

Three things to do today:

- [Read about behaviour in Schools](#)
- [Learn about Freedom of Information](#)
- [Ask a friend to join](#)

Another Review

The Scottish government has set out yet another review of how local services are delivered. The review aims at fulfilling the government's community empowerment strategy. This time the review is being done in partnership with COSLA.

The [Local Governance Review](#) is about much more than local government. The review states that *"the review brings a wide range of Scotland's public services into scope. This will include some of those powers and functions held at national level. We will work closely with the public, private and third sectors to explore what changes to decision making arrangements can improve people's lives in different places across Scotland."*

The review is in its early stages and the plan is to "engage" with people across Scotland by going out to communities throughout 2018. Legislation is planned before the end of this parliament.

This will clearly be a wide ranging review and could have substantial implications for members working in all services including the third sector.

UNISON's Dave Watson will be a member of the review team.

Local Government Budget Cuts

As has become normal in recent years the budget announcement lead to angry debates about whether or not local government has had its budget cut. The answer is yes. The draft budget proposed no cash increase for local government, which meant a 'real terms' cut in council budgets of around £153m. This was in a year when the Scottish Government had a cash increase in its own budget from Westminster of £188m. They also announced the end of the pay freeze but allocated nothing in the budget to pay for a wage rise.

Now an additional £159.5m of revenue funding has been added. This roughly means that councils are getting a standstill budget in 'real terms'. However, that does not mean there won't be more cuts in the coming year.

That's because 'real terms' means an assumption that inflation will be 1.4% next year. No one really believes this will happen, certainly not a prudent council finance director. Then there will be the usual round of 'unavoidable commitments'. These include demographic change, which IJBs

alone calculate at 2% per annum. COSLA calculated all these demands at 2.6%, plus 3% for a realistic inflation estimate. That's where their £545m figure comes from.

Does the revised budget meet the Scottish government pay policy, let alone the trade union side claim? A 3% pay increase costs councils around £210m. As pay makes up around 55% of the revenue budget, £88m of the new money is for pay. Then councils can increase the council tax by 3% raising £77m, which by the same proportions is £42m for pay. That's a total of £130m, or a shortfall of £80m. They could of course meet the cost by spending almost all the new money on pay, but that leaves almost nothing for inflation and those unavoidable commitments.

So the extra money is very welcome and makes a significant contribution to the draft budget shortfall. It also means that local government is suffering as badly, but not much worse (this year at least), as other departments outwith the protected spending areas.

However, it still means an underfunded pay policy and service cuts.

Behaviour in Schools

The Scottish government published a lot of education statistics at the end of the year so the report into [behaviour in schools](#) didn't get much coverage. Which is a shame because its important.

What the report tells us is that cuts, particularly to classroom assistants and to specialist support staff, are creating problems in school when it comes to maintaining positive behaviour. This substantial report backs up what members told [UNISON](#) during our survey of school staff at the beginning of the year.

The new report finds that there has been an increase in low-level disruptive behaviour since 2012. Staff also reported that it is this type of disruptive behaviour that has the biggest negative impact on their experience in schools.

We need to invest and value the whole school team.

Head teachers, teachers, support staff and pupils all agree that there is a clear link between having sufficient support staff in a classroom and positive behaviour in that classroom. Staff also felt that the reduction in support staff combined with growing numbers of pupils with ASN had resulted in a shortage of one-to-one support for pupils and a wider negative impact on behaviour.

Again in line with UNISON's research, it is clear that support staff do not have enough time for discussions with class teachers about pupils or involvement in whole school discussions about behaviour and relationships in schools. Headteachers also indicated that cuts

in non-school based support for pupils with additional needs are also impacting on the level of support available to pupils. It is also clear that when resources in schools are stretched in general then that has an impact on other aspects of school life which could promote positive behaviour.

There is a clear link between having sufficient support staff in a classroom and positive behaviour in that classroom.

The report also states that: "There is also scope for improvement in relation to: ensuring that support staff feel valued, communication and training"

Last year our members told us they feel undervalued and the lack of time, lack of resources and heavy workloads mean they are struggling to maintain standards for pupils in Scotland. Things like the [Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland](#) only including teacher numbers doesn't help. This year they have added the numbers of early years workers with or working towards degrees but no numbers for those with other qualifications. Not counting these staff seems indicative of an attitude that these workers don't count. The Behaviour in Schools report shows that they do.

Instead of wasting time and money on an education reform Bill that few support we need to invest in and value the whole school team if we want to give pupils the best chance of succeeding.



Impact of Cuts

UNISON branches are campaigning hard against looming council budget cuts that will see more jobs lost and increasing damage to important services, with the most vulnerable people worst affected.

Pressures over the winter saw A&E waiting times reach record highs in late December and cuts have affected important areas including children's mental health services, with immense stress on many NHS workers.

