

## **FACILITIES TIME IN SOLIHULL REPORT TO SCHOOL FORUM FINANCE WORK GROUP MEETING 11 June 2019**

School forum agrees to fund the cost of union time in Solihull maintained schools and some academies [approximately 25%] who agree to buy back the facilities time arrangements. The unions who are part of the facilities time agreement are NEU, NASUWT, NAHT, Unison and GMB. It pays for the cost of employing the representatives of NEU, NASUWT and NAHT and partially pays for the cost of the representatives of Unison and GMB. In the case of the support staff unions this is because they also represent employees of core council, so costs are shared with the council based on employee numbers in schools.

The union group calls itself the staff panel and meets monthly to discuss joint concerns and issues. A lot of that is preventative work, sharing potential difficulties and doing what is necessary to ensure early intervention avoids longer term problems. We also meet with a variety of other groups; monthly, termly or half termly. We meet HR to work on policies and procedures monthly; we meet with the directorate [DCNC] half termly, the core council [CCNC] termly and the councillors led by the leader [SSJC] termly.

There is additional work for the chair of the staff panel in communicating with LA officers and helping to draw up the agendas for meetings. Over the last year NEU has taken that role.

All the unions attend these joint consultation groups. In addition, we represent the staff panel on other groups including the strategic accountability board [SAB], school forum, and health and safety groups. Individual members on the staff panel share information back to panel meetings and sometimes by email where appropriate.

On occasions the panel will produce joint responses to consultations e.g. funding and budget proposals, school reorganisation proposals. As individual unions we also respond to management of change proposals in schools.

The last year has been characterised by casework and contact from members linked to issues connected with accountability and funding.

Several schools have initiated Management of Change to restructure their staffing to reduce costs to meet budget pressures. Schools have less resources, but have the same or increased levels of accountability and expectations. School leaders therefore are under pressure to deliver more with less and the knock-on effect is the pressure transfers to teachers and support staff.

Management of Change [MOC] processes create a significant workload for unions. Individual staff affected need a lot of support as their jobs become at risk and their future becomes uncertain.

**In addition to school reorganisation proposals, in recent years there have been several MOC processes involving LA staff ... SISS, Early Years, SEIS, ARCs. The local authority makes no contribution to facilities time and when the price of facilities is contested this is an issue that the local authority ought to address.**

Casework has increased in relation to absence and performance. Policies on sickness absence and appraisal are being initiated in schools to address issues connected with staff not meeting expectations. There is often a connection between staff not meeting targets and the absence which results from the workload and pressure this creates. Sometimes it's not easy to work out which comes first. Whatever the underlying issues, the impact is to create a workload issue for union reps.

It is a concern that union reps have detected a variation between schools on their understanding of and empathy with issues connected with staff wellbeing. Union reps find that some schools place great importance on staff wellbeing when managing issues and some schools don't have the same priority focusing on the impact of performance rather than the underlying causes. An example is the impact of marking policies, which can be very prescriptive and time consuming for members in some schools. A coordinated local approach to marking policies with managing workload being a guiding principle would be welcomed.

The panel meet regularly with key officers. This communication is a 2-way process of sharing information to solve problems and issues before they develop into something more difficult. Examples include looking at

trends around staff absence, occupational health data, accident statistics, progress on disciplinary investigations and concerns expressed by members.

Although individual panel members always put the needs of their members first, relationships between panel members are very good. Support for members in individual negotiations with the employer can sometimes be challenging around performance, absence, discipline, grievance, flexible working etc, but beyond that all panel members are committed to supporting Solihull schools to be as successful as possible. We want our members to work in good schools delivering a first-class service to pupils and parents across the borough. We feel that we make our contribution to doing that as a team, working both individually and collectively.

Each union has produced an individual report of their activities between April 2018 and March 2019 classified into various categories and levels of involvement as follows:

- 1 One off contact where an issue is resolved in one call or email.
- 2 This is when further information is required, and another contact is needed to resolve the issue.
- 3 This is when an issue requires several contacts to resolve the concern and may take several days; even weeks.
- 4 This is when an issue goes on over months with multiple meetings with members and others.

In addition, union representatives have produced a narrative to provide additional information to support the data collected.

### NAHT REPORT

	Sickness Absence Well-being	Disciplinary	Appraisal & Capability	Grievance staff and parents	Advice	Pay & Conditions	Collective Issues
1			1		2	3	1
2	1			2	5		2
3							1
4	1	1		1			1

Most headteacher members seem very settled in their roles and managing extremely well. There have been several long running cases involving continuing support, but 3 of these cases have been with members of leadership teams, whose jobs have been at risk.

Feedback from members suggests that there is considerable stress in the system caused by funding issues particularly, but members are continuing to manage those issues as effectively as is possible in these situations.

I continue to spend time promoting the retention of facilities time. I have accessed the support of Senior LA Officers to help engage with academies who don't buy back into facilities time. Over the last year or so we have managed to reduce the price per pupil to schools and academies with the aim eventually of bringing it down to £5 per pupil.

Adrian Cattell and I will be visiting academies over the next few months to talk about facilities time with Principals.

