



Enhancing Education By Valuing Education Staff



2025

Education
Divisional Conference
23rd - 25th April 2025

Minutes of Education Divisional Conference **2023**

Held in the Midlands Park Hotel 13th-14th April 2023

In attendance

School Secretaries	Luisa Carty, Noreen O Callaghan, Susan Phelan, Rena McGrath, Edel Cooney, Hilary Kellett, Caroline Bolger, Pauline McNally, Caitlin Ni Chathain
School Caretakers	David Hearne
SNA South Dublin/South Leinster	Pamela Larkin, Melissa Clear, Martin O Shea, Alex Cathcart, Maggie Devoy, Rachel Farrelly, Valerie Johnson, Antoinette Mullen, Mary Keating, Debbie McGlade, Mairead Ramsbottom, Barbara Price, Claire Daly, April Hogg, Caroline Whelehan, Jackie Buckley, Aisling Lohan, Fiona McGrath, Theresa Murphy, Elaine Shannon, Bridie Kelly Doyle, Lucy O'Neill, Mags O'Shea, Orla Hassett, Emer Woods, Madeline Bennet
SNA Connaught/Ulster	Jennifer Bradley, Frances Roberts, Annemarie Maguire, Fiona Masterson, Declan Kavanagh, Jonathan Farrelly
SNA Munster	Catherine Quirke, Deborah O'Connor, Rose Donovan, Martina McEaney, Damien Mulcahy, Siobhan Foley, Denis Foley, Caroline McGrath, Bernie McEaney, Dawn Holton, Lisa Thornhill, Michelle O'Keefe, Amy Leahy, Tara O'Donovan, Tony Hamilton, George Hamilton, Afic Brosnan, Cait Looney
Education No. 1 Branch	Noreen Kelly Sheehan, Patricia Carney Grealis
SNA North Dublin/North Leinster	Carol McSherry, Jesslyn Henry, Julie Harper, Linda O'Sullivan Bridie Shortall, Catherine Fitzgerald, Dolores Cunningham, Mary Cauldwell, Maria McIlkenny, Richella Matthews, Dorothy Rawlins, Claire Waters, Jess Curran, Derval Cleland, Marian McGennis, Donna Woods, Sandra Bracken, Bobbie Carter, Shane Vaughan, Clare Keaveney, Phil Quinlan, Laura O'Regan, Catherine McDermott, Edel Callaghan, Corina O'Neill
Higher Education	Gina O'Brien, Barbara Byrne, Catherine O'Reilly, David Jackman, Eileen Byrne, John Doyle, Linda McGlinchey, Marie Quaid, Siobhan O'Callaghan, Mary Coughlan, Peter Somers, Anne O'Leary
NETB	Marcel McCafferty, Brenda Mullins, Denise McQuillan, Patricia Tarpey, Paul Carey, Ger Lyons, Caitriona Tuite, Joan Regan, Helen Pearse
School Completion Programme	Cait Ni Mhurchu, Jennifer Cummins

SOC

Siobhan Daly	Civil Service Division
Helen Lundy (Secretary)	Civil Service Division
Eileen Coman	Education Division
Niamh Jordan**	Education Division
Gerry Foley (Vice-Chair)	Health & Welfare Division
Don Meskill	Health & Welfare Division
Rose Marie Conroy (Chair)	Local Gov & Local Services Division
Audrey Warren*	Local Gov & Local Services Division
Tom Kavanagh	Municipal Employees Division
Michael Ross	Municipal Employees Division
Teresa Kearns (Returning Officer)	Services & Enterprise Division
Billy Gallagher	Services & Enterprise Division

*Kathryn Collins resigned from SOC in 2022 and was replaced by Audrey Warren who was transferred from the Education Division to the Local Government and Local Services (LGLS) Division.

**Niamh Jordan was nominated by the Education Division Executive Committee to replace Audrey Warren on her transfer to LGLS Division.

