

2013

Privatisation and Shared Services in Higher Education – a UNISON Organising Guide



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1. Introduction

Changes in the higher education sector have been rapid since 2010. Until recently the key driver for government policy in the UK was to encourage the expansion of Higher Education to increase participation with an express aim of creating a more educated workforce. However a combination funding and policy directives are forcing universities to reassess the way they are managed and promoted to ensure maximum efficiency, sales and 'profits'. This is despite the current financial health of the sector (A UUK survey conducted in 2012 identified planned investment by universities totalling £8 billion) and high profile failures of shared services and privatisation initiatives in the public sector.

This will be further accelerated following the recent changes to VAT regulations which provide HEIs and further education colleges an exemption from VAT when setting up shared services arrangements. There is now a greater incentive to share services such as payroll and procurement, because a "new business" operation would no longer have to charge VAT back to the partner institution. David Willetts the Minister for Universities and Science has publicly stated that he perceives the higher education sector spends much too much on back-office functions and was surprised at the small number of shared services arrangements in the sector. Steve Butcher, head of procurement and shared services at the Higher Education Funding Council for England at a conference in December 2012 stated that students paying higher tuition fees "will want to see an efficient and effective sector, and the sector has to rise to that challenge."

2. Definitions and the Challenges Ahead

A shared service is perceived as a means of higher education institutions (HEI's) saving money, under the guise of increased efficiencies. In the past this has typically included back-office operations like processing records, payroll, finance and benefits. However, a wider range of services is now being identified as coming under the umbrella heading of a "shared service." In the summer of 2010 the government provided £20 million to encourage universities and colleges to adopt efficiencies and savings through shared services and other 'innovative practices'.

Privatisation or outsourcing of services is when a university awards a contract to an external company to provide a service that would otherwise be provided by staff employed directly by the university. The prime motivation is to drive down costs. This reduces the NI and pensions costs to the University. In addition, staff who are transferred to a new employer in the private sector who provide services to the university often see reductions to their pay and other conditions of service.

The number of private operators eligible to be given university status is on the increase. In June 2012, the government lowered the number of full-time students needed to be a university from 4,000 to 1,000. This has increased the number of institutions eligible to attain 'university status'. This change followed a recommendation by the rightwing think tank Policy Exchange in its 2010 report, Higher Education in the Age of Austerity which called for a US-style market in higher education. It argued that private operators should get the right to call themselves universities, award degrees, get easier access to taxpayer funding and even take over failing universities.

The rise of venture capitalists in the higher education sector. A further challenge is presented by a generation of companies that have emerged specialising in taking over the running of public services. In the context of tight public funding in Higher Education, university managements are being encouraged to seek private sector involvement and investment. For example, the key players in the new field of providing English language and foundation courses for overseas students are a group of education businesses and media conglomerates, often financed and owned by private equity funds and venture capitalists.

3. Emerging Trends in the Higher Education Sector

- **Learner and Researcher expectations for "IT services"**. These are increasing dramatically - especially when tuition fees rise to £9,000 per year. Students are behaving as "customers" and are demanding more extensive, professional and reliable services from their University.
- **University boundaries are eroding** - Increasingly, Universities are interacting with their communities (employers, schools, colleges, health-care, housing associations, local authorities, government agencies, citizens etc) and also with other HE Institutions. This is sometimes called the "Edgeless University". These interactions require more sophisticated management information systems, technologies and sophisticated Identity Management systems than Universities have previously had to implement.
- **A generation of companies that have emerged specialising in taking over the running of public services, employing staff and financing infrastructure.** Large education businesses are likely to have ambitions far beyond providing courses for overseas students. Organisations such as KAPLAN and INTO for example, also sell generic, commodified courses such as accountancy. They specialise in e-learning initiatives and have a demonstrable ambition to establish wholly private for-profit Universities. Establishing private centres for international students is likely to be a growth area in the future for these private companies. INTO University Partnerships currently have joint ventures with a number of UK universities. In January 2013, INTO completed the sale of a 20% stake in the company to Leeds Equity Partners, one of the private funds behind the for-profit education giant Education Management Corporation, which is being currently being sued for £11 billion for fraud by the US government.
- **Companies owned by venture capital or private equity funds. are inherently short-termist.** Their backers are likely to be interested in quick and high profits and may have their own agenda or vested interest. Consequently they are unlikely to be interested in higher education in the long-term or research outside of their own interests. Such ventures cannot provide universities with stable and sustainable finances in the medium and long-term.

4. Sector Wide Information and Developments

The Freedom of Information (FOI) requests sent out by UNISON and the NUS to all UK universities in March 2013 obtained information on all the contracts for cleaning and catering services in the UK. The data included the names of the companies involved in providing contracted services, the contract renewal date and whether the company pays the Living Wage. This information is available from education@unison.co.uk this presents branches with opportunities to organise workers in these companies. Branches can also continue to put pressure on Universities to bring back in house these contracted out services.

