who work alongside schools are critical to supporting the learning needs of all children.

Chair: We are running a little short of time.

Q18 Mrs Flick Drummond: A very quick question. It needs a longer one but never mind.

There are so many ways of getting into teacher training. Last time there were about 23 and there are more than that now. What impact is that having on recruiting teachers, if there are so many ways of getting into teaching that it is difficult to find the wood for the trees?



Professor Dame Alison Peacock: The issue is that there are not enough people coming forward. There are a plethora of different routes that you can join but when I am travelling around the country talking to colleagues, almost everybody involved in initial teacher education is saying, "We are under-recruiting. We cannot find teachers for love or money". I am not so sure it is about the variety of routes. It is more to do with the reputation—

Dr Bousted: There is a whole other story about teacher training.

Mrs Flick Drummond: Yes, I thought it was going to be a long one.

Dr Bousted: There is a whole other, very sorry story about the re-accreditation process, the market review and the way that that has left higher education institutions. Why you would embark on that, with such poor outcomes, when you are hitting a teacher recruitment and retention crisis is beyond me.

Mrs Flick Drummond: Yes. It may be too big for us because I know we are short of time.

Q19 **Ian Mearns:** Dame Alison, you have raised concerns over a lack of high-quality CPD as another challenge in recruiting and retaining teachers. To what extent do the Department's "golden thread" reforms address these concerns and what more could be done to help all teachers access development opportunities?

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: Thank you. It is important that we have professional learning that is tailored to teachers in specific areas of the curriculum. When we first started with the "golden thread" it was very generic. Increasingly we have opportunities for early years, literacy, numeracy and so on, but for a design technology teacher or a teacher who is a scientist and wants to develop their skills we need to make sure it is subject-specific. Too much teacher CPD in schools is all about compliance. It might be about safeguarding. Too often, it is 'one size fits nobody' and teachers find it very tedious, to be honest.

I would say, wouldn't I, coming from the Chartered College, that the more we can develop those teachers who would have been ASTs to become chartered teachers, the better. We are hearing from them that they are staying within the profession, they are fired up and excited about what they are doing, and they are getting promoted. Teachers love to be challenged—it is part of the DNA of being a teacher, otherwise you would not be one because the job is very difficult—but they like to be challenged in terms of their knowledge and their expertise, and to be able to concentrate on teaching their subject. There are so many things that take them away from teaching their subject right now. Those are to do with the support services and everything else we have heard this morning that make the job much more difficult. There is a need for CPD that focuses on building your skill in the classroom.



When we were talking about behaviour earlier on, it struck me powerfully that we are losing those teachers just at the point where they are becoming really competent. As a teacher, before you walk into the room there will be a class that will go, "Shh, she's coming." We all remember that from our days in school, the teacher who has that charisma. If they do not have the experience, if we are bringing new people in and constantly churning the workforce, we lose all of that, and it is what makes our schools work.

Dr Boustead: It really is. By the time I had finished doing seven years at the school I finished teaching in, all I had to do was walk down the corridor.

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: We can imagine.

Dr Boustead: It was not that I was being nasty, it was that everybody knew me and they knew what would happen if they stepped a centimetre out of line, so they did not. It did not happen.

Ian Mearns: You have spent the last 13 years scaring me, Mary.

Dr Boustead: Yes, that is right.

The other issue for CPD in England is that when you look internationally, our teachers are less likely to access CPD because leaders find it difficult to release them. That goes right back to recruitment and retention. If you have three full-time maths teachers in a department of seven, those teachers really need CPD but heads can be quite reluctant to release them because they are needed to do their own classes and cover the work of other classes. CPD becomes more and more of a luxury the more there is a recruitment and retention crisis.

Dr Roach: I do not have much to add other than to simply reflect on the question of what kind of profession we want to construct and support: a profession that is led from the classroom, with critical thinking, critical leadership of pedagogy and reflexive practice. So much of that is being squeezed out in ITT and so much has been squeezed out, as Alison has said, in relation to CPD. Yes, there is that compliance model, but so much is transactional.

Teachers want to know and crave to know how they can support children and young people, how they can develop them, and how they can understand how psychological, behavioural and other issues can impact on the teaching and learning process. They want to apply themselves to their knowledge of the subject and their joy of the subject. We need to create the space and the time for teachers to be reflexive practitioners and leaders of pedagogy.

Chair: We have time for one more question.

Q20 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** We have talked about the gender pay gap and we have also talked about that 75% of the workforce is female. What can



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the Department do to encourage greater diversity of people coming into teaching?

Professor Dame Alison Peacock: One of the things that the Chartered College does is try really hard to provide role models in terms of people leading CPD and online webinars. We know that if you are from the global majority, you are trying to teach within schools and you do not see people who look like you who are teaching, it feels more difficult. We are trying hard to present all of those role models, creating fellows, from colleagues who can demonstrate the best of what teaching is about. We need to do so much more but it is at least a start to embrace that across our professional body.

Dr Roach: I would say that Government needs to take this seriously. Last year, across Whitehall, the Government published its Inclusive Britain Action Plan, which spoke to the issues of ethnic and racial diversity, but I have seen little or no evidence of how that is being translated into a workforce plan within the Department for Education.

According to the Government's calculations, 14% of teachers are from black and minority ethnic groups compared with around 36% to 40% of pupils. There is a challenge. There is a challenge when we look at representation in terms of numbers and there is a challenge when it comes to looking at the experience of those teachers because we know that their experiences will often be more negative as a result of their everyday experience of discrimination, harassment and exclusion in the schools context.