EDEC

Noreen O'Mahony (Chair)
Eilise McGarrell (Vice-Chair)
Ursula Cox
Breda Halley
Helen Hogan
Claudia Jennings
James Kavanagh
Annette Murphy
Kathleen O'Doherty
Joan Regan

Education Division staff

Andy Pike	Head of Division
Shane Lambert	AGS
Stella Griffin	AGS
Dave Sexton	IRO
Gary Honer	IRO
Diarmiad MacAbaird	Organiser
Dylan Archbold	Organiser
Joan McCrohan	Organiser
Patricia Lydon	PA
Róisín Harrison	PA

Fórsa staff	Moira Haslam	Conference Team
	Bernie Aston	Conference Team
	Ryan McKinney	Conference Team
	Róisín McKane	Conference Team
	Niall Shannahan	Communications
	Kate O'Sullivan	Communications
	Mark Corcoran	Communications
	Mehak Dugal	Communications
	Grace Williams	Organiser
	Michael Kerrigan	Organiser
	Juliette Cooper	Policy & Research Officer
	Kevin Donoghue	Director of Campaigns
Fórsa officers	Michael Smyth	President
	Julie Flood	Treasurer
	Helen Sheridan	Vice President
	Betty Tyrrell Collard	Vice President
	Martin Walsh	Vice President
Panellists	Juliette Cooper	Policy & Research Officer
	Brendan Doody	PO Dept of Education
	Dr Rose Ryan	Director of Access Maynooth University
	Tara Madden	Education Project Manager EPIC
	Leo McKenna	Teacher Donabate Community College.
	Caitlin Faye Mantini	President USSI
	Waqar Ahmed	President Post Graduate Affairs.
	Kate Cooley	Student MTU
	Eva Grace	Disability Officer
	Saoirse McMahon	Student Donabate Community College.
Speakers	Norma Foley	Minister for Education
Distinguished Service Awards	Maggie Ryan	
	Anne O'Leary	
	Mary Coughlan	
	Patricia Fanning	
	Claire Keaveney	
	Helen Hogan	

Pay and related

Motion 1

This Conference recognises and applauds the work done by the School Secretaries branch committee in negotiating and delivering for its members the first centralised, standard contract of employment for grant-paid secretaries since 1979.

While Conference recognises the significant achievement in doing so it is aware that further work is needed to bring school secretaries into line with public servants in the areas of pensions, sick leave and public service status.

To this end, Conference directs the Education Divisional Executive to provide all practicable assistance needed to the committee of the School Secretary branch to achieve these goals and bring currently grant-paid school secretaries into line with their colleagues working in Education Training Boards (ETBs) and those who continue to work to pre-1979 school secretary contracts who hold this public service status.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 2

Conference instructs the incoming Education DEC to ensure that all school secretaries be immediately recognised as public servants by the Government, and rewarded accordingly for the diverse workload undertaken daily, dealing with the challenges and complexities of the job. This recognition should also include upgrading to Grade IV posts, in line with Circular Letter 0081/2020.

School Secretaries

Motion: Carried

Motion 3

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC and school secretaries to continue to fight for equality and parity in line with our ETB colleagues. Whilst we have come a long way, we still have a long way to go and must keep the pressure on the DES until we achieve our goal of parity in full.

School Secretaries

Motion: Carried

Education policy

Motion 4

Conference welcomes and endorses the National Access Plan, a strategic action plan for equity of access, that was recently published by the Higher Education Authority in conjunction with the Department of Education.

Conference commends the valuable work of our SNAs with children and young adults in schools and the vitally important role they play in assisting the students they work with to complete their education.

Conference is disappointed at the lack of support that exists for these students at the next stage of their life journey be that third level, apprenticeship, other vocational training, or the world of work.

At post-primary level, it is estimated that 17.9% of 13-year-olds have some form of Special Educational Need (SEN). Census 2016 found that, in total, 643,131 people had a disability, meaning that 13.5%, or one in seven, of the population has a disability of some kind.

The NDA (2018) estimates that by 2028, the number of people with a disability will increase by 20%. One-third of this increase is due to the increased size of the population and two-thirds to the ageing of the population. Based on these projected figures, it is estimated that by 2026, 14.8% of the overall population will have a disability. In AHEAD's (2021) analysis of 2019/2020 data, there has been consistent year-on-year growth in the numbers of students with disabilities registering with support services in higher education – an increase of over 220% in the last 11 years.

