

## **Briefing Paper for the Finance Committee on Clause 11 of the Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill**

1. The Finance Committee has requested briefing from Department of Education (DE) officials in relation to Clause 11 of the Financial Provisions Bill and the proposed amendment to encourage recruitment to Initial Teacher Education in teacher shortage subjects. The purpose of this paper is to provide the Finance Committee with an update on this issue in advance of officials attending an oral briefing session with the Committee.

### ***Background***

2. Article 66(2)(a) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 gives the Department the power to pay grants at such rate or amount and subject to such conditions as it may determine in respect of expenditure incurred or to be incurred by any persons in connection with the initial or further training of teachers.
3. Whilst this provides the necessary legal cover for the Department to establish bursary programmes, a bespoke power with express provisions for bursaries covering tuition fees and living costs, as proposed through the Financial Provisions Bill, would further strengthen the Department's position.
4. The particular areas under consideration for inclusion within Clause 11 of the Financial Provisions Bill are bursaries for the Postgraduate in Educational Psychology, Initial Teacher Education and School Leaders.

### ***Postgraduate course in Educational Psychology***

5. Since 2006 all new Educational Psychologists (EPs) are required to have completed a doctorate-level qualification specified by the British Psychological Society. There is a very limited supply of individuals within the labour market with this level of qualification and previous attempts by the Education Authority (EA) to recruit EPs directly have proved unsuccessful.
6. Therefore, in order to ensure there is a sufficient pool of suitably qualified EPs to enable the EA to meet its statutory duties in relation to special educational needs, DE has funded the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology (DECAP) course at Queens University Belfast since 2006.
7. The DECAP course is the only professional training course in educational psychology within Northern Ireland and it provides the relevant qualification to

enable registration as a practitioner. It is a three-year bespoke course and the Department of Education provides financial support for both the provision of the course and the students undertaking it.

8. There are currently 36 students on the DECAP course, with 14 final-year students due to qualify and commence employment with the EA later this year. DE funds the running of the DECAP course, including tuition fees, bursary payments, travel and programme expenses. The total annual cost of running the DECAP course is £2.4m.
9. The course is specifically designed and tailored towards providing qualified EPs that can work in the Northern Ireland education system. The course director and course tutors are seconded educational psychologists from the EA and students have supervised placements within the EA as part of their learning. Graduates from the course are obliged to take up employment in the EA for at least three years after they qualify.
10. Students who choose not to take up employment in the EA, or leave during the three-year initial employment period, are obliged to repay the bursary that they received during the course. Since 2012, the EA has employed all of the DECAP students that have qualified from the course. Only three left outside of their three-year contract and these individuals all repaid their funding.

### ***Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme***

11. The recently established Initial Teacher Education Bursary Scheme aims to tackle teacher shortages in critical post-primary subjects, including Maths, Technology & Design, Chemistry, Physics, ICT and the post primary Irish-Medium Enhancement Programme (through which students undertake a Postgraduate Certificate in Education in a post primary subject at either Queen's University, Belfast or Ulster University and combine it with Irish language study at St Mary's University College).
12. This is a four-year pilot programme, commencing in September 2026 which offers PGCE students a combined Living Cost and Tuition Fee bursary of up to £17k per annum per place to include £1k per month living costs and the cost of the tuition fee and a Tuition Fee only bursary for Bachelor of Education students for each of their four years of study.
13. In return for these bursaries, recipients are required to teach in a grant-aided school in Northern Ireland for a minimum of two years following graduation.

### ***Bursaries for School Leaders***

14. In considering the inclusion of the Initial Teacher Education Bursary Scheme, colleagues from the Office of the Legislative Counsel also flagged the opportunity to futureproof the proposals.
15. The Department of Education, through its [TransformED Strategy](#) is reviewing and enhancing the professional learning offer for teachers and leaders. Postgraduate study continues to be a popular choice for school leaders participating on a self-funded basis, with leadership and special educational needs being the predominant choices.
16. Bursaries for school leaders to undertake postgraduate study in leadership have been identified as an option for further consideration by the Department of Education and this has therefore been suggested as an additional element for inclusion in this Financial Provisions Bill.

### ***Current DE Clause in the Financial Provisions Bill***

17. Clause 11 reads as follows:

(1) The Department of Education, or the Education Authority with the permission of the Department of Education, may –

- (a) give a grant to governing body of a higher educational institution in Northern Ireland so as to enable it to meet costs arising in connection with the provision by it of a course leading to a post-graduate qualification in educational psychology (or a similar subject).
- (b) provide, or give a grant to a governing body of a higher education institution in Northern Ireland so as to enable it to provide, financial support to students on such a course.

(2) Grants or financial support may be provided subject to conditions (which may include conditions about repayment with or without interest or other return).

(3) “Governing body” and “higher education institution in Northern Ireland” have the same meanings as in Article 30 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

18. This makes provision for bursaries similar to those for Initial Teacher Education and School Leaders, with the express power for the bursary to be provided

directly by the Department or the Education Authority, or indirectly via a grant to the Higher Education Institution (HEI), with associated conditions.

19. The proposed amendment to Clause 11 is therefore to include bursaries for initial teacher education and school leaders, along the same lines as that covered for the Postgraduate in Education Psychology.