It comes back to the systemic challenge. Government does have some of the tools. We have an Equality Act, for goodness' sake. Why are we not taking that more seriously? How is the public sector equality duty made real within schools, whether that is on the issue of race and ethnicity or with regard to gender, disability, or sexual orientation? How are the Equality Act and the public sector equality duty being made real in schools? Now, we have asked the Government to look at that, to look at, for example, equality pay gap audits and reporting. The Government is reluctant to do that. It is political choice it comes back to. If we are serious about an inclusive and diverse workforce then we make it happen, we do not leave it to chance.

Chair: Thank you very much. I am very grateful for the input of this panel. We will move to the second panel of the day.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Paul Whiteman, Julie McCulloch, and Jenny Sherrard.

Q21 **Chair:** Welcome to our second panel. As you have heard, there is plenty



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to talk about. We are pleased to welcome Paul Whiteman, the General Secretary of the NAHT, Julie McCulloch, Director of Policy at the Association of School and College Leaders, and Jenny Sherrard, Head of Equality and Policy at the UCU, the University and College Union. I will start by asking Paul and Julie: what is your member's assessment of the challenges with regard to teacher recruitment and retention, particularly given the recent statistics that have been published by the Department on the scale of that challenge and what needs to be done to meet it?

Paul Whiteman: To agree with colleagues in the last session, the word "crisis" is not an overstatement of where we are right now. We said to Government in 2017 that we were in crisis then, and nothing has gotten better since that time. There are too few graduates coming into the profession and too many people leaving too early.

To add to the statistics given to you in the earlier session, looking primarily at leadership, leadership aspiration is falling at all levels. We have a supply and retention crisis at leadership level as well. In our recent survey, less than one-third of school leaders would recommend leadership as a career option going forward. More than half, 53% of assistant and deputy headteachers told us that they had no interest in stepping up to be a headteacher in a school. Not only are our members struggling to recruit and retain the education workforce within their schools but we are losing leaders at the same rate that we are losing teachers.

Julie McCulloch: I would absolutely echo that. You have heard lots of stats from the previous panel. I thought I might share with you, if I may, a few stories, very briefly, that we hear from our members about how all of this feels in the context of people trying to run schools and colleges at the moment and keep those institutions going. Like Paul, we have been saying for the last couple of years that we are quite soon going to get to the point where recruitment and retention is the only thing we are talking about in education policy, or should be, and I think we have reached that point.

Here are some of the things we are hearing from our members, and these are all unprompted. We have not done a survey to get these, these are just people getting in touch with us to share their thoughts.

One member has said to us, "As a senior leader in charge of recruitment I am horrified by how impossible it is to get staff. We are literally getting no applicants for the maths, English, science and modern foreign languages jobs we have advertised. We need to spell it out to parents that this, along with shrinking budgets in real terms, means that we will have to have larger classes and even classes doubled up in the hall. Some subjects will become impossible to offer. Unqualified teachers or non-subject specialists will be teaching these larger classes." To Paul's point, this member goes on to say, "As a school leader, why should I stay in this job? I love teaching but being a school leader is becoming an impossible task."



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Another member got in touch to say, "This week I have lost the whole of my music department. We are left at this stage of the term with no head of department for music, no music teachers, and wondering how we are going to continue teaching those students who are already halfway through examination courses, never mind offering music coming into Key Stage 3."

We have had another member talking about how they have had to appoint an early-career teacher, in their second year, into a middle leadership post just to keep hold of staff who have real potential, "But we are worried about setting them up to fail because they need time to develop and to hone their craft", as your previous panel was talking about.

"I have never known recruitment challenges like this. We are still trying to recruit science, geography and German teachers. Not only am I getting no direct applications but anyone who comes from an agency"—here is a little bit of teacher dark humour for you still—"has had more jobs in the last five years than the times I have said, 'Tuck in your shirt', in any given week."

It is really, really tough out there. It is tough across the country and in all sectors but it is particularly tough in some areas, especially the most disadvantaged areas, and it is incredibly tough at the moment in the special school sector. We know that they are our most vulnerable children and young people, they are the people who need the most highly qualified teachers, who need the most support in the form of teaching assistants, and recruitment into that sector has fallen off a cliff. We are in real danger of not only letting down those most vulnerable children and young people but, in some cases, struggling to keep them safe.

Q22 Chair: In the special sector, clearly there have been bigger issues. We have been looking in our persistent absence inquiry at children not attending, families feeling that children's needs are not being met and that sort of thing. Would you say that is directly linked to the challenge of recruitment and retention?

Julie McCulloch: It absolutely is. We know that we have children and young people with increasingly complex challenges and that they are increasingly in the mainstream as well as in specialist settings, and the level of expertise that we need in order to give those children what they are entitled to is very high. Ensuring we have sufficient supply of staff into those schools is crucial and it is hugely problematic at the moment.

Q23 Chair: Jenny, how does that compare with the situation in FE?

Jenny Sherrard: It is fair to say everything that the previous panellists have said, and more. 96% of colleges are reporting that they are struggling to recruit staff, according to the Association of Colleges' latest workforce survey. We know that 25% of further education teachers are



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leaving after just one year in the job, compared again to 15% in schools. The attrition rate in FE is even higher.

