



# Designated Manager Survey

## Summary findings

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# 1. Introduction

Children who are looked after or have experience of care, taken as a group, generally do less well at school as other children from similar backgrounds. They are much more likely to have fewer qualifications, lower attendance and higher rates of exclusion. Although some children who are looked after do well in education, the gap between this group and their peers is unacceptably large.

The Scottish Government, in 2008, recognised the importance of having a 'Designated Manager' in every educational establishment in Scotland as a way to provide children who are looked after with the additional support that they often need, and are legally entitled to<sup>1</sup>. They hoped this would ensure children have a positive experience of school and achieve the qualifications that they are capable of. A Designated Manager is a senior member of staff within an education establishment who leads on coordinating assessment, planning and support for children who are looked after, and their families. The Scottish Government, COSLA and the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care published [Core Tasks for Designated Managers](#) in 2008 as guidance for schools and particularly for Designated Managers, outlining 'core tasks'.

The Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) based at the University of Strathclyde, works hand-in-hand with practitioners, schools, the Scottish Government, and a range of other professionals and public and private sector bodies to provide guidance and capacity-building ensuring the right support is provided for children who are looked after. The CELCIS Education team chair the CELCIS Education Forum, a network of professionals involved with, and interested in, the educational experiences, outcomes and opportunities of children who are looked after. Through ongoing interaction with Forum members and colleagues in the wider sector, it has become evident that the role and function of the Designated Manager is not being fully or consistently implemented across Scotland. In order to understand more about the strengths and opportunities that exist within this role, CELCIS has undertaken a national survey of Designated Managers.

This summary report is the high-level analysis of information from the 487 respondents to the survey. It contains emerging themes that developed from these responses. The CELCIS Education Team will work with a range of stakeholders using this analysis as the basis of a strategy that will support Designated Managers to clarify and fulfil their role and make sure that every looked after child in Scottish schools and early years centres has access to appropriate and timely support.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2009/11/03140104/3>

## 2. About the survey

Between January and April 2017 CELCIS sent an email to all schools in Scotland, inviting Designated Managers to complete a short online survey to help deepen understanding around the prevalence of the role, how it is functioning, the use of the core tasks document, and what further support school staff need in the role. Emails were also sent to all CELCIS Education Forum members, Heads of Education in all 32 local authority areas and professional networks.

In total, 487 professionals responded to the survey. The vast majority of responses were from local authority schools (n=445), with a further five from independent special schools, including one secure care provider<sup>2</sup>. Most respondents were from mainstream primary (64%) or secondary (22%) schools, with a small number (7%) from local authority special schools and early years (3%) providers. The remaining schools were mostly all-through schools, or schools that provided both nursery and primary schooling.

In all, 26 local authorities responded to the survey. However, response rates across local authorities varied widely, from 76% of schools reporting in one local authority, to less than 1% in another. This has implications for the representativeness of the sample.

Although the sample is relatively small compared to the total number of Scottish schools, it is the only survey of Designated Managers in Scotland that we are aware of, and therefore provides a useful basis for future strategic planning.

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<sup>2</sup> A small number of respondents did not provide information on the type of school or provider.

### 3. Sample

#### Number of responses



26 out of 32  
local authorities and 5 independent special schools  
responded to the survey