What kind of cuts and where? Name a key service and there are proposals somewhere in Scotland, to further cut it. Of course, many councils are looking at very similar kinds of cuts packages. Education is taking a big hit. A few "floated" cuts do win welcome reprieves (e.g. the music school in Edinburgh) but the reality is that all of the cuts go too far.

Some proposed cuts examples include: Moray: halving school library and school technicians posts to save £319,000, nearly £500,000 of cuts to integrated children's services including ASN, home school link workers and child mental health. Loss of around 100 FTE posts and overall savings needed of £7m this year and £16m in 2019/20. South Ayrshire: Nearly 300 FTE posts including school assistants, home-link and school librarians, 160 teaching posts to save £4.25m. Further details can be found in [briefing 95](#). Branches are encouraged to continue to send details of local cuts to the Bargaining and Campaigns so that we can collate the detail to support your campaigns.

Investments

Pensions are meant to safeguard our future, but that future is threatened by the burning of carbon in fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. It's also a poor investment, which is why there is a growing movement to divest our pensions from fossil fuel investments.

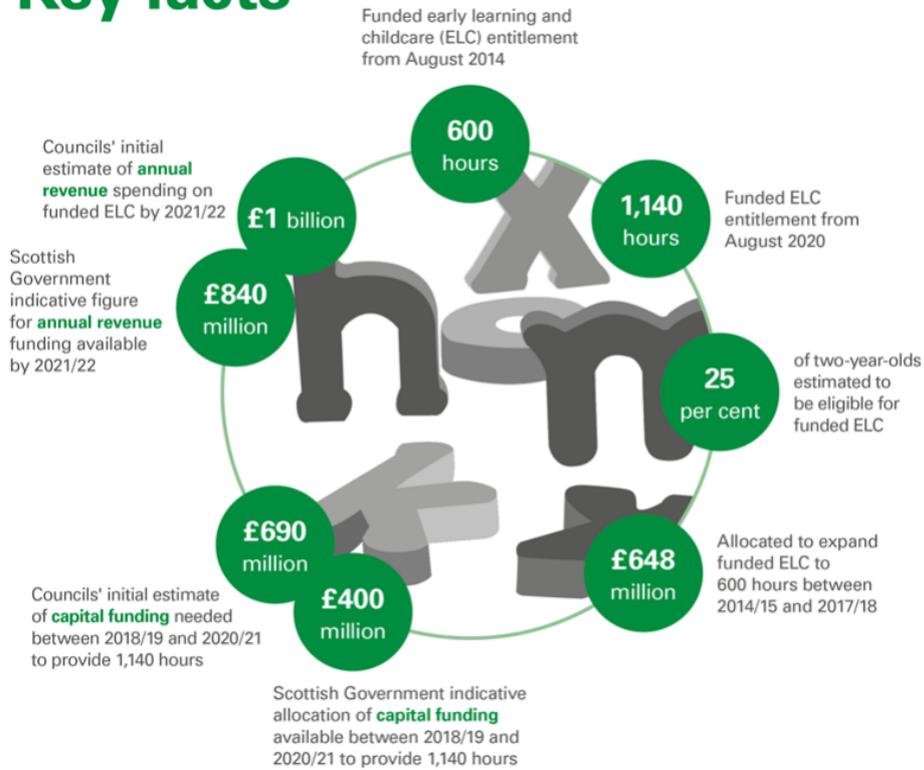
[UNISON's new guide](#) is designed to help members of local government pension schemes push for changes in the investment of their funds. The aim is to explore alternative investment opportunities, allowing funds to sell their shares and bonds in fossil fuels and to go carbon-free.

Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme funds have some £1.8bn invested in fossil fuel companies - that figure grows to £16bn across the UK. New government regulations for fossil fuels have raised the costs of high-polluting industries and reduced their investment appeal. Equally, emerging clean and green technology has created new and lucrative business opportunities for funds. The UK government is also consulting on allowing pension schemes to dump fossil fuel investments by dropping 'best returns' legal rules.

In Scotland, all local authorities, including those who administer the local SLGPS funds, have a statutory duty to reduce emissions in accordance with the Climate Change (Scotland) Act.

One of the strengths of this new guide is to challenge the conventional wisdom that fiduciary duty is a barrier to divestment. Trustees can take account of non-financial factors where they have good reason to think that scheme members share their view, and there is no risk of major financial harm to the fund. Let's protect our hard earned pensions and leave a planet fit for future generations.

Key facts



Early Years Expansion Risks

The [Audit Scotland report](#) on childcare sums up the issues that UNISON has been raising for some time. The government has not done the preparation or provided the funding to deliver this flagship policy. They state that there are "Significant risks" which is strong language from Audit Scotland.

Councils estimate it will cost £1 billion to deliver

UNISON has been highlighting these issues to the Scottish government since their initial expansion to 600 hours. Most significantly that the government has seriously underestimated the funding needed to delivery high quality childcare.