Therefore, this Conference calls on the Education DEC to engage with Government, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to provide immediate support to these students to ensure that they progress and reach their full potential and calls for the recommendations contained in the National Access Plan to be implemented immediately.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 5

This Conference proposes that the Education DEC promote equality for all pupils by seeking access to career guidance and school completion programs for pupils in special schools therefore promoting access pathways to third level education. Please support this motion.

South Dublin/South Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 6

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to advocate for additional resources both financial and psychological for children in care particularly when they reach the age in which they will be accessing and participating in higher education and who wish to pursue their education to PhD level.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 7

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to campaign for special schools be included in all services afforded to DEIS schools. This is a service long overdue in special education.

South Dublin/South Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 8

This Conference recognises the exponential rise in young people presenting with mental health challenges and the significant deficits that exist in meeting their needs. This Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek that the Department of Education invest in SCP capacity to facilitate mental health supports and to be the home of the recently announced emotional therapists in schools, whether they are DEIS or Non-DEIS schools.

School Completion Programme

Motion: Carried

Motion 9

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek that the Department of Education once and for all resolve the ongoing governance and employment deficits in the School Completion Programme which this union has been highlighting since 2006. The failure to address these issues is limiting the ability of SCP to meet the needs of children and young people, retain experienced and qualified staff, and facilitate the expansion of SCP to all DEIS schools.

School Completion Programme

Motion: Carried

Motion 10

This Conference calls attention to a significant rise in the presentation of school refusing behaviours among students in the Junior Cycle as reported by staff working on the ground in schools. Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek that the Department of Education ensure adequate funding is put in place in the School Completion Programme to address the social, emotional and educational needs of these young people.

School Completion Programme

Motion: Carried

Motion 11

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to engage with the Department of Education to seek to place Sustainable Development Goals formally on the schools' curriculum. These Goals are vitally important, and schools are well-placed to promote them. Many schools are already engaged in projects, and where they are engaging the learning and awareness is inspirational, with everyone benefitting from the knowledge. The students in particular are enthusiastically embracing the learning and many very interesting initiatives are beginning to emerge.

Munster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 12

That this Conference calls the Education DEC to ensure ETBs cease the practice of outsourcing administrative work to private companies and entities and ensure the use of direct employment is in place.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Motion 13

This Conference urges the Education DEC to negotiate with the Department of Education to ensure that every pupil leaving a special school and intending to avail of a third level placement will have access to a PA (personal assistant).

South Dublin/South Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 14

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to secure continued realistic funding from the HEA and DFHERIS to ensure that the Technological University (TU) transition phases are appropriately funded from integration, organisation and design, right through to the implementation phases. Success of the TUs are dependent on adequate funding and supports during this period.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 15

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to engage with the Higher Education Authority and the DFHERIS to ensure that appropriate and acceptable funding is secured for the ongoing and future development of higher education in line with the Department's strategic plans.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 16

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek a meeting with the DFHERIS to discuss the findings of the OECD Report on Education in the Technological University/IoT sector and the deficit of PMSS to academic posts. In the traditional universities, the ratio is 1 to 1 while in TUs it is 0.59 to 1. This report is the result of a universal wise research into the academic roles, but we are concerned with the effects the implementation of this report will have on our administrative members.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 17

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to ensure continued progression of Organisational Design Phase II, to include a review of all grades and functions of an ETB.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Motion 18

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to support requested amendments to the Higher Education Act 2022. The Act contains the incorrect title for professional, management, and support staff. Also, a request for equal representation with our academic colleagues on the Governing Body of Technological Universities was not given due consideration when this legislation was put to the houses of the Oireachtas. Therefore, the diverse cohort of admin, library, technical, and support staff have only one representative on the governing body of each TU as opposed to three and possibly four academic representatives. These issues are not acceptable and must be amended.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 19

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek immediately the establishment of a committee between the PMSS unions, the DFHERIS, and THEA to draft our circulars outstanding. This is a long outstanding issue which we and our official have raised with the Department and THEA on numerous occasions over the years. It was agreed at the National TU Negotiation Forum to address this issue but there has not been any progress to date and this needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

General terms and conditions

Motion 20

In 2018, the NCSE published their review of the Statutory Special Needs Assistant Scheme. This review recommended changes to the way in which Special Education was provided. Since 2018, the Government has committed to implementation of elements of the review such as the Frontloading allocation mechanism and the Schools Inclusion Model but has failed to deliver such changes. This has resulted in continued uncertainty and confusion for all concerned with the provision of education to students with additional needs. Parents and staff are unsure how the allocation of scarce resources should be managed within our Schools and SNAs are unsure of their role.