#### Description of role

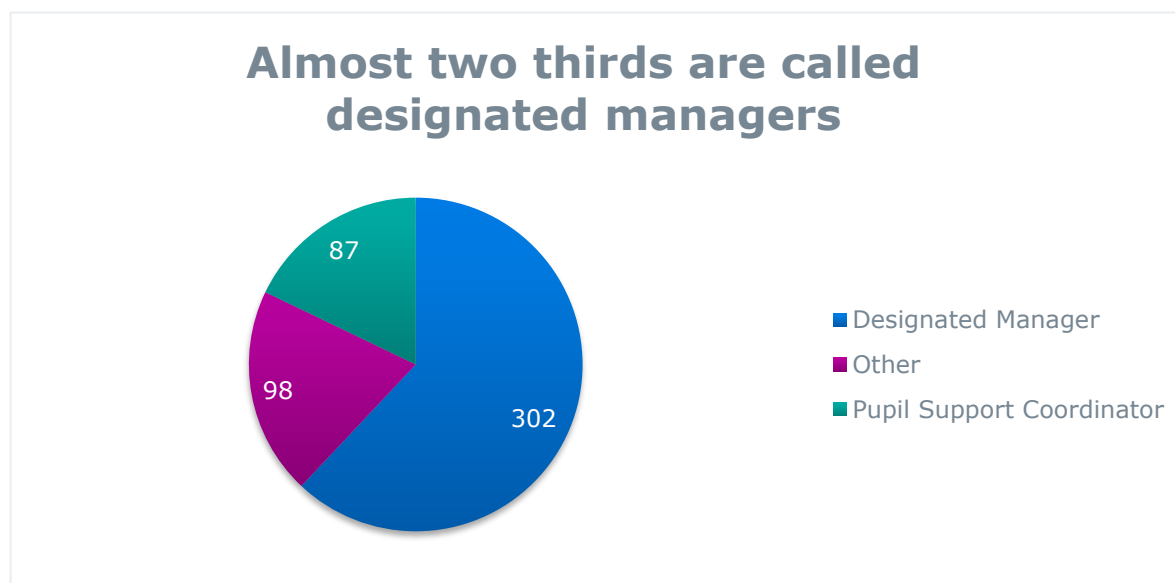
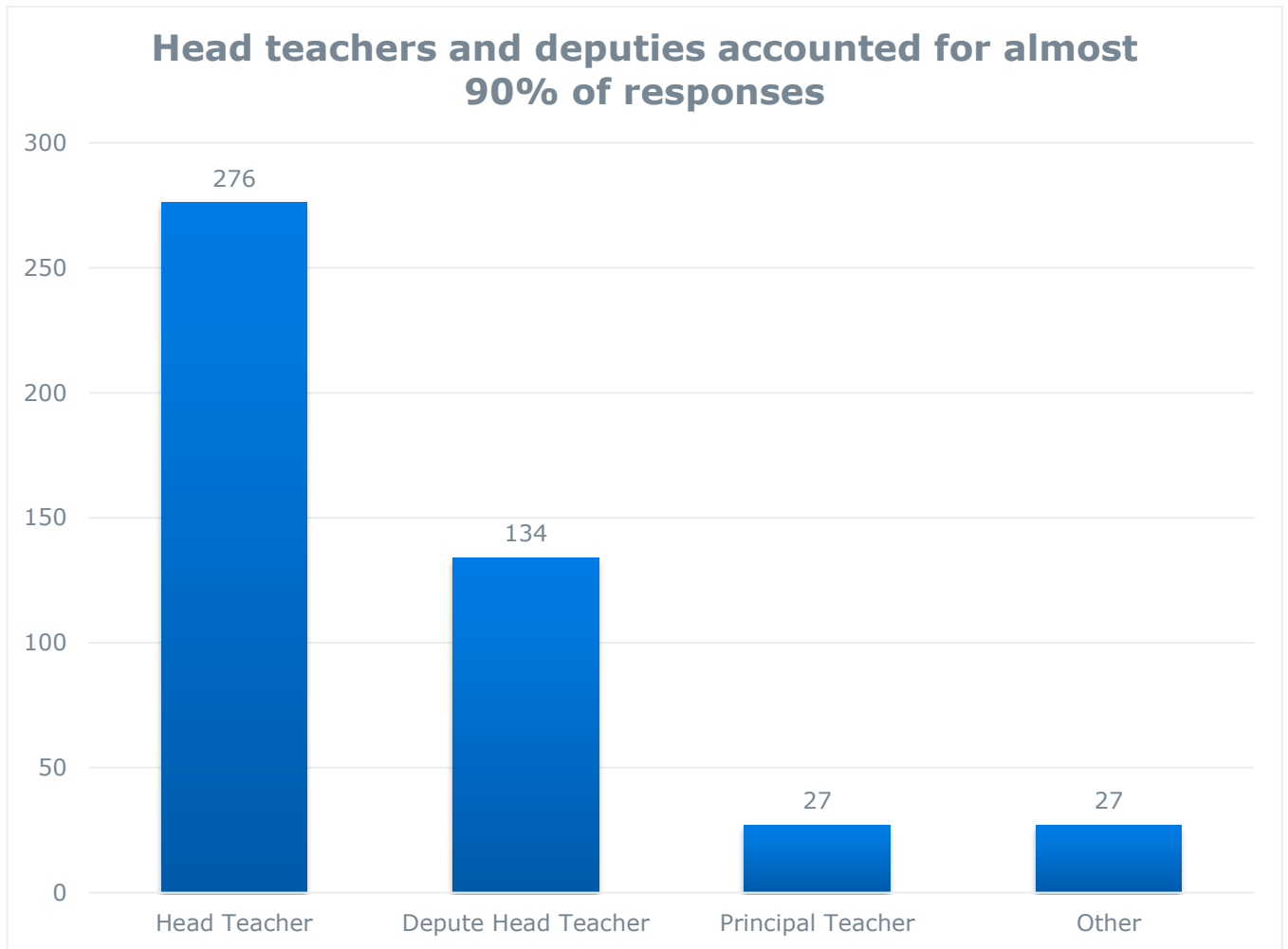