It was clear from the outset that government made the announcement about the extra hours without any real information about how the current system was working and what would be needed to meet the expansion.

The report details just how much is still to be done. The key issue as ever is adequate funding. The Scottish government says it will cost £840m a year but councils, who are currently delivering the service put costs at £1 billion. That's a substantial gap.

This is not the end of the problems. The whole "funding follows the child" commitment means that councils are being asked to plan for a service when they will have no way of knowing how parents will spend the money. How can they possible design a service under these conditions?

While the Audit Scotland report does highlight the need for 12,000 extra FTE staff, even this underestimates the numbers. This is a largely female workforce and many will want to work part-time as they have their own caring responsibilities. There isn't anything in place to ensure that anywhere near even the 12,000 workers will be available in time. High quality early learning depends on highly skilled and qualified staff. If the service is to meet the stated aim of improving children's outcomes and closing the attainment gap then there needs to be not only initial training for new staff but ongoing professional development for all staff.

Pay is also a problem: while the government is looking at ways to guarantee the living wage, this is far too low to reflect the skills and qualifications for the job. The report shows just how complex using procurement will be to guarantee that rate. There is so little detail or data that it is hard to see how the government is going to deliver on time.

Councils and Health

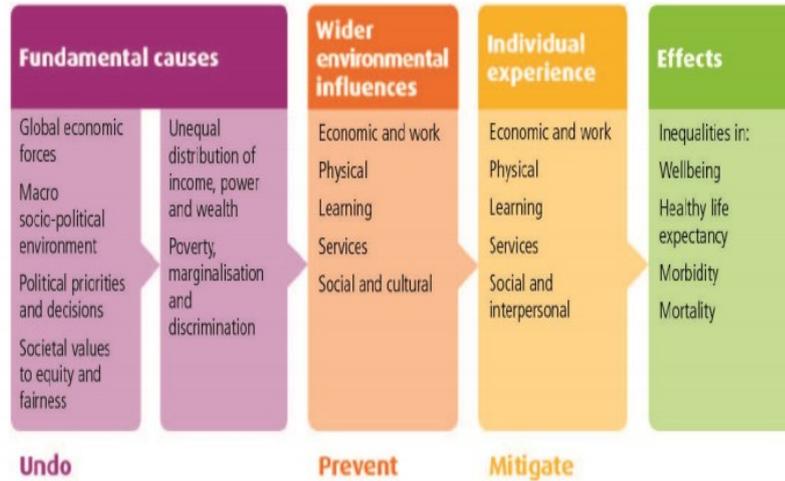
Branches campaigning against council cuts may find the new Improvement Service guide useful. The new [guide](#) for councillors highlights their role on improving health inequalities in their areas. Councillors should be judging proposals in their areas on their impact on the least well off and most marginalised in their communities.

As the report states, in better off areas men experience 23.8 and women 22.6 years more of good health than those in the most deprived areas. While its easy to try and blame people for their own poor health there is overwhelming evidence that this is not the case. Health is socially determined.

Discussion on health inequalities tends to focus on the health service. The reality is that it is investment in local government services that has the biggest impact. The usual example is that while antibiotics played a role it was actually

improved housing that made the biggest impact on TB in the UK.

The paper lays out clearly the role that elected members should play in reducing health inequalities and the impact of poverty on citizens in their area.



While it is full of statements about councillors engaging, empowering and involving communities its also contains good practice examples that branches could use

when lobbying councillors about cuts. Councillors should be clear about the impact of cuts on those living in poverty and other protected groups before they make decisions that will impact on people's lives.

There is also a councillor briefing covering [procurement](#) which branches may also find useful.

Get It Minuted Campaign

An admission that a council made deliberate plans to avoid freedom of information legislation has prompted renewed calls for proper enforcement.

The Ferret investigative website [reported](#) that Highland Council had planned to meet face to face to gather sea lice information from fish farmers who were insisting on not writing anything down. The admission highlighted the importance of the [‘Get It Minuted’ campaign](#), launched in January by the Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland, supported by UNISON.

The CFoIS produced a [report](#), backed by UNISON, and launched ‘Get It Minuted’ in response to concerns that the Scottish Government is undermining transparency and accountability by failing to issue agendas and take notes and minutes of meetings with a range of external

parties. Journalists and MSPs have raised the issue repeatedly.

The initiative coincided with admissions that not only were [no minutes taken](#) of a meeting between Justice Secretary Michael Matheson and then Scottish Police Authority chair Andrew Flanagan, but Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland has said it [saw no need](#) to minute its monthly meetings.

As the Sunday Herald [editorial](#) on 28 January said: “The Government should urgently issue new guidance instructing civil servants and public bodies across Scotland to minute their meetings and live up to the spirit of FOI.”

UNISON [urges](#) all those having meetings with the Scottish Government to insist that there are always agendas, notes and minutes.

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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