Therefore, Conference calls on the Divisional Executive to seek that Government bring forward clear policies on the future model for Special Education that:

1. Abolishes the Statutory Special Needs Assistant Scheme and replaces it with a service-based model with SNA resources allocated to each and every school;
2. Provides access to inclusive education for all students with additional needs and provides SNA and SET support for students on a permanent basis;
3. Establishes an ongoing allocation of SNAs for each school with a redeployment scheme enabling staff to move to new schools in the local area as an alternative to redundancy;
4. Provides adequate access to health and social care services for students with additional needs through a schools based service;
5. Ensures that SNAs have access to continual professional development with a revised entry qualification to ensure new staff are equipped to meet the needs of students.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 21

That this Conference requests the Education DEC ensure that SNA concerns relating to completion of probationary periods is addressed during the contract review. It is the experience of SNAs who move from one school to another either as a choice or as a consequence of being made redundant are required to complete probationary period all over again.

This practice is outdated and should not be allowed to continue, it is more than reasonable for SNAs to request that once they have completed a probationary period that is accepted in one school there should be no need to complete another probationary period in another school.

The requirement for additional probationary periods is meaningless and serves to undermine the experience and years' service provided by the SNA.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 22

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek the urgent extension of the 2019 scheme for 'Leave of Absence following assault for lecturers employed in TU's and IoTs' to be applied to all PMSS and not just lecturers.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 23

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek that all Occupational Health reports issued to employers in relation to all staff referrals be copied to said employees at the same time as issued to employers. This will ensure honesty, transparency and GDPR compliance.

South Dublin/South Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 24

When Norma Foley mentioned on 3rd November that she "welcomed the decision to align bereavement leave for staff in the education sector with those in areas of the public sector. This agreement will see existing leave for staff extended to 20 days in relation to the *death* of a spouse/partner or child." This did not include school secretaries. This Conference calls on the Education DEC to challenge this. Our grief is as important as the colleagues we work alongside.

School Secretaries

Motion: Carried

Action: Claim

Motion 25

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to engage with the Department of Education and all education providers to ensure that they agree to put in place a policy on menopause awareness and paid leave of absence days.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 26

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to ensure that adequate resources are put in place to safeguard the family friendly and work-life balance initiatives for all administrative staff in the ETB sector.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Motion 27

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to develop and implement a policy of CPD for administrative staff in the Education and Training Board sector.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Motion 28

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to pursue with the Department of Education the recognisable anomalies in annual leave entitlements that exist amongst administrative and library staff within the public service. Our members in education seem to have less favourable terms than our colleagues in other public services.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 29

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek the Department of Education reinstate regional and national in-service to School Completion Programmes and direct that funding is ringfenced for the provision of external supervision for SCP staff members to ensure their continued wellbeing in the workplace.

School Completion Programme

Motion: Carried

Motion 30

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek that compulsory closure days are added to annual leave entitlement of new entrant administrative staff in ETBs.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Motion 31

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to engage with each education provider to ensure that they implement a policy on surrogacy. To engage in a campaign to highlight an awareness of the multitude of routes people take to become parents including surrogacy. Currently people accessing surrogacy as a route to parenthood have no entitlement to paid leave therefore, it is necessary to seek equity of treatment for those becoming parents in line with adoptive leave which are equivalent to the provisions within the maternity/adoptive leave for those becoming parents through surrogacy.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 32

Conference instructs the incoming Education DEC to ensure that all Fórsa branch committee members, be granted paid leave without exception, to attend union business that fall within term time, such as training and conference without affecting annual leave.

School Secretaries

Motion: Carried

Pensions and related

Motion 33

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to provide structured information days in relation to retirement for all school staff represented by them as a matter of urgency. Please support this motion.