Figure 1: Title of role related to responsibility for looked after children

Sixty-two per cent of respondents (n=302) were the *designated manager* at their school, with a further 18% being *pupil support co-ordinators* (n=87). Twenty per cent (n=98) of respondents did not identify with either of these titles, preferring to use the title of their substantive role including, *head teacher* (n=37), *depute head teacher* (n=15), *looked after children champion / co-ordinator* (n=7), *principal teacher* (n=8) and *child protection officer / co-ordinator* (n=3).

## Substantive teaching post



**Figure 2: Substantive post held by Designated Managers**

Head teachers (60%) and depute head teachers (29%) accounted for nearly 90% of all responses, which suggests that the overall responsibility for supporting looked after children in schools lies with one of these senior members of staff. In most other cases (6%), the responsibility would appear to lie with a principal teacher within the school. The role of principal teacher varied between those based in primary schools (n=10), and those in secondary schools with a guidance / pastoral care (n=14), or learning support (n=3) remit. Other professionals with overall responsibility included managers (or heads) of early years centres, faculty heads, or pupil support managers.

## 4. Findings

### Sources of information about looked after children

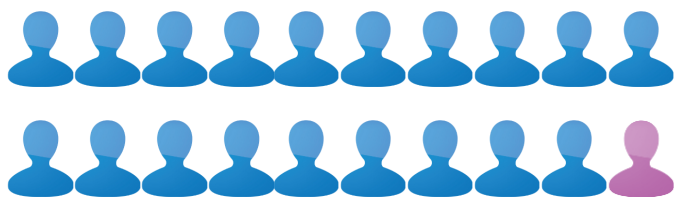
The majority of respondents get their information about looked after children from local authority memos or briefings

|                                       | %   | Count      |
|---------------------------------------|-----|------------|
| Local authority memos or briefings    | 92% | 418        |
| Social work colleagues                | 77% | 353        |
| School colleagues                     | 52% | 239        |
| Independent reading                   | 47% | 213        |
| School in-service                     | 45% | 207        |
| Education Scotland website            | 34% | 153        |
| Scottish Government website           | 30% | 138        |
| CELCIS website                        | 12% | 53         |
| Other                                 | 11% | 50         |
| General Teaching Council for Scotland | 7%  | 34         |
| <b>Total</b>                          |     | <b>456</b> |

Table 1: Information sources about looked after children

There are a range of sources available where practitioners can get information about how to support looked after children. We were interested in where people find the information to support them in their role and when they access this. The table above shows most respondents got information on looked after children from local authority memos or briefing papers (92%) or social work colleagues (77%). More than half of respondents got information from school colleagues and just under half (45%) got information from school in-service training. Other sources included Education Scotland, Scottish Government, CELCIS and General Teaching Council for Scotland websites. Almost half of respondents undertook some independent reading on the topic.

## Responsibility for child protection



**96% of respondents have responsibility for child protection within their school**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, almost all respondents (96%) also had responsibility for child protection within their school. Of those with child protection responsibilities, just over a third (36%) indicated they shared this responsibility with another colleague, in most instances with a senior member of staff, such as head teacher, depute head or principal teacher.

## Core Tasks for Designated Managers

Respondents were asked a set of questions about the Scottish Government's guidance for Designated Managers – officially known as *Core Tasks for Designated Managers in Educational Establishments in Scotland*.

