

Fair Funding Consultation - Responses

Question 1

- (a) What are the **advantages** of the current system of funding schools?

Local Authority Finance Departments ensure all delegated monies are appropriately managed and accounted for.

Finance expertise provided to all Head Teachers from Local Authority.

Devolved School Management (DSM) budget allocation in Argyll and Bute allows 90% of Education funding to be devolved to schools.

New reviewed DSM guidance in Argyll and Bute allows greater flexibility for Head Teachers.

Funding delivered through GAE currently supports rural schools.

Local authority purchasing and procurement procedures ensure best value for the spend against resources.

- (b) What are the **disadvantages** of the current system of funding schools?

Current formulas for distribution of funding to schools are not fully equitable at Local and National level.

There is a variation of DSM percentage available to schools across Scotland.

There is variation within the detail of the guidance issued by each local authority.

Question 2

- (a) What are the benefits to Head Teachers of the current Devolved School Management schemes?

Current DSM allows head teachers flexibility to transfer monies between accounts to ensure meeting the needs of the school.

The current system ensures schools can consult on spending with staff and wider community.

The guidance in place in Argyll and Bute allows head teachers to meet the individual needs of each school.

- (b) What are the barriers that head teachers currently face in exercising their responsibilities under Devolved School Management? How could these barriers be removed?

Budget carry forwards are not guaranteed and this restricts future multi annual spending plans which may impact on curriculum delivery.

Absence cover, e.g. maternity and long term is an uncontrollable factor within DSM.

Question 3

How can funding for schools be best targeted to support excellence and equity for all?

Free School Meals entitlements, SIMD profiles and rurality are really important and should be taken into account when funding is being allocated.

Rural schools needs are currently reflected in the share of funding received for islands and rural areas through the needs-based formulas within the local government settlement. This needs to be considered as 34% of Scottish Schools are classified rural schools.

Question 4

- (a) What elements of school spending should Head Teachers be responsible for managing and why?

All non-property and transport related expenditure, however the current model of DSM supports this already.

All HR legal requirements are currently supported within Local Authorities and ensure that there is no issues with employment rights this may become a financial issue if schools were responsible for employing their own staff. Staff are currently employed by the Local Authority.

- (b) What elements of school spending should Head Teachers **not** be responsible for managing and why?

Severe and complex ASN that demands particular expertise/resourcing.

Property, transport, HR function related to legal aspects to ensure best value. Educational Psychological Services ensures that there is equity and expertise is available for all especially in a rural area where there are many small schools. Early Year's Service ensures that there is equity and expertise is available for all especially in a rural area where there are many small schools.

Major Capital expenditure – to ensure best value.

- (c) What elements of school spending are not suitable for inclusion in a standardised, Scotland-wide approach and why?

Major capital expenditure and issues related to National agreements, e.g. class sizes, working week, staffing.

Consideration needs to be given to equity for rural schools in ensuring the schools are supported to deliver in areas where the school population is low.

Question 5

- (a) What would be the **advantages** of an approach where the current system of funding schools is largely retained, but with a greater proportion of funding allocated directly to:

1. Schools;

Already in place with DSM.

Schools can meet their own improvement agenda however this may be more difficult for smaller schools where a pupil related formula would not sustain the rural school.

2. Clusters; or

More focused improvement opportunities, financial advantage of schools engage in cluster development. This however could be achieved through extending the terms of existing shared headship arrangements.

There are advantages to shared funding and resource opportunities which provide best value.

3. Regional Improvement Collaboratives?

There are concerns around the regional collaborative sitting outside the Local Authorities which traditionally have provided support and collaboration in regard to all areas of work including finances.

New collaboratives would require local leadership drawn from the ranks of Local Authorities and new funding would need to be provided to support this work.

High level of knowledge and skills at regional collaborative level would provide a more uniform approach in line with National policy/initiatives which may provide better value.

- (b) What would be the **disadvantages** of an approach where the current system of funding schools is largely retained, but with a greater proportion of funding allocated directly to:

1. Schools;

A main concern would be the Head teacher workload/pressure, and accountability. This is a concern regarding the desirability of a Head Teacher post in a rural authority where the majority of Head Teachers are teaching Head Teachers with a considerable class teaching commitment. This could cause even greater issues in attracting Head Teachers within rural areas.

Head teacher capacity for this additional work load is variable across Scotland

2. Clusters; or

For a rural authority there is a great variation of schools and the ability to share resources on an equal basis becomes more difficult. The geographical spread within a rural area of clusters makes working more complex and sharing of resources more difficult.

3. Regional Improvement Collaboratives?

This depends on how regional collaboratives are structured and to the purpose of the funding that is available to the collaborative. Very little information is currently available to allow this question to be fully answered.

Question 6

The Scottish Government's education governance reforms will empower Head Teachers to make more decisions about resources at their school. What support will Head Teachers require to enable them to fulfil these responsibilities effectively?

Ongoing support - examples of good practice shared and clear guidance given.

Offer Head Teacher peer support which involves regular engagements with regional improvement collaboratives.

Support with procurement and employment law advice and guidance would be essential.

Consideration needs to be given to support structures which include finance experts.

Question 7

What factors should be taken into account in devising accountability and reporting measures to support greater responsibility for funding decisions at school level?

Teaching Head Teacher's in rural areas will have considerable pressures and require support mechanism.

Head Teachers will require to have posts job sized.

Quality clerical/financial support will need to be increased.

Question 8

Do you have any other comments about fair funding for schools?

Whilst improvements could be made to the formula structure to improve equity there is currently a system through DSM which provides head teachers with relevant budget control within a structure which provides accountability.

To be able to comment on regional collaborations and budget implications there requires to be much more detail on the structure of regional collaboration and the remit.

There requires to be more budget made available to deliver equity and excellence for all within education. Changes cannot be made by simply redistributing resources within the current system.

True flexibility is needed by head teachers to determine how best to use resources. This includes removing the teaching numbers commitment to allow them to determine how best to meet the learning needs of their pupils – this may for example include commissioning support from the FE or HE sectors rather than on traditional teaching posts.