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Institute of Scotland

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## SCOTTISH BORDERS EIS ADVICE ON RESPONDING TO TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S SERVICES SEPTEMBER 2008

The Executive Committee of the Borders Branch of the EIS have been gathering the views of colleagues from across the Region. Our members have attended the meetings that have been held so far in the consultation process of SBC. We have invited comments and questions from all areas that will be affected by the sweeping changes proposed by the Project Board of TCS. There is a lot of information presented on the SBC website and it is not all easily accessible. What we feel is lacking is evidence that the proposals will deliver the claimed improvements in Children's Services along with the savings that are required in the budget. In this and other leaflets we try to spell out the consequences of the changes for classroom practitioners and the young people in their classrooms. The following points have been made to us by our members and by parents at the consultation meetings. You can make your own judgements from your own professional experience as to their validity.

### Shared Headships

The main rationale for this change in our Primary schools is that the role of a teaching headteacher is one that is increasingly unsustainable. The increase in the number of shared headships will not save any money and, in fact, will probably cost more.

It is the stated policy of the EIS nationally to oppose shared headships – our view is that every school in every community deserves its own headteacher.

- Many headteachers still want to teach and while it could be argued that they should not be class-committed it is still desirable that they spend a part of the week teaching in their school.
- There are many ways of supporting teaching heads – for example by removing unnecessary administrative tasks so that they can concentrate on teaching and learning. Increasing administrative staff would be cheaper and more efficient.
- In order to reduce the number of Primary headteachers we have at present, SBC are encouraging early retirement. This will result in the loss of many good practitioners from the service at a time when they still have a lot to offer and when A Curriculum for Excellence is being introduced.
- Where two schools share a headteacher s/he will not be in either school on at least one day a week because of meetings – the rest of the week will be divided – how? Teachers and parents are asking who is in charge when the HT is regularly absent.
- Where three schools share a HT, s/he will probably be in each school once a week.
- The HT who manages more than one school has to run 2 or 3 sets of parents' evenings, Parent Council meetings and attend double or triple the PTA events – this will put an intolerable load on HTs.

- It is already difficult at times for parents or teachers to speak to their headteachers – they are often out of school at meetings – this proposal will make it worse in most of our Primary schools.

Finally, despite many requests for evidence that this massive shift to the use of joint headships will benefit teaching and learning we have yet to see that evidence. Officials of SBC insist that the pilot schemes have been ‘highly successful’ and if this is so there should be criteria and results available for us to study. The view of the largest teachers’ union in Scotland is that the system of shared headships will not improve the service to our youngest and most vulnerable pupils.

Please consider these points when responding to the Consultation on TCS. You do not have to use the official response form. We have been assured that all responses will be taken into account and will be available to elected members before they vote on these proposals in November.

Kay Miller, Secretary  
EIS  
Scottish Borders