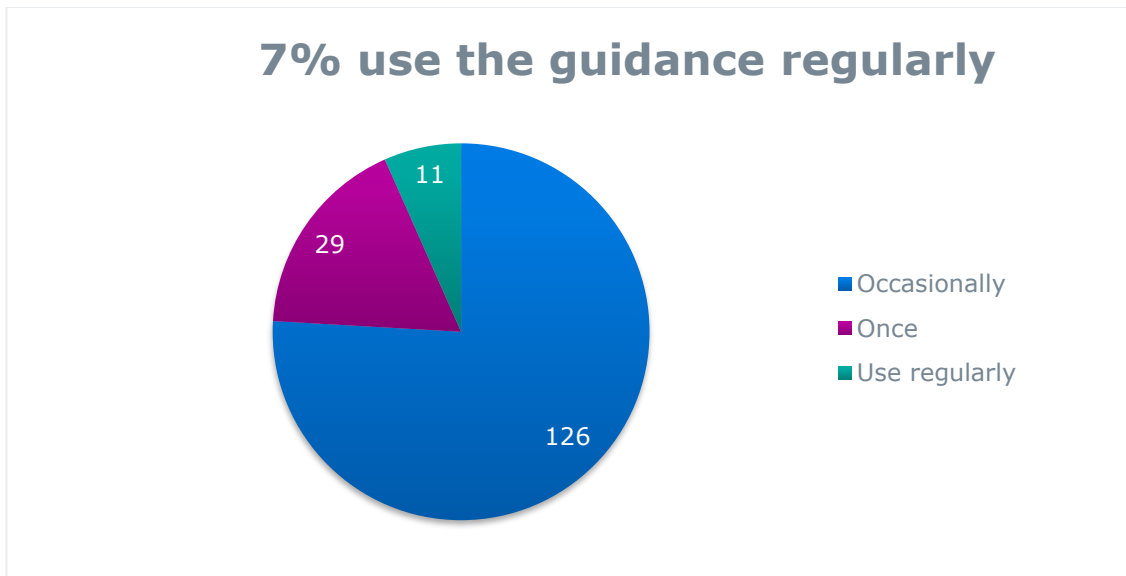


**59% of respondents were not aware of the guidance**

Awareness of the Core Tasks was low; only 41% of respondents were aware of Scottish Government guidance.

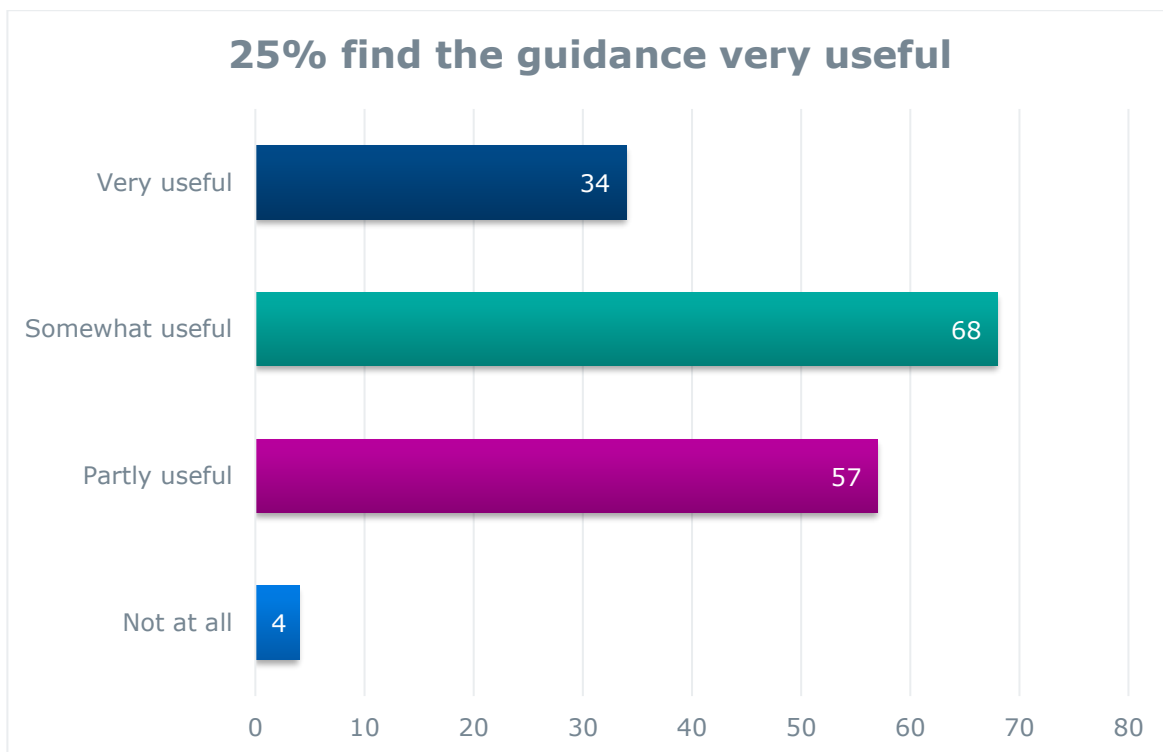


## Core Tasks for Designated Managers (cont'd)



**Figure 3: Regularity of use of Core Tasks for Designated Managers**

Use of the guidance was also relatively low. Only 7% (n= 11) of those familiar with the guidance referred to it on a regular basis, and almost a fifth (17%, n=29)) had only referred to it once. However, over three-quarters (76%, n=126) did refer to the guidance occasionally.