All of the points that have already been made about the impact that has on the level of expertise are incredibly acute within the sector. When we speak to our members, a lot of the same themes that have been covered today are coming through front and centre: the issue of pay and the issue of workload. These are real, extremely acute challenges that mean staff simply are not wanting to enter or stay in the sector. When we see that pay in further education is at an even lower level than it is in schools, we have to factor in the fact that we are also competing against another part of the education sector that is reporting this level of challenge. It is everything that has already been said, but distilled into—

- Q24 **Chair:** You are talking about, 25% leaving after their first year on the job. Has there always been a differential between schools in that space or is that something that you are seeing rise at a sharper rate?

Jenny Sherrard: I do not have the historical data to hand but certainly we see that that is a consistent thing right the way through. We are talking about 25% attrition after one year but that rises to almost half after three years, compared to 25% in schools, and over 75% after a decade compared to 60% in schools. This is not just a phenomenon for early-career teachers in further education, it is something that we are seeing is a consistent problem right the way through.

- Q25 **Ian Mearns:** Both ASCL and the NAHT have recommended revisions to the pay structures and frameworks for schools. Could you expand on these recommendations and how would these reforms help school leaders in managing their staff pay progression and overall budgets?

Paul Whiteman: All in all, the pay system or pay structure we have right now is beyond its sell-by date. It has been tinkered with over the last decade or so to try to bring some relief to specific pressures, and over a period of time that has meant the whole thing has become more difficult and more unworkable.

For example, UPS grades historically served to recognise longer-serving, more accomplished teachers. That has been transformed in some areas into people doing more rather than bringing that more seasoned approach to education. We need to adjust it to make sure that we recognise that more seasoned approach to teaching and keep good teachers in the classroom rather than forcing people into leadership roles, which they may not want or be suited to, just to answer some of their salary difficulties.

Performance-related progression has absolutely failed in education. There is not enough money to make it attractive and you are robbing one teacher to pay another. The workload that sits on school leaders' shoulders because of a system that simply does not work is a real problem as well. They are the basics.



What you cannot get away from in all of this is the lack of money in the pay system. That is the biggest problem. When changes are brought forward—this is something that happens in public sector pay in general but it happens in education as well—we tend to try to change pay systems without investment. If you watch pay systems change in the commercial environment, they bring investment in to change their pay system and therefore it picks up smoothly and it answers the problems that they have. We need to revise the system and bring in investment to take it forward.

Julie McCulloch: I agree with Paul that it is about both the quantum and the distribution of pay across the framework. If we look at the extent to which leader pay, in real terms, has dropped since 2010, leaders are now taking a third less home than they were in 2010. We are very supportive of the increases to the starting salaries for teachers and that was absolutely something that we needed to do, but one of the consequences of that, when there is not enough quantum in the system, has been that the differentials between different levels of the pay scale have become squeezed and the incentives for teachers to move up through the pay scales, particularly into leadership, have been diminished. There is a real challenge there in terms of the structure.

There is also a need—to pick up on a conversation that you started to have and we may come back to in this session—in terms of flexible working if we are looking at that, which to some extent we are. I think there are things we could do to increase flexible working in schools and colleges but it is always going to be challenging. We need to be looking at pay and other financial compensations even more in a context where so many professions are able to offer much more flexibility.

Q26 Ian Mearns: One of the things that new teachers coming into the profession might look at will be that progression. If the differentials have been eroded, they might have a good starting salary but their capacity to increase that will have been eroded significantly. Maybe that is one of the reasons why we are seeing such high attrition rates after three and five years in the teaching profession.

Paul Whiteman: Can I illuminate that just a little bit? What you might expect is for a teacher in a larger school to think about their first headship being in a smaller school, to begin to get their experience. The differential between the first leadership pay point in the system and the highest teaching point is £620 per year—after tax, you are not even going to get a couple of beers in your local for that—but the step up in responsibility is phenomenal. The two things are so far apart. That is why when I am talking to NAHT members at the higher end of being in the classroom or in middle leadership and I say, “How many of you want to become school leaders?” no hands go up at all in the room.

Ian Mearns: Certainly it has been reported to me in my locality. I think there are particular problems with the Catholic sector because of the requirement to be a practising Catholic to be a headteacher in many



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dioceses and authorities. Certainly they are having significant problems recruiting deputy heads and heads in primary schools in and around the north-east of England.

Q27 Mrs Flick Drummond: To very quickly ask about pensions—we talked about pensions in the first panel—do you think that the change in the lifetime allowance will help encourage teachers to stay in the profession for longer? I have come across teachers who were hitting that threshold and left, like doctors, air traffic controllers and so on. Would it have an impact on teachers staying in the profession, particularly senior leaders?

Paul Whiteman: It is too early to tell right now. Certainly in the advice we have been giving to members about retirement we did have some who were coming up against those tax thresholds, but they were exercising different choices around staying in pension schemes and investment choices rather than necessarily leaving the profession to deal with the tax liability. We also know that it only affects about 0.5% of the teaching workforce. Right now, we are not sure of the extent to which it will have a huge impact.

Q28 Kim Johnson: Jenny Sherrard, we know that teachers have seen a real-terms pay cut over the past 13 years and you have mentioned the disparity in pay between schools and FE colleges, but your Charter for Professional Respect in Further Education calls for 10% increase in pay and a reduction in precarious employment. Can you say how close UCU is to achieving these recommendations, and what needs to be done to achieve them?

Jenny Sherrard: Sure. As I said before, pay is probably the number one issue that our members are concerned about. The value of pay has fallen by over 35% in real terms over the last decade or so. That is a huge amount, particularly in the current climate with the cost of living increases.