If we could persuade a significant number of academies to buy back, we believe we could bring the price down to £4 or possibly £3.50. Academies are getting some of the services provided by unions for free, especially when they use Solihull Policies. This is not fair to all those schools and academies who do pay for the service.

By not engaging with local arrangements they also risk a breakdown of the whole system as more schools become academies and facilities time funding is delegated to all schools.

It will be school staff and union members, who will suffer most if that happens, as can be seen from the numbers who are receiving support from this first-class local service.

**Ian Backhouse NAHT Branch Secretary**

## NEU REPORT

	Sickness Absence Well-being	Disciplinary	Appraisal & Capability	Grievance staff and parents	Advice	Pay & Conditions	Collective Issues
1	48	8	22	7	70	15	18
2	37	5	15	5	31	15	16
3	11	2	9	3	7	9	12
4	8	1	4	1	7	6	8

The union is seeing a year on year growth in casework with work pressures in schools increasing all the time. Much of the work is related to teacher's appraisal and sickness and absence management. Due to the trigger points for sickness and management having changed there has been an increase work load in supporting members to prepare their responses and attending related meetings.

What is significant is the number of young teachers that are asking for support and help about work issues including managing anxiety and stress stemming from often draconian and unmanageable marking policies and workload. Trying to recruit reps in school remains very difficult which means the load on designated caseworkers increases as they become the first port of call.

There has been a significant increase in management of change throughout the borough as the school cuts have started to bite and much time has been spent supporting members through this. In the best-case scenarios, the union has been consulted at the earliest stage of MOC and therefore we have been able to support managers with the implementation.

A lot of time continues to be spent supporting members who work in the Alternative Provision. This provision has seen a considerable amount of casework and negotiation. One facility which went through this process found that it was stopped and then restarted after a visit from Ofsted. This has still not been finalised.

Officers have continued to be fully engaged with the review and evaluation of Solihull school policies. We have also worked with a range of working parties in SMBC to review new OH and EAP services. We also have worked with SMBC on the Workplace Wellbeing working party. One officer has provided the agenda, minutes and chaired the regular SSP meetings at the Hub.

This year there has been an increase in time spent on disciplinary cases supporting members mainly through the investigative phase, but in some cases through every stage of the process up to dismissal.

The Solihull NEU branch provides a 'first port of call' to members who are feeling the first signs of stress or anxiety. We have been able to sign post them to alternative support services or training. In many of these cases we believe we have often resolved issues before they become an attendance or casework issue thus preventing impact in the place of work.

**Simon Bennett and Gillian Clowe**  
**NEU Joint Branch Secretaries**

## GMB REPORT

	Sickness Absence Well-being	Disciplinary	Appraisal & Capability	Grievance staff and parents	Advice	Pay & Conditions	Collective Issues
1	8	2	5	2	24	5	4
2	3	0	1	3	11	3	
3	7	2	2	1	19	5	1
4	8	2	4	0	22	4	

Over the past 12 months I have seen an increase in Management of Change with schools and core council having to make members redundant due to budget cuts. Sickness absent management is on the increase with more time attending Stage 1/2 meetings with members.

PDR issues are also a big factor in my role as members not getting incremental payments even after achieving their targets,

GMB attends monthly meetings with HR and other trade unions to help develop policies that not only support members but SMBC as well.

**Gary Woodhouse**  
**GMB Branch Secretary**

### **NASUWT Report**

	Sickness Absence	Disciplinary	Appraisal & Capability	Grievance	Advice	Pay & Conditions	Collective Issues
1	39	2	15	6	74	75	8
2	18	7	14	4	51	9	21
3	5	6	1	12	9	5	11
4	2	1	1		5		3

A squeeze on school budgets has led to Management of Change and redundancies which have caused a great deal of stress and uncertainty amongst members who need a lot of advice and support during this process. We have moved out of a phase of voluntary redundancies where many schools are now cutting support roles or teaching roles. Teachers in smaller primary schools and teachers of minority subjects have been particularly at risk. In some schools, this has also increased teacher workload or increased class sizes.

Concerns about pay, particularly in relation to additional responsibilities have also been raised more frequently this year. There have been several instances of appraisal being used inappropriately and teachers finding themselves being punished for unachievable targets. The government working group report 'Making Data work' explains clearly why the use of data targets is flawed and should not be used to hold teachers to account, but this is still happening.

Workload and pressure to get results remain a key factor in sickness and capability matters. We see a vast variation between schools in terms of understanding the pressures on teachers and managing staff wellbeing. As well as many cases of unfair treatment and unreasonable expectations of staff, we've seen some very supportive schools when it comes to staff welfare. We have experienced some schools which are supporting members very sensitively through mental health issues, although the picture is mixed.

It has been another positive year in working with the council in continuing to develop policies to protect the interests and wellbeing of our members. However, if schools are not compensated fully for releasing officers for facilities time, we will struggle to recruit future NASUWT officers for casework and negotiating at local level.

**Pauline Astle**  
**NASUWT Secretary**

### **UNISON Report**

	Sickness Absence	Disciplinary	Appraisal & Capability	Grievance	Advice	Pay & Conditions	Collective Issues
1	2	4			3	4	4
2	4			2	2	2	4
3	4	2		4	1	8	2
4	6	4		2	3	6	4

**David Williams**  
**Unison Branch Secretary**