5. Privatisation delivers results for Company Shareholders - not our public services

Branches can contact Bargaining Support Group (bsg@unison.co.uk) for information on companies bidding for University services. This information provides details on financial accounts, industrial relations, media profile and share holders. The HEI sector and other public services continue to ignore the size and influence that the companies bidding for services have and the impact they can have on their reputation when linked to high profile failures. The actual nature of the perceived competition for contracts is often overestimated. Often it is the same companies bidding time and again for public services. **Some of the key companies involved are as follows:**

- **Balfour Beatty** - employs 50,000 operates in over 80 countries, working for customers principally in the UK, the US, South-East Asia, Australia and the Middle East. Turnover of approx £64bn
- **Compass** - Compass Group UK and Ireland. Turnover approx £1.95 billion Employs more than 50,000 with over 7,000 client sites
- **Capita** - The largest business process outsourcing company in the UK, with an overall market share of 27% in 2009. Clients in central government, local government and the private sector. It also has a property and infrastructure consultancy division which is the fourth largest multidisciplinary consultancy in the UK. Roughly half of its turnover comes from the private sector and half from the public sector. Employees 46,500. 2011 turnover approx £2,930m.
- **ISS** - Covers more than 50 countries worldwide. Number of employees 530,000. 2011 revenue approximately 10.4 billion Euros. ISS in its annual report of 2011 says the following *“At ISS, on the contrary, we are strong believers in self-delivery. By delivering our services through staff employed directly by ISS, we have much better control of the quality of the service delivered to our customers. ISS aspires to be a great employer by focusing on corporate responsibility and being a good corporate citizen as we believe that it is the best way to also keep our customers engaged”* It is surprising in that its central business is to provide privatised services commissioned by public authorities such as Universities and Colleges that it sees the benefit of directly employing its own staff!
- http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/ABEA-5ASMJV/2299187149x0x548349/95f93cb8-c498-4122-882d-f9ba08c2f654/Annual_Report_2011.pdf
- **Mitie** - Turnover approx £2 billion. Number of staff employed 63,569. Head office in Bristol, and more than 200 smaller offices throughout the UK and Ireland. MITIE operates mainly in the UK and Ireland with a growing presence in Europe.
- **Sodexo** - One of the largest food services and facilities management companies in the world. Approximately 380,000 employees, representing 130 nationalities. Present on 34,000 sites in 80 countries. For fiscal year 2010 (ending August 2009) revenues reached 15.3 billion euros, with a market capitalization of 6.5 billion euros. Revenues by region represented: 37% Continental Europe, 38% North America, 8% UK and Ireland, 17% Rest of World.

6. Why UNISON opposes privatisation and shared services

There are many reasons why we oppose shared services and successful campaigns can be run against them. For example, proposals at London Metropolitan University were resisted by the active involvement of the branch and ordinary members. Through mobilisation and imaginative ideas publicly they exposed the private companies bidding for shared services and through publicity stunts targeted university management.

- It's not a quick fix and can take up to three years.
- Consultants' claims about potential savings are exaggerated – In 2008 the civil service attempts to achieve savings £159 million by shared services had cost £1.4bn to set up.
- The Research Councils UK Shared Service Centre to pool back-office functions project was due to be completed by December 2009 at a cost of £79 million. But, in reality, it was not completed until March 2011, at a cost £130 million
- Procurement costs for agency and consultancy fees are significant.
- Savings are often dependent on:
 - cutting terms and conditions
 - relocating employment to areas where employment costs are lower
 - off shoringFor instance Capita already has 64 business centres onshore in the UK, nearshore in Ireland, the Channel Islands and Europe, and offshore in India. All of the above measures will have a negative impact on the local community and economy.
- Managing a shared service creates a significant drain on the resources of the leadership teams over a period of time as setting up a shared service can take up to three years.
- Set up costs can exceed initial projected budget.
- The limited control that partner organisations could exercise over the assets could be a disincentive for the HE sector to take advantage of the VAT exemption and set up its own "in-house" provision.
- There is little competition and a core group of private contractors dominate the market.
- The negative impact it could have on academic integrity and the reputation of the university. There is evidence to demonstrate how outsourcing can diminish an organisation's autonomy and ability to enact changes. This could lead to a more prominent role by private companies in the shaping of the future of our higher education system.
- Staff may lose their jobs as the new company seeks to avoid duplication of staff doing similar work.

- The private control of provision imports an unacceptable level of financial risk into institutions. A failed venture may saddle colleges or universities with liabilities and debt.
- Once a shared services model is