

UNISON Further Education Branch SUBMISSION ,October 2021

1. The UK Government Policy of austerity in public finances, Regionalisation in Further Education in Scotland, and subsequent annual programmes of change (job cuts ,re-organisations, 'voluntary' severance) have hit Support Services hard for staff and students. .
2. The process of organisational is the sector is difficult for UNISON, UNITE and GMB due to a range of factors:
 - (a) The failure of the national employers to put in place and national organisational change policy & procedure, despite agreeing at the national bargaining table to do so to December 2018.
 - (b) Poor practice regarding local decision -making and engagement with trade unions which has led to disputes acrimony and the submission of a national paper on approaches to consultation to the machinery
 - (c) The ongoing threats of compulsory redundancies among support staff and the issuing of statutory HR1 forms . Academic year 2019/20 saw this threat running (for months) in a number of colleges (Fife (21 , Perth , Borders, Moray and others).
 - (d) Poor terms of Voluntary Severance in the sector which disadvantage the low paid and older workers with long service.
3. The postcode lottery of services to FE students have been exacerbated by the 'pock marking' of often small teams through the application of random VS schemes with little strategic vision, driven solely by cost cutting. Some college support services structures have been left like swiss cheese in terms of resourcing. 2 UNISON reports highlighting the increase of work related stress as a result of overwork and under resourcing in the sector have been submitted to the machinery with again no response from the employers
4. The chasing of overseas markets by some colleges delivers little financial return for the investment in the view of the trade unions.
5. The 2020/21 year has been calmer due to the injection of COVID related Barnett consequential, revenue savings (utilities), etc. ; yet the employers are still pleading poverty in terms of national bargaining outcomes. Workers have not been compensated at all in this sector for their efforts during COVID in using their homes to continue to deliver services to students (financial, welfare, course support) in unprecedented times. This despite largest annual

settlement for colleges according to S.G. Some Lecturers have received a £400 'bonus'.

6. Privatisation is still used as a lever for cost savings in this sector (catering, cleaning) to the detriment of quality in the unions' view and the loss of work experience opportunities for students (e.g. hospitality catering). This service has seen the biggest loss of jobs due to the pandemic. No learning or evaluation has been taken place and colleges still put faith in poor private companies with a terrible record on fair work and pay running services. UNISON believes this costs the sector.

7. UNISON would welcome the opportunity to engage with PAC at future sessions.

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