South Dublin/South Leinster SNAs

Motion 34

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to emphasize with the Department of Education and DFHERIS the adverse effects the shortfall in resources within the offices of the NSSO and shared services payroll are having on public service pensioners. This shortfall has resulted in payment of pension increases being delayed by at least a year. This situation is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to happen again.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 35

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to secure back-pay sanctioned under recent pay agreements is applied to retired administrative staff members in the ETB sector.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Job evaluation

Motion 36

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to ensure that the job evaluation scheme currently in place for Technical Universities is rolled out to Education and Training Boards.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Motion 37

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek an agreement with the Department of Education to an extension of our job evaluation scheme to inclusion the Grade 7 and the APO management level. Grade 7 is an administrative grade and our members at this grade feel aggrieved because this grade was not included in the original agreement. Our APO members have not had a grade review for over 20 years and their roles have changed considerably over the years.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

72 hours

Motion 38

This Conference welcomes the recent commencement of discussions on the SNA 72 hours obligation and national SNA contract. The 72 hours are a bank of unpaid hours which may be used by employers to undertake duties that could not be undertaken during normal working time. Originally the 12 days, they changed to 72 hours in 2011. The hours, or more precisely the constant abuse of them have become a stone in the shoe for SNAs since. They are regularly abused by school principals in manners that are often demeaning and totally inappropriate. SNAs often suffer the hours being scheduled incorrectly or being used to do duties that are not appropriate to the role of an SNA, or which displace the duties of other grades within the school family.

The way they are used offers little or no benefit to the SNA, or more importantly the Children that they care for, in fact they often serve as a debarment to SNAs undertaking training, as they would need to do that on top of the 72 hour obligation. This abuse needs to stop.

We believe that the abuse of SNAs in this manner stems from the lack of a professional qualification and the continued classification of the provision of the SNA service as a scheme. This classification and the current qualification are stuck in time and are nowhere near reflective of the modern SNA role or responsibilities. Nor does it consider the significant change that has taken place with regards the provision of Special Education overall or current recruitment practices which sees employers consistently seeking qualifications beyond those nationally agreed.

The current qualification is wholly inadequate and only serves to perpetuate the inaccurate view that SNAs are unskilled workers, reinforcing the misconceptions of employers around what duties might be appropriate. This outdated qualification needs to be changed to appropriately reflect the level of responsibility SNAs hold and the complexity of the tasks and duties they carry out daily.

The SNA contract is also no longer fit for purpose. It contains too many grey areas or provisions that are open to abuse, such as "at the discretion of the principal". Like with the 72-hours this is often used to compel SNAs to undertake inappropriate duties and displace the work of education colleagues.

This Conference calls on Fórsa's Education Division to support fully our officials throughout these discussions to eliminate such abuses and deliver a better working environment for SNAs, better opportunity for development and a fairer contract which accurately reflects the current day roles and responsibilities of SNAs.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 39

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to continue to work to abolish the bank of time known as the 72 hours. This time is abused particularly under the heading of the discretion of the principal. Its use is random and unnecessary and used to abuse and disrespect SNAs.

North Dublin/North Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 40

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to find a resolution to the most serious day-to-day abuse of respect for SNAs, that of Inappropriate Work, before the end of the current school year in May/June of 2023.

SNAs have been carrying out secretarial, caretaking, cleaning, and teaching duties for far too long, without an end in sight. We have also been carrying out medical and nursing procedures, doing healthcare work, physio, and OT, none of which we are properly trained or covered to do, and all of which is way above our payscale. We need to remind ourselves that we are employed by the Department of Education, and not the HSE. Remember what almost happened during the first Covid Lockdown (courtesy of Minister McHugh), and why.

Inappropriate work needs to be prioritised by Fórsa, which should consider the long-held Trade Union Movement's opposition to Displacement, that of taking work away from others whose job that is. Inappropriate Work also covers the contentious issues of the 72 Hours and June Work, most of which are taken up with work which is clearly 'inappropriate to the grade of SNAs'.