One of the main issues that FE has faced in relation to schools particularly is that we do not have binding national bargaining. Therefore, the current negotiation structure when it comes to determining what pay increases are going to be is that the Association of Colleges makes a recommendation and, frankly, most colleges ignore it. That has contributed to this overall steep decline in FE pay.

We have just seen the ONS reclassification of further education and I think what we now need to be focusing on, alongside that, is a shift in the bargaining machinery that further education uses because without a binding collective agreement on pay I think we are going to continue to see pay erosion in the sector. What we are asking for and pushing for in our Respect FE campaign is for a change to the way in which national bargaining is done so that we are in a position to have a binding collective agreement.



Part of that also comes with greater interplay between FE pay and the way in which pay for schools is determined. It is important for us to get a seat at the table, not necessarily as a negotiator but as an observer in the STRB discussions, so that there is a recognition that there is a real link between schools and further education and that decisions made for schools have an impact on further education. At the moment, unfortunately, that impact is that in schools pay is declining but in further education it is declining even more quickly. If we are going to begin to address that, we need to have these two measures.

Q29 Kim Johnson: Julie McCulloch, we have heard this morning that there are numerous pay disputes with the Government at the moment. What do college leaders need from the Government to address the issues around pay for the FE workforce?

Julie McCulloch: Thank you. I agree with Jenny Sherrard's points. The discrepancy between school pay and FE college pay is significant and widening. Just to add to Jenny's points and to your point, the other challenge in FE, particularly in specialist FE colleges, is that of course they are trying to bring people in as teachers and tutors with occupational specialisms, who are often coming from industries that pay much better. If you are bringing in somebody to lead an engineering apprenticeship, for example, or somebody to lead a T-level in technology, those people can have much more lucrative careers, frankly, if they stay in their day job rather than coming into FE.

Looking particularly at the Government's ambition around T-levels, there is lots to support about T-levels as a qualification alongside other high-quality post-16 qualifications, but we hear from our college members that getting people in to provide teaching and support to students in those specialist qualifications is extremely challenging when they cannot afford to match anything like the pay they would get outside of FE.

Q30 Chair: You talk about the Government's ambition on T-levels. We also have the Prime Minister's ambition on everyone doing maths until 18. A large proportion of that would be delivered by colleges. You need the specialist teaching workforce there.

Jenny Sherrard: If I could interject again, I am not aware of any other sector where the body tasked with negotiating pay in the sector has, for two years within a decade, said, "I wish I could make a pay recommendation but I am not going to do that because whatever I could recommend would be so insulting to staff."

Q31 Ian Mearns: A supplementary. Jenny, do you have any data on the age profile of the workforce in the FE sector that you could furnish us with?

Jenny Sherrard: Yes. It is quite a challenging age profile. We know that 30% of the workforce are over 50 and only 8% are in the lower age bands. Now, the makeup of the FE workforce is generally different in that a lot of people do come to it slightly later. Nevertheless, when we combine the fact that 30% of the workforce is between 50 and 59 years



of age with the attrition rates that we talked about earlier, it is clear that we have an ageing workforce at the very same time as we have this bulge in students coming through the system. We are rapidly heading towards a very severe crisis if we cannot address the issues with recruitment and retention by improving pay and addressing workload.

- Q32 Ian Mearns:** Is there a feeling at all that FE colleges as employers and the DfE are relying on people coming in from other professions at a later stage in their life, with professional pensions, who therefore are happy to have a lower level of income as a teacher in FE, or has that just been made up?

Jenny Sherrard: That absolutely does happen and is a factor in what we are talking about here. We know that the levels of casualisation are also very high. That reflects the fact that a lot of colleges are relying on fixed-term contracts or hourly paid contracts for people who are perhaps working alongside other professions, but that does not provide the sector with the stability that it needs. Also, we are seeing that where there is a huge demand in industry—for example, construction and engineering—those are the areas where colleges are struggling the most to recruit staff. Therefore, the skills that we need the most in order to get our economy moving again are the skills that are not being able to be delivered in colleges. It becomes a vicious cycle. We will not have those people to train for the future if we cannot train people now.

- Q33 Andrew Lewer:** Given the other challenges that schools are facing, do your members report back that they have had the capacity to engage with the Department's "golden thread" reforms in training and development?

Jenny Sherrard: For the "golden thread" reforms it is a slightly different picture in FE. For UCU, the biggest concern in relation to teacher education—the previous panel talked about this—is that the crisis in teacher recruitment has come at the same time as a shift away from university teacher recruitment. I think the market review there has been extremely damaging to the way in which different providers are able to recruit into initial teacher education programmes. Certainly the shortfalls, in recruitment of secondary teachers particularly, have a real knock-on impact in further education.

Paul Whiteman: Capacity is a real issue. With ITT and early career frameworks we have seen an increasing workload being demanded by the new schemes that have come in.

It is also worth saying while we have the opportunity that we are getting a report back that the "golden thread" is far too narrow. It concentrates more on cognitive science than other parts of pedagogy and the narrowness means that there is not enough flexibility for school leaders to make decisions around the training in their schools. Access to providers has narrowed as well. It is a much narrower view than we have had before, which is causing difficulties, as well as the lack of capacity.



Julie McCulloch: I would echo all of those thoughts. It is probably too early to know the impact that the early career framework has had on recruitment and retention, which was obviously one of the main reasons for introducing it, but certainly from the point of view of leaders being able to manage that programme in their schools and mentors having the time to do the work that they need to do, it is hugely challenging. We know that 61% of mentors have said they found it difficult to find the time that they know their mentees need in order to succeed in that programme. That is a huge challenge.

The “golden thread” is a very good idea. Strategic thinking about what we need in terms of the development of staff in our schools, from entry right up into senior leadership positions, is a very sensible way to think about the system. Like Paul, our members worry that—more broadly than just the early career framework—it has become quite narrow. We welcome, for example, the expansion of leadership NPQs but there really needs to be a recognition that there are also very high-quality learning packages outside of those NPQs.

There is a new NPQ being developed at the moment in special educational needs to replace the existing qualification. One of our members’ serious concerns about that is the amount of time that that programme will take has been significantly reduced. To refer back to some of the points I was making earlier about SEND and those teachers and leaders who are going to be working with children with special educational needs, it is highly specialised. We are concerned about the reduction in time those people might have on the new SEND NPQ as opposed to the current qualification.

Q34 **Ian Mearns:** Jenny and Julie, with regard to the FE sector, is the Department doing anything new or has it been doing anything effective to incentivise new staff to train to teach in FE? Is there more the Department could do to help colleges recruit and retain staff?

Julie McCulloch: The only thing I think we have not talked about so far—Jenny might well have other thoughts—is the FE bursaries. There are now bursaries for teachers coming into FE for particularly hard-to-recruit subjects: maths, sciences, engineering, computing and so on. Again, they are fairly new and it is probably too hard to know the impact of increasing those.

Q35 **Ian Mearns:** Could you quantify what they add up to?

Julie McCulloch: Yes. The bursaries vary by subject but they are £29,000 for maths, science, engineering and computing, and £15,000 for special educational needs and English. That is the level we are looking at. They are very much designed as a recruitment tool. As I say, we do not know quite how that is going to work yet and we definitely do not know if they will have any impact on retention.

Q36 **Ian Mearns:** That is the interesting point. It might be a good golden hello but are there any handcuffs tied in with those bursaries?



Jenny Sherrard: For us, the bigger issue is that it is all very well having a training bursary of £29,000 but if the starting salary in an FE college is £26,000 that is not a particularly attractive offer for the years after you have done your training. Yes, there may be additional incentives that colleges can put in place for those shortage subjects, but the reality is that overall the starting salaries are simply not attractive compared to other sectors. If we are talking about a maths graduate you might get a £29,000 bursary to start off teaching but your prospects beyond that are very low pay compared to going into industry. I think Rishi's pledge for maths to 18, on those figures, is very ambitious indeed.

Q37 **Caroline Ansell:** Good morning. I wanted to ask questions around the recruitment and retention of teachers and leaders from across a more diverse background, specifically for Paul because I believe the NAHT has called for a strategy to be embedded across all facets of the Department's work, calling the work to date "limited, piecemeal and even forgotten". My question to you is: what do you have in your mind's eye for that strategy that you cite there? You invite the Department to consider its strategies but I think you have already considered them and found them wanting. What would a new strategy look like, embedded across all facets of the Department's work?

Paul Whiteman: At the moment it seems like our conversation around equality and attractiveness is something other than the core conversation. What we mean by embedding it in is making sure that we are not just having a conversation to one side, lamenting the fact that we are not improving our figures. Everything we do on recruitment and retention, from salaries to workload pressures to flexibility, should talk to being attractive right across all facets of life and the issues that drive equality. That is what we mean by that. At the moment we tend to look at statistics and look at small changes to address small issues, rather than trying to embed the whole thing.

Now, there is no agreed approach to that. What we—

Q38 **Caroline Ansell:** What strategies might you foresee, looking at best practice from across different sectors perhaps, or from across the world? How are other countries leading on this so that the leadership and indeed the teaching workforce looks more representative? You mentioned discussions around workload and pay, but you would not, I assume, be looking to incentivise recruitment by offering preferential, higher pay or a lesser workload for those who present with those characteristics. What strategies do you have in mind?

Paul Whiteman: It is about making the profession accessible to everybody. As you do that, it makes it more representative of everybody as well. For example, you had some conversation on the last panel about flexible working to retain predominantly female members of staff, because the burden of childcare, whether we like it or not, still does fall on female workers. What we do not have at the moment is a strategy that says, "How do we deal with the difficulty and the pressures of



inspection and accountability to allow school leaders to take risks and take chances to change the structure of their teaching workforce to make it more attractive?" for example. It is not just about how you pay more and how you change hours; it is also how you encourage the structures within schools to say, "Yes, we can take a risk and we can do something different."

Q39 Caroline Ansell: What would taking a risk look like? Do you have something exciting and innovative in your mind's eye?

Paul Whiteman: No, I think it is more discussing the challenge than knowing the answers. I do not profess to know all the answers to this but we can talk to the Department about finding those changes. For example, if you were to share a classroom between two teachers, you have to make sure that you get the blend of those two teachers correct so that it works properly with the children in the class. There is also a marginal cost increase to sharing work, if you do job shares and things like that. The burden for responsibility and for inspection and so on falls on two sets of shoulders rather than one. There is a lot of complexity there.

Q40 Caroline Ansell: Would that not sit with the school, the individual school, rather than Department-wide?

Paul Whiteman: Overall, but how you manage it and how you control it sits—

Q41 Caroline Ansell: Do leaders not have the autonomy or independence at this point to make those systems changes?

Paul Whiteman: They certainly do not have the capacity in terms of budgets and funding for the cost increases, and they do not have control over what the inspection and accountability regime does to them if they do something that is more innovative, it does not work the first time and they have to change it.

Q42 Caroline Ansell: How does the FE workforce compare to the school workforce in terms of that diversity? I imagine the challenges are quite similar.

