



Three things to do today:

- [Read about childcare expansion](#)
- [Learn about cuts to services](#)
- [Ask a friend to join](#)

ASN Support Cut

The Conversation had an [article](#) problems faced by children with autism in schools. In Scotland the high hopes of those (including UNISON) who supported the 2000 Act around mainstreaming of pupils with additional support needs (ASN) have also not been realised.

While children with a range of additional support needs now attend mainstream schools many are far from being mainstreamed into school life. There is also widespread misunderstanding about who is actually providing support for children with ASN on a day-to-day basis. Classroom assistants provide the majority of their support and those (mainly) women do not get adequate training, support or pay for the work they undertake. School nurses are not part of a school's staff complement: pupils' healthcare needs are taken care of by support staff. Pupils with challenging behaviour are also most often supported by school staff not teachers. Yet these are the jobs that have been cut. Schools need appropriate funding for both the day-to-day delivery of specialist support and for training and professional development for all the staff.

Schools are struggling to meet the needs of pupils because of budget cuts. We need to invest in local government otherwise this will keep getting worse.

Show Us The Money

The Budget Bill as proposed needs serious revision. It isn't that it's all bad - there is a welcome increase in health spending for example. The serious issue isn't so much how the Scottish government intends spending its budget. The problem is the size of the budget the Scottish government [intends to raise](#).

Rather than using the powers they have to provide the services people need the plan is to throw councils into crisis. Local government is being hammered. It is simply not tenable to describe the settlement proposed as fair.

UNISON's [Damage](#) reports give detail on the impact of a decade of cuts on local government services. Staff are struggling to meet demand despite working long unpaid hours to try and maintain the quality of services to citizen's. COSLA [evidence](#) to the local government committee is clear: Local government budgets have been cut.

Councils are tightly restricted in how much they can raise for themselves. Council tax is capped. Where they have raised revenue the Scottish government is using that as a substitute for rather than supplement to their own funding - and what money councils get is increasingly ring fenced

The cuts that will be seen in services cannot be blamed on the Westminster austerity - these are the Scottish government's own choice. For at the same time as services come under threat the Scottish government boasts of either below inflation increases in business taxes - or of actually lowering them. Being "the lowest taxed part of the UK" is nothing to be proud of when it means unmet needs and a declining social fabric.

The Scottish government claims to be anti austerity. They should, and if they are disinclined to Parliament should insist -that they make good on that promise . [Scotland needs a budget to defend services](#)

Childcare Expansion at Risk

If the Scottish Government wants to meet its promises to expand free childcare it will need to train more staff and increase their wages.

That is the result of a comprehensive survey by UNISON Scotland of the numbers currently being trained to deliver the expansion.

Responses to Freedom of Information requests by UNISON Scotland to every council and every college in Scotland show that there are just not enough people in colleges or on in-work training courses to meet the staffing levels needed for the promised extra hours.

Audit Scotland estimated that 12,000 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) extra staff are needed. This is a largely female workforce. Currently just over half work part-time. There is no reason to believe this will change substantially more than 12,000 people will be needed to reach the WTE figure. Currently there are only 11 702 people in training – meaning a significant shortfall – even if every single person both completes their training and goes on to work in childcare.

There are just not enough people in colleges or on in-work training courses to meet the staffing levels

Currently there are 6983 part-time students and 3173 part-time students in our colleges on the range courses which could potentially lead to a job in childcare either with or without further study. There are also 444 modern apprentices in local authorities and 1102 people undertaking work based training that could qualify them for work in the early years. (at least 96 of those are qualified staff undertaking advanced qualifications for leadership roles).

