

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

The Scottish Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance on reducing the risks in schools was again updated with effect from 28 February, with key changes to the rules around the use of face masks/coverings and large gatherings in schools. The NASUWT formally expressed concerns around the evidence-base provided for these decisions.

The NASUWT was consulted over further proposed changes to the guidance, now due to take effect from 18 April, and submitted an extensive written commentary on this. While the NASUWT is pleased that the latest changes have been delayed from their originally planned date of 21 March and we welcome the continuation of some key mitigations such as CO₂ monitoring and effective ventilation, there is concern about the ending of asymptomatic testing and the devolving of more autonomy on decision-making to individual local authorities and schools.

The NASUWT has secured a selection of public health specialists and policy officials who will attend a webinar for NASUWT members on Tuesday 29 March (5.00pm-6.00pm). The panel will provide an overview of the evidence behind these proposed changes and engage in an open Question & Answer session with members. Please sign up for this event by e-mailing the Scotland Centre at Scotland@mail.nasuwt.org.uk.

PAY

A further pay offer was received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) on 25 February. This is described by them as 'a best and final offer' but only adds 0.22% to the previous offer. The details are as follows:

- a 1.22% increase at all SNCT pay points effective from 1/4/21;
- a further 1% increase at all SNCT pay points effective from 1/1/22;
- an £800 cap for those earning £80K and above; and
- a one-off non-recurring payment of £100 to each SNCT member of staff (pro-rated for part-time) for all SNCT members in post on 31/3/22 and based on working hours at that time.

This offer was considered by the NASUWT Salaries Committee on 10 March and unanimously rejected. This decision will be reported to the next meeting of the SNCT Teachers' Panel.

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) published study support on 7 March, aimed at pupils in all subjects. The member response to this was mixed, with some subject teachers (e.g. Modern Languages, English) welcoming what they perceived to be helpful, but many more expressing dissatisfaction, especially those where only a generic 'Study Guide' was produced.

The NASUWT met with the SQA on 17 March and shared these concerns. If you did not forward concerns to the Union in advance of this meeting but still have a question, the SQA is still happy to receive contact

from teachers requiring clarification on the study guides direct. The SQA responded that it will look to use other tools at its disposal later in the National Qualifications (NQ) process to be as fair as possible to pupils: moving grade boundaries and allowing exceptional circumstances reviews for examination absence and appeals for perceived underperformance. Whilst welcoming this, the NASUWT did urge caution around the possible workload implications of evidence-gathering for exceptional circumstances/appeals processes.

The SQA guidance on Estimates at the following link indicates the types of evidence and weighting given to these, emphasising that it is the quality of evidence, not the quantity, that is important. Given that such evidence will be crucial in any exceptional circumstances/appeals process, members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with this: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/nq-2022-estimates-guidance.pdf.

CAMPAIGNS

NASUWT Scotland is continuing our '*A Better Deal for Scotland's Teachers*' campaign. The latest COSLA offer has emphasised the importance of pay in Scotland, but work is underway to expand the campaign into workload and wellbeing. Please follow the NASUWT on www.twitter.com/NASUWT_Scotland and www.facebook.com/NASUWTScotland to stay up to date with the campaign.

The Step Up Sisters campaign was launched on International Women's Day with the aim of encouraging more women to become active within the NASUWT. If you would like to explore becoming more active, please see the following weblink: www.nasuwt.org.uk/StepUpSisters or contact Scotland@mail.nasuwt.org.uk.

RESOURCES

The NASUWT has launched a number of Wellbeing Tools for Teachers: from easy-to-use toolkits and checklists to in-depth advice and support. We have produced resources on issues such as stress, workload, mental health, abusive behaviour and more.

For Endometriosis Action Month, the NASUWT has published advice for members: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/equalities/under-represented-groups/women/managing-endometriosis-adenomyosis-fibroids-work.html>.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

29 March	Ask the Public Health Specialists – webinar, 5.00pm-6.00pm
15 – 18 April	NASUWT Annual Conference (Birmingham)
25 – 27 April	STUC Congress (Aberdeen)
21 May	NASUWT Scotland Conference
21 – 22 May	STUC LGBT Conference



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