Connacht/Ulster SNAs

Motion: Carried

June working

Motion 41

That this Conference asks the Education DEC to work to end the practice of June work as it is another way for principals to abuse SNAs by using the time to force inappropriate work on SNAs, doing jobs that have nothing to do with the role of an SNA. Currently June work should only be used for appropriate work including exams in post primary schools.

North Dublin/North Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

SNA permanency, redeployment and related

Motion 42

Conference asserts that there is no longer any genuine reason to retain the current model of the SNA redundancy scheme and subsequent model of allocations.

On a yearly basis, SNAs fear and await the decisions of the NCSE as to whether members will have a job come September for the following school year. During the pandemic there was some kind of relief for SNAs in this regard as the positions were frozen.

As we move out of the restrictions and directions that were needed during the pandemic to ensure returning to school was safe for students and staff, we will surely see a return to the yearly dread that is associated with SNA allocations and the fear this brings to many SNAs that their jobs may not be there come September.

Conference contends that this system is out of date and not fit for purpose, this is all more apparent as the data shows that SNA allocations increase year in year out. This means that if there a yearly increase in allocations there should be no requirement for any SNA to made redundant.

It is more than reasonable for SNAs to ask to be treated fairly and given the opportunity of employment in another school if the SNA allocation in their existing employment is reduced. In this regard it is more than possible to have in place a transfer scheme in which an SNA who has been informed that their post no longer exists in a school, they should be allow to transfer to another school within an agreeable geographical distance.

This scheme should not have any conditions that rely on the SNA needing to be re-interviewed not should they need to have their employment status altered that shows their service record has been broken because they move from one school to another.

The SNA Redundancy Scheme should be maintained for SNAs who may not wish to transfer from one school to another, this would be cognisant that there is a provision of posts within a certain geographical area that would take into account where the reduction in allocation takes place.

SNAs are seeking that they treated fairly and in line with counterparts in teaching and other employers in education such as the Education Training Boards whose employees have access to such schemes. The Department's position is untenable, and we cannot allow this current injustice to continue. Conference calls on the Divisional Executive to engage with the Department of Education to address these concerns.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 43

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek permanency and job security in line with all other public servants for SNAs. Because of the current system an SNA could be working in the same post for many years, but their position is dependent on allocations by the NCSE. Real permanency is vital for SNAs to get access to mortgages and loans etc.

North Dublin/North Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 44

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to enter negotiations with the Department of Education to end the unjust treatment of substitute SNAs. To this effect it is proposed that the rights of substitute SNAs are brought into line with those of their permanent colleagues they are replacing. This should be done without taking away from the rights of the permanent post-holder. To achieve this end, it is proposed that substitute SNAs be afforded the same rights as substitute teachers, who receive the same conditions of employment as their permanent colleagues after 40 days.

They are then classified as 'non-casual' substitutes and they become entitled to paid sick leave, family illness leave, maternity leave and other benefits. Substitute SNAs must 'sign on' for every school break and holiday and are regularly left with long delays before payment. They should not have to 'sign on' and should be paid for holidays, like all other SNAs. We propose that this discussion takes place during Fórsa's upcoming meeting with the Department and a resolution be sought before the end of the current school year in May 2023.

Connacht/Ulster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 45

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek the introduction of a centralised Garda vetting database during the SNA contract review. This would allow flexibility for substitute SNAs to work across different schools and for staff to participate in summer provision across different schools.

The current system is complex and is a barrier to flexible movement of SNAs from one school to another which in itself provides difficulties not just for SNAs but for employers who need to employ an SNA at short notice whether that be on a full-time basis or a part-time basis.

A centralised system in this regard would be beneficial and would free up and lessen unnecessary and lost administrative time, it can often take weeks and longer for SNAs and schools to agree a start date for employment due to the antiquated system that being used and conference calls on Fórsa to further members concerns in this regard.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 46

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek the establishment of a centralised database that will provide a Garda vetting hub where potential new employers can access in order to determine potential new employee's Garda vetting status. This would cease the practice of workers in the education sector having to seek Garda clearance when moving from one employer to another.