These figures indicate the existence of a shortfall, but this is compounded

when completion rates for courses and destination upon completion are factored in. Modern Apprenticeships (MA) in childcare have a 73% completion rate. For those who complete any of the social care MAs only 81% were still working in the sector 6 months after completion. On HNC courses related to early years

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only 38% went into work. These are lower than the averages for similar qualifications. (not all the college courses in our totals were at HNC level so many would need further training for practitioner roles) Staff retention in the sector is also lower than average as a whole. The higher pay and better terms and conditions in the public sector mean that retention is higher (90%) than average (88%) there while retention in the private sector is only 78%. So these people also need to be replaced.

There is a very high risk that there will not be enough qualified staff to deliver the planned expansion.

The Scottish government urgently needs to increase the number of college places, but this isn't enough. The key to recruiting and retaining staff in the numbers needed is to improve pay and terms and conditions across the sector. The proposed benchmark of the Living Wage is far too low. You can earn the real living wage in many supermarkets without a qualification. If the Scottish Government wants to encourage people to undertake training and the responsibilities of delivering a high quality early years service they need to value what this overwhelmingly workforce do.

The government also needs to invest in more full and part-time college places in order to ensure that there are enough qualified staff in place to deliver a high quality service.

Visitor Tax

COSLA have launched a campaign to "strengthen local democracy" with [proposals](#) for a Transient Visitors Tax (TVT).

Cuts to local government budgets and the decade long council tax freeze (followed by a cap) have highlighted just how little control local authorities have over their finances.

This lack of control limits local choices. Increasingly our councils are becoming mere delivery arms of central government. This limits the power of citizens to drive change in their communities.

The paper lays out options for a tax paid by overnight visitors. COSLA suggest this monies raised could be used to maintain public services vital to tourism, support local strategies and support Scottish areas to compete in the Global tourist market.

The key to this proposal is that it would be up to local authorities where and when (or if at all) to levy the tax.

Various options used elsewhere are laid out. A per room or per person per night rate or a percentage of accommodation costs. Some places have a one-off charge.

The charge could apply to all accommodation (hotels, BnB Air BnB, campsites etc. Again local authorities could decide which types of accommodation would be liable. If they wanted to encourage campsites they could exempt visitors who camp from a charge.

Councils who wanted to encourage more visitors out of high season could introduce seasonal exemptions. They could also set zones to encourage visitors into specific areas.

Hopefully these proposal will be taken seriously as a first step to more power and money for local authorities. Both of which they desperately need

Keeping People Safe

The Scottish Government has now published the analysis of responses to its consultation on plans to improve Building Standards Compliance and Fire Safety. These proposals have been prompted by the report of the Independent Inquiry into the Construction of Edinburgh Schools and the fire at Grenfell Tower.

UNISON generally welcomed proposals many of the proposals put forward in the consultation. It is clear that action is necessary to protect the public through strengthening building standards compliance and fire safety standards. UNISON's [response](#) highlighted the need for adequate funding for local authority building standards teams to ensure that the changes can be effectively implemented. The recent [analysis](#) of responses to the consultation indicates that many others share UNISON's concerns about funding.

Responses raised concerns about resources, both financial and staffing, to enforce any new standards. Three quarters of respondents and the vast majority consulted in face to face events agreed that "enforcement capabilities are insufficient". It is generally believed that there needs to be a greater focus on effective deterrence to overcome the financial incentives to focus on profit over safety. All stakeholder groups believed that local authority building standards teams were already over stretched. Something UNISON highlighted following our survey of building control staff: [Building Stress](#).

The final proposals and timetable for the introduction of new standards will be clearer when the government responds to this analysis.



Zero Waste in Money Advice

Public provision of services offers excellent value for money as well as democratic accountability.

Every pound invested in these services gets clients an extra £21-£24.

The [latest report](#) into Money and Welfare Rights Advice services in Scotland shows that every pound invested in these services gets clients an extra £21-£24. These are significant gains for people who are often already on very low incomes.

Not only does this make a significant contribution to clients' household incomes, it also improves their physical and mental health. Increasing their income means they also have money to spend supporting local businesses. So these services benefit the wider economy as well.