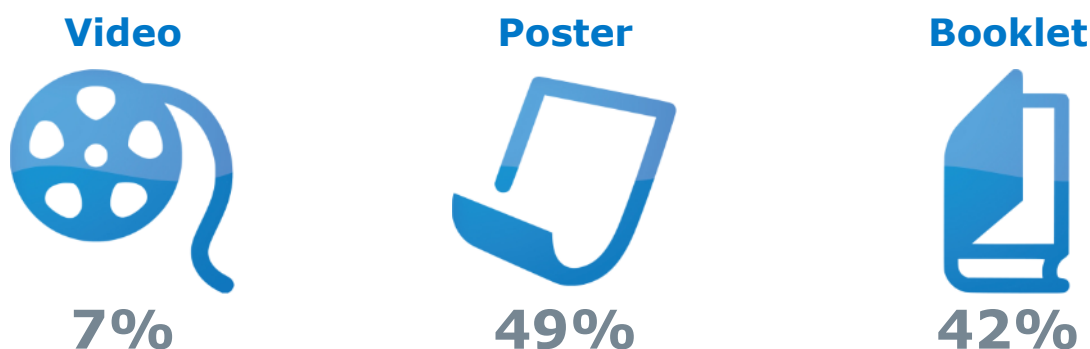


**Figure 4: Usefulness of Core Tasks for Designated Managers**

Twenty five per cent (n=34) of respondents found the guidance 'very useful', although most respondents found the contents at least partly or somewhat useful. This raises some questions about the accessibility and format of the document.

## Format of future guidance

We asked respondents a number of questions about the possibility of CELCIS providing updated guidance about supporting looked after children in schools.



Almost half of respondents (49%) indicated a preference for a poster (n=202), which they could refer to in the workplace, and 172 respondents (42%) suggested they would use a booklet. There was also some interest (7%) in guidance in video form (n=31), perhaps suggesting the need to provide updated guidance in a variety of formats. Respondents also indicated that they would prefer to receive updated guidance directly, with 134 respondents (44%) preferring a hard copy and 124 respondents (40%) preferring an electronic copy (40%).

In terms of content, responses varied considerably. Many respondents wanted to see flow charts and checklists outlining duties and responsibilities in the new guidelines, whereas others wanted them to cover legal and procedural arrangements. Some indicated a preference for examples of good practice, while others wanted links to additional resources and information on organisations and agencies who support looked after children. In short, some respondents were looking for guidance that was short, clear and easy to understand and use, whereas others indicated a preference for more detailed resources and information to support them in their work.

## Assessments and policies

### 92% of respondents' establishments assess looked after children for Additional Support Needs



A high proportion of respondents (92 %; n=361) indicated that looked after children were routinely considered for additional support for learning assessments; a similar figure was also returned for co-ordinated support plans (88%; n=343).

Seventy per cent (n=323) of respondents indicated their school had a handbook. Of those, only 37% (n=121) included information about looked after children. Only 45% (n=175) of respondents indicated that the needs of looked after children featured in the school improvement plan.

Almost half of schools (49%; n=188) had a policy about the exclusion of looked after children. Only 31% (n=117) of schools have a policy about engaging with parents and / or carers of looked after children. However, 75% (n=305) of schools included previously looked after children and adopted children in the support arrangements for looked after children.

## 5. Next steps

CELCIS will bring together a range of relevant practitioners, managers and policy makers to discuss and plan:

- How the role of the designated manager could be uniformly recognised across all schools
- How to improve the national understanding of the role of designated manager
- How to ensure practice is improved where necessary in line with the national guidance
- How to broaden understanding of how the role is functioning on a more nationally representative and routine basis
- How to ensure designated managers have access to effective guidance in an useful format
- What the specialist role should be called to ensure that every designated manager can identify with the title of the role

## **About CELCIS**

CELCIS, based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, is committed to making positive and lasting improvements in the wellbeing of Scotland's children living in and on the edges of care. Ours is a truly collaborative agenda; we work alongside partners, professionals and systems with responsibility for nurturing our vulnerable children and families. Together we work to understand the issues, build on existing strengths, introduce best possible practice and develop solutions. What's more, to achieve effective, enduring and positive change across the board, we take an innovative, evidence-based improvement approach across complex systems.

## **For more information**

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