North Dublin/North Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

SNA Assault Leave

Motion 47

Per circular 62/2017, "The maximum leave available to SNAs who are assaulted in their line of work is capped at 3 months (92 days) and then, in exceptional cases another 3 months (91 days) at full pay. This is subject to a limit of 183 days in a rolling 4 year period. Any subsequent leave is dealt under the Sick Leave scheme".

However, if a SNA is still unable to work due to significant physical injuries which occurred in their place of work due to no fault of their own, we believe that the only person qualified to assess if the SNA must return to work is a doctor or certified medical practitioner. As long as the SNA remains incapacitated due to assault, they should remain on assault leave once a doctor will certify that this is the reason the SNA is absent from work.

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to prioritise a change in circular so that SNAs will not be expected to lose their sick leave entitlements due to serious assaults which have taken place in their place of work.

North Dublin/North Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 48

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek provision for special leave for Special Needs Assistants who are accidentally injured at work. Accidental injury is not counted as Assault Leave. Currently, SNAs who need to stay out of work as a result of a workplace accident are required to produce a medical certificate and it comes out of their very limited sick leave allocation (92 days in 4 years). SNAs regularly report to us, that any medical expenses incurred are not covered by the school. This can often result in a significant loss. We call on Fórsa to put this very important concern on the agenda in future discussions with the Department of Education.

Munster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motion 49

That this Conference call on the Education DEC to look into the possibility of no-fault compensation in the case of injuries acquired following assault in the course of our duties.

Munster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Equality and related

Motion 50

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to engage with all education providers to ensure that they put in place a policy on sexual harassment.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 51

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to engage with the DFHERIS and all education providers to ensure that they implement a policy on domestic violence leave.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 52

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to ensure the protection of the roles of pregnant people in ETB administrative roles by securing agreement to sanction replacement staff for the duration of their maternity leave and to ensure those roles are not diminished or outsourced while people are on maternity leave.

NETB

Motion: Carried

Public and social policy

Motion 53

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek that Government to introduce free public transport for further education and higher education students. A decision to grant full free public transport for higher education and further education students would have multiple benefits.

These include the following:

- It would make a meaningful contribution to a cost-of-living reduction for these students. Numerous studies point to the economic challenges faced by students in further and higher education forcing many of them to work part-time during their studies. There is an abundance of evidence internationally that part time work, though necessary if they are to continue in college, usually has a negative impact on, educational outcomes for students;
- It would incentivise students who may be contemplating dropping out of college to remain there, whether as undergraduates or postgraduates;
- It would allow greater number of students to remain living at home during their studies. These would also reduce cost for the students, reduce the pressure on student accommodation and free up accommodation currently rented by students to other renters;
- It would reduce the use of cars, especially single occupancy cars, in the journey to the campus and reduce car parking pressure on campuses;
- It would enable students who choose or must live away from home to live in locations some distance from the campus thereby further easing the accommodation pressure on university towns;
- It would have a positive environmental impact and help socialise the younger generation away from private transport towards public transport.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 54

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek a review of the SUSI student grant scheme to facilitate applications for mature students who due to the cost-of-living crisis and the lack of rental accommodation are living independently with parents, they are then means tested on their parent's salary even though they have no choice but to live in their parents' home.

Higher Education

Motion: Carried

Motion 55

That this Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek to hold schools that ask or demand "voluntary contributions" to publish the amount of money raised and account for how it is spent. The current cost of living crisis is impacting everyone. The cost of sending children to school is enormous. These co-called "voluntary contributions" are an added stress to families. Especially when it's more than one child in the family attending the school, where the cost is usually per student. There is a lot of pressure on families to pay and no pressure or expectation at all on schools to account for monies raised and how it is spent. While we accept that schools can often be cash poor, this burden should not be passed on to families. The main point of this motion is to hold schools to account for the monies raised and how it is spent. Because it is deemed to be "voluntary" there is a notion that it is optional. Any parent knows that it is far from voluntary.

Munster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Health and safety

Motion 56

This Conference notes with some concern the inadequate health and safety provisions that exist within schools and the education sector overall, which were highlighted throughout the recent pandemic.

The lack of central guidance and clear policies on Health and Safety within the education sector has led to a situation where there are wholly inadequate responses to Health and Safety and significant variances in the standards adopted between schools.