It is essential that local authorities have sufficient funding to ensure the continued provision of vital service like Money Advice which are currently at risk due to local government budget cuts.

Key findings

Local authorities spent £25.76m on welfare and money advice services. This includes 32 services directly provided by authorities and 85 via external organisations. This work not only impacts positively on the finances of service users it also improves their general health and well being. The total financial gain for service users was £624.7m

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Who uses these vital services?

- 38% were permanently sick and disabled or suffering a short-term illness or injury
- 25% were in some form of employment while 11% were unemployed and seeking work
- 28% of service users had disposable income of less than £6,000, 55% less than £10,000 and 88% less than £20,000. Median household disposable income in the UK is £27,300.40

Advice services make a huge contribution to people's health. Local authorities need adequate funding to ensure they can deliver these vital services to protect citizens.

Support Staff Protect Pupils

School support staff regularly go home worried about pupils' welfare, safety and emotional state after discussing issues such as grooming, gangs, domestic violence, bullying, loneliness, and sexual abuse with them.

The research suggests that across Scotland a third (33%) of school support staff involved in children's welfare go home **every day** worried after having spoken to pupils about the issues that trouble them both inside and outside of school. Almost nine in ten (86%) of support staff told UNISON they'd gone home worried about pupils after talking to them.

Issues of concern can range from parents splitting up, family bereavement, self-harm, and sibling rivalry, to family members falling ill, the misuse of alcohol or drugs at home, and having a parent in prison.

In the [survey](#), of more than 3,000 school support staff – across the UK – involved in children's welfare (including teaching assistants, learning mentors and welfare officers) staff stated that they felt the contributions they made in school helped pupils to feel safer (78%), and supported their learning in the classroom (93%). Three in five (64%) also said they thought their work helped pupils feel less isolated, and two fifths (41%) that it improved their attendance.



Their work with children also meant improved behaviour in the classroom – cited by 80% of support staff who responded – and decreased workloads for teachers (72%).

Yet, despite the obvious benefits that support staff can bring to distressed pupils and the smooth running of schools, over a quarter (27%) reported that their schools had made cuts to staff carrying out pastoral roles over the past year.

Cutbacks to other parts of public services are also being felt in schools. As they try to support pupil welfare, support staff said they had noticed a decrease in the availability of support services beyond school. Cuts to local government budgets are having a severe impact on pupils: the cuts must end. Local government must be adequately funded

Tipping Point: Cuts to Environmental Health

Swingeing cuts to environmental health teams have reached 'tipping point', putting public safety at risk. [Tipping Point](#) – is the latest in UNISON's damage series of reports which looks at the impact of austerity on Scotland's public services. Freedom of Information requests to local authorities and a Scotland-wide survey of UNISON members working in environmental health teams paint a disturbing picture of a service that has been cut to the bone. Staff have to manage an ever-increasing workload with significantly reduced resources, leaving many working long hours as they struggle to maintain a service that keeps the public safe. Staff are overworked, under-paid and under stress.

The report revealed:

- More than 9 in 10 (95%) said there had been cuts or severe cuts in the past five years
- Two thirds (67%) said there had been cuts or severe cuts in their service this year

- More than three quarters (76%) described morale in their team as low or very low
- 9 in 10 (90%) say their workload is higher than five years ago.
- Two thirds say they are working late and skipping breaks and lunch to try and get more work done
- Less than one in five (18%) believe their teams have adequate resources to deliver an adequate service to the public
 - There are five per cent fewer environmental health officers and around a fifth (21%) less people in other roles in the teams than in 2012/13
 - Budgets have been cut by 14% compared to 2012/13 and by 12% since 2016/7

There is nothing left to cut. If citizens still expect local services to function there needs to be more money for local services.

If you would like more information on any of the articles in this newsletter or have information you would like to share in the next issue please contact: [Kay Sillars](#) in the Bargaining and Campaigns team on 0141 342 2819 k.sillars@unison.co.uk



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