Paul Whiteman: I defer to colleagues on FE.

Jenny Sherrard: Certainly there is a very real issue with diversity in further education as well. Thinking about what you were saying in terms of things we need to fix, a key one comes down to pipeline. We know that students with certain backgrounds are struggling more to get into and through higher education, and we know that at every stage from undergraduate to masters to postgraduate level the numbers of, for example, black students drop off disproportionately. If we are going to address diversity in further education and further education leadership, we need to recognise that there is this issue with drop-out rates at different points. It is not just about making the programme attractive



once people are in the sector, it is about addressing how they get into the sector in the first place.

Q43 **Caroline Ansell:** How do you begin to go about changing culture then, which is what you are describing, essentially?

Jenny Sherrard: I think that is right. It is no coincidence that we have named our campaign Respect FE. When it comes to arguing and bargaining for better terms and conditions, a lot of this comes down—and other panellists have said this—to the fact that unfortunately, the more the Government chips away at the way in which further education is funded, the more it chips away at the sense of respect and professional autonomy that the staff working in further education have. That is particularly acute—

Caroline Ansell: That applies globally rather than to the groups that we are talking about.

Jenny Sherrard: It does, but it has a particularly acute impact on staff who might already feel marginalised within their workplace, if there is a lack of professional respect, a lack of professional autonomy, and you feel like you are being judged additionally because of your characteristics. Having a more respectful approach that recognises the value that staff bring to the work they do is very, very important in meeting those diversity challenges as well.

Q44 **Caroline Ansell:** Are there any particular examples of good practice? I would be very keen to know that. Julie?

Julie McCulloch: I was just going to make a couple of observations in response to your question about what the Department specifically could do. It feels to us a little like this has been deprioritised in the Department over the last few years. Perhaps three or four years ago the Department was, for example, bringing together roundtables of organisations across the sectors to discuss this issue. It was funding—we have hubs for almost everything, I think, now in education—EDI hubs, or equality, diversity and inclusion hubs. I believe that is no longer the case.

I do not know the extent to which the Department is collecting data in terms of teachers, leaders and other staff in schools with different protected characteristics, but I am not sure we have as clear a handle on that as we could have. That is a key role the Department—

Q45 **Caroline Ansell:** What was the main thrust of the work that you are describing, the good work, the roundtable work? When was that?

Julie McCulloch: I cannot remember exactly but I think it was probably around four years ago or so. Certainly that was the point where there were those sorts of roundtables happening. I think what that was starting to do was unearth some of these suggestions, ideas and good practice.

Caroline Ansell: Before the pandemic, then?



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Julie McCulloch: Yes, although I think it was some time before the pandemic. I do not think it was something that stopped as a result of the pandemic. Perhaps it had started to tail off a little before that.

Caroline Ansell: Perhaps just a shift in focus around survival, the way I remember that.

Julie McCulloch: There is probably an element of that, but as Paul alluded to, if we are looking in this challenge in the round we cannot afford to say, as a system, "It is too hard to look at diversity at the moment, we just need to look at numbers." Diversity is key to getting those numbers.

Caroline Ansell: Clearly we need to go back to that work and see its fruits as well.

Q46 **Kim Johnson:** Paul, we heard some alarming data from the first panel this morning on workforce issues. Do your members feel that Department policies and guidance help them to address teacher workload?

Paul Whiteman: There is a lack of Departmental guidance and policies that are helpful right now. Right throughout the pandemic and as we have come out the other side, have seen from the Department confusion in terms of the direction of travel and what they would like to do around recruitment and retention specifically. We have the early career framework and ITT but there is nothing really on pay, nothing on workload, and nothing on accountability and inspection, which are all the drivers that are driving everybody away.

There is also, I have to say, a political narrative about education that is deeply unhelpful. There are times at which there is a choice to criticise the teaching profession over issues that are not in their control—societal issues that come up in schools but are not driven in schools—and there is a political narrative around "blame the school, blame the teacher," which makes it a deeply unattractive profession for people to come into. None of this is being addressed by the Department. That is a very long of saying that no, there is nothing coming from the Department at the moment that is helpful.

Q47 **Kim Johnson:** On that point, how do workload and some of those issues impact on the mental health of school leaders?

Paul Whiteman: Just a couple of statistics from the DfE's own report, "Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders". We know that full-time leaders work, on average, 57.5 hours per week. That is after the claims from Government that the workload toolkit had a positive influence on workload. That is current: 57.5 hours per week. Part-time leaders work 48.8 per hours. That is supposed to be part-time and I think that underlines the same thing, that if you go part-time you get your weekend back and you do not count that anymore but you are still working over the hours that you are paid for.



More than 43% of leaders work more than 60 hours a week. That is a huge burden. What is driving that is the impact of inspection and accountability as much as anything else. Just to paint that picture of almost the psychological torture of a school leader around inspection, when you know you are in the inspection window, you think about school Monday on Sunday afternoon, and you begin to worry, "Is my phone going to ring to tell me I am being inspected tomorrow?" It does not ring tomorrow, so you have that concern again overnight on the Monday night, that concern again overnight on the Tuesday night. You have a four-day period of worry. You are then let off the hook for two days because you will not get the call on a Thursday or Friday. That is repeated week in and week out, week in and week out, until you get your inspection. That is what drives 60 hours a week because that is a career-defining moment, when the inspectors arrive.

On the impact on mental health, what that drives is that 70% of school leaders report that they do not have sufficient time for their personal life. There is no work/life balance for them. Education Support, the charity, found that 67% of leaders have experienced poor mental health symptoms due to their work, 61% continue to go to work when they are sick and should not go to work, and 67% have considered leaving the profession due to the mental health impact.

Q48 Kim Johnson: Julie, Patrick spoke in the first panel about enforcement. I just wanted to know from your point of view, how constructive would it be for the Department to introduce more statutory requirements for schools around workload?

Julie McCulloch: To start with those workload documents themselves, I think they are useful. We too signed up to them as an organisation. We think there is some very good practice there. The big problem, though—I will come back specifically to your question but just to paint the picture a little bit—is that they kind of miss the point about what is really driving workload in our schools and colleges. Paul has alluded to that and Mary spoke very passionately earlier, particularly about the ever-increasing expectations on schools and colleges in terms of what they are picking up because of the decimation of wider social services—CAMHS, social care, all of those things. Schools are becoming the only institution that can support children and families with some of those broader issues.

The challenge, if we are looking just at the proposals in those workload documents, is that yes, there is some very good practice but there are probably some assumptions there about the wider services that schools and colleges can draw on in order to deliver those commitments. Teachers and leaders are spending, as our members tell us, in some cases the vast majority of their week trying to get CAMHS referrals for children, or dealing with gang violence—all of those things that I do not think the public would think schools are for, but that is what they are dealing with. In the context of those incredibly strong accountability



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pressures that Paul referred to, I do not think it would be helpful to add to those accountability pressures in the way that you are suggesting.

Kim Johnson: Jenny, in terms of FE?

Jenny Sherrard: The workload pressures are extremely acute in FE, as they are in schools. Our staff are reporting that they are working two days extra a week on average. It is absolutely a similar picture.

I would very much endorse what the panellists have said but there is an additional pressure in FE that comes from the way it has experienced a large degree of churn in terms of the various reforms that have been brought forward by successive Governments in relation to curriculum change and change in the way that budgets are delivered, including, for example, some of the devolution of adult education funding. That has created a huge level of complexity that staff are having to spend a lot of time getting to grips with in order to make sure that they understand the sector.

Fundamentally, it comes back to the issue of funding. Realistically, every member of staff who leaves the profession creates a bigger workload for those who remain. When funding for adult education is 40% lower now than it was in 2010 even after the investment boost over the last couple of years, it is a dire picture. Unless we can address the fundamental issue of funding and pay, I do not think we are going to begin to touch the sides of the workload issue.

Q49 **Chair:** Anna Firth had a question but she had to leave us. I will ask about the "Working Lives of Teachers and Leaders" survey. Paul, you have already alluded to the high levels of workload for school leaders. What could the Department do that you think would help to address that and make leadership responsibilities a more attractive option for teachers?

Paul Whiteman: First, going over what we have previously said, reinvigorate or bring back in all of the support services that schools used to enjoy so that they can get on with the job of teaching and learning, rather than supporting all the other needs of children that used to be supported so well before. Secondly, have a much fairer and proportionate approach to the accountability of school leaders. The inspection and accountability system is well overdue an overhaul. We have seen in dramatic circumstances the impact of that on at least one school leader, and we know of others that have been reported as well. I have to say the lack of urgency to deal with that is astonishing.

Q50 **Chair:** As you know, it is something this Committee has agreed to look into and we will certainly be hearing from you and others on that particular issue. That is going to be an important inquiry, particularly as we move towards the appointment of a new HMCI and look at opportunities on that front. It is also just trying to work out, given all the challenges that we set and the relatively small number of people who are aspiring to move up into leadership, whether there are any other tools at



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the Department's disposal to address this. Clearly pay is part of that discussion as well.

Paul Whiteman: Yes, certainly pay is very important. It is one of the most obvious indicators of the value that society places on a teacher, the easiest measure to compare to other professions, and one of the primary reasons why it is not as attractive as it once was.

The standing of the profession could be addressed. When we hear Ministers and others say thank you, they need to really mean it. When we hear people say that and then we read excerpts of WhatsApp messages and things that reveal what was in people's minds about the profession rather than what they were saying in public, it is deeply unhelpful and very hurtful. Our members were turning up to work, in common with health sector workers, in an environment that was not safe during the pandemic. It took a very long time for Government to recognise that and to say the appropriate things about them, after having spent the very early weeks of the pandemic criticising them, accusing teachers of sitting in the garden drinking prosecco and not wanting to come back to work. That was never the picture, and when you have a political narrative like that it is deeply, deeply unhelpful. There needs to be a sustained and planned narrative from Government about rebuilding the status of the profession. That is about pay as well as narrative.

We can do something about inspection immediately. We can do something about accountability immediately. It is a great shame that we got very close to agreeing with the Government in pay talks a body, which would include the trade unions, to look at specific changes we could make for school leaders and teachers, which would have a target of reducing workload by at least five hours a week over a short period of time. That seems to have disappeared with the collapse of the pay talks.

Q51 **Chair:** That presumably could be part of any structure, if there is an eventual agreement on this. That will be post the work of the STRB now.

Paul Whiteman: As a trade union general secretary you are an eternal optimist. I very much hope so.

Q52 **Mrs Flick Drummond:** The last set of questions. Julie, you mentioned flexible working and I just want to look into that a little bit more because I think your report said that it is not without its issues but you would like to see it. I just want to hear from all of you how that would work.

Julie McCulloch: It is a challenge. I support everything that your previous panel—particularly Alison, I think—was saying about how we can, I think, in individual schools and colleges, look at how we can make flexible working work more effectively. We gather and publish case studies on that, which look at some of the ways in which our members have made that happen. That inevitably has to be balanced against the fact that we know we need a certain degree of continuity for children and young people and we know that that is something parents particularly



value, particularly for younger children. There is a balance there that needs to be struck.

In some of the solutions that our members are starting to explore—again, this was touched on earlier—there is a question around expectations on individual middle leaders and teachers around both academic and pastoral work. Is there more that could be done to separate some of that out? To the suggestion earlier, should every teacher have to have a tutor group? There are those quite practical questions.

This links as well to the challenge in particular subjects. There is some interesting work being done around how you can use the expertise of particular subject specialists in your school or college to work more flexibly. Some schools and colleges, for example, are moving towards some subjects having a more lecture-style approach. If you have a fantastic physics specialist, it would seem sensible to use that person's skills and knowledge beyond small groups of students. That might play to the flexibility agenda as well.

One of the challenges here is that there is a bit of a catch-22 in the context that we are in at the moment, in that offering more flexible contracts might attract more teachers and leaders into the profession but if those contracts are part-time of course it means you need more people. That is the challenge that lots of school leaders are grappling with at the moment, how you make that work.

Q53 Mrs Flick Drummond: Further education, presumably, could incorporate it more because it is specific subjects.

Jenny Sherrard: Yes, there certainly is a bit of a different picture in further education. It is a different cohort and therefore there already is a greater degree of flexibility to some extent.

I think our members would say that they would be quite sceptical about flexible working proposals because casualisation is so rife and unfortunately the experience that our members have of flexibility tends to be that it is flexibility based on whatever the employer needs rather than what is going to work for the individual staff member. We do need to be cautious in how we approach it, in terms of making sure that it is about addressing the concerns of the staff as opposed to meeting simply what the employer is trying to achieve.

In principle, certainly I think that flexibility would be welcomed by members. It is probably, in many ways, more achievable in FE than it is in schools but as I say, we do need to approach it with some caution.

Q54 Mrs Flick Drummond: Is there enough human resources management to be able to do that? I assume some academies buy in HR but for individual schools it would be a bit harder on their budgets. Would that help?



Paul Whiteman: There is a difficulty with some human resource provision in education right now. There is not enough of it and accessing it from private providers is a difficult thing to do in terms of making sure you get the right advice and the right quality.

That leads to a point I perhaps did not articulate very well earlier on. I do not think we have the cultural confidence to begin to try new things around flexibility within education. It is still employment that pretty much happens in public. If you are a teacher who has a different working pattern from being in school all day every day, parents know about that, the community know about that and they make their own judgments about your commitment to the school or otherwise.

It also means that when trying different things there will be opinions from everybody about whether that is the right way to educate or not, which may not necessarily be informed by the academic research that is driving those things. It becomes very, very difficult because it drives public conversations and public pressure on the school as well. One of the things that the Department can do is begin to develop that cultural confidence to try new things.

Q55 Mrs Flick Drummond: Society now is looking at flexible working anyway, particularly after the pandemic. Therefore, hopefully that will change, but I can see that if you see your teacher in the supermarket at 10 o'clock one morning you might think differently. It is an interesting thought. There are examples of places that are doing it, are there?

Julie McCulloch: Definitely, yes. Speaking to some of our members, there are some people who have the majority of their staff on flexible contracts of one sort or another. They are not necessarily finding it easy but there are some interesting examples starting to emerge.

Chair: I have seen a few examples of effective shared headship in schools and sometimes in larger primaries where you can have it across different stages, and sometimes also with two people working a three-day week, but of course that comes with cost implications.

Mrs Flick Drummond: That is not flexible working, is it? They will be working five days, which is what we have heard.

Q56 Ian Mearns: It is a matter of great concern from the protection of employment perspective because one person's flexible working is another person's casualised working. Of course casualisation can often lead to savings for the employer because they do not have costs in pensions, a whole range of holiday pay and all the rest, but for the person employed it can often be precarious employment. How can we strike that balance in terms of making the professions attractive, both in FE and in schools, by trying to employ advantageous flexible working offers but without resorting to casualisation, which is a cost saver from the employer's perspective?



Jenny Sherrard: From UCU's perspective, we have focused on tackling zero-hours contracts as our top priority when tackling casualisation. We see, unfortunately, what we believe is a great abuse of those across tertiary education and we do not think that they should exist in the sector. Moving staff on to fractional contracts is certainly a good place to start when they are not working full-time.

It is difficult. At the end of the day, we need a bit of a reset in terms of how we understand who we are trying to help when we are talking about this. As I say, because of historical abuses of these kinds of contracts there is a great deal of mistrust in the sector about how they are being employed.

Q57 **Ian Mearns:** When it comes to recruitment and retention problems and you see the amount of casualisation and precarious employment within the sector, it is like one side of the equation does not understand the implication the other side of the equation is having on their problem of recruitment and retention. I am sorry, there was a bit of word blindness there for me. Anything to add, Julie?

Julie McCulloch: I think we are talking about two very different things in the two different sectors here. In FE, as Jenny said, if we are looking at 25% of the workforce on precarious contracts that is a very different position from the school sector, where I think flexible working is much more coming from individual employees wanting to find a way to have a better work/life balance, look at caring responsibilities and all of those things that we know people want to do. There are probably things that we can learn across the two sectors but the solutions may be different.

Ian Mearns: One thing I would add is that sometimes schools use precarious employment practices but not for teachers, for other staff.

Julie McCulloch: Yes.

Ian Mearns: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much.