Whilst some schools were hugely proactive in putting Health and Safety measures in place, undertaking risk assessments, supplying appropriate PPE and ensuring best practice was followed, there were also incidents where BOM's and/or principals penny pinched and refused to provide PPE or equipment to assist resolve ventilation issues, despite the fact that funding was made available by the Department.

The education sector is lagging behind many others when it comes to health and safety. Workers in the sector can often find themselves working in premises that are not up to standard, often cold and damp with inadequate facilities and ventilation, they also find themselves in roles that have not been risk assessed with little or no cognisance given to the risks that they may encounter whilst undertaking their daily duties, PPE is either not provided at all, or what is provided is wholly inadequate for the purpose it is supposed to serve.

We need to change the mindset; we need to get education employers to give health and safety the attention and commitment it deserves and compel them to ensure they provide all of us and our colleagues and students with a safe and healthy working environment.

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to seek that Government introduce a Health and Safety Charter across the education sector. The charter should outline the steps all employers should take to put in place strong safety mechanisms, ensuring that risks within our workplaces, roles, and responsibilities are mitigated to the greatest extent possible, providing an appropriate level of health and safety for workers and students alike.

Education Divisional Executive Committee

Motion: Carried

Motion 57

The Government has enacted the Children First act of 2015 primarily centred on child protection/reporting procedures. From that Act various circulars including 0081/2017, 0072/2020 and Tusla's *Children First* guidance policy 2017 are based (this list is not exhaustive).

This Conference calls on the Education DEC to request the Department of Education issue instructional memo or circular to all school managements directing that school child protection policy and intimate care policy adapts the practice of '2 adults to 1 student' in all intimate care settings affording the highest attainable measure of protection for both student and staff as a risk minimising control measure.

South Dublin/South Leinster SNAs

Motion: Carried

Motions deemed to be Out of Order

Motion 58

That Leo Varadkar, in his current position of Taoiseach, be held accountable and stands over his reply, as Tánaiste to questions from Deputy Séan Canney in the Dáil, on the 8th October 2020 wherein he stated that it is the Government's objective to regularise school secretaries employment, terms and conditions and pension rights.

School Secretaries

Motion: Out of Order

Motion 59

All time spent working as a school secretary should be counted for increment payments. This has not been the case and secretaries are prevented from moving within their field in the education sector as moving from a grant paid position to Department appointed position can result in an increment drop in pay. Again School secretaries are left out of the education sector re pay.

School Secretaries

Motion: Out of Order

Motion 60

The Higher Education branch calls on Conference to take into consideration the goals and aims of Forsa's and the Division's Strategic Plan. One of its priorities is to recruit new members with a goal to increasing overall membership to 100,000. For the Higher Education branch to do this effectively we need a branch organiser because the members of the branch executive have very busy full-time day jobs and are giving what spare time they have to the efficient running of the branch.

Higher Education

Motion: Out of Order

Motions advisory to the National Executive Committee

Motion 61

Conference asks you our members and Fórsa to lobby our Government to instate a Minister For Women in Ireland. From the inception of our free state 100 years ago, women have not been treated equally and have been overlooked. We are the backbone and foundation of our state and family's overall wellbeing. Ensuring access to dedicated women's health care from puberty to menopause and beyond will lead to an improved health for women, children and families. Health of women will no doubt enrich the families, communities and economy of Ireland.

School Secretaries

Motion 62

Conference asks Fórsa to seek a review of the foreign travel circular to reflect the increased costs in accommodation and travel for International Officers and staff.

Higher Education

Motion 63

Fórsa is affiliated to the BDS Campaign but should do more to inform members on this issue, send out information listing products and companies that should be boycotted and should also ensure that all union investments including pension funds do not hold any stock in Israeli companies or equities.

Connacht/Ulster SNA

Motion 64

We seek that Fórsa trade union engage on an information campaign to raise awareness about the BDS campaign. This should include all resources at the union's disposal and should seek to educate members of the importance of this movement. Fórsa should also ensure that none of members money is used to support the Israelis continuing occupation. Including pensions funds, investments. Fórsa should seek out every opportunity to highlight the plight of the people of Palestine.

Connacht/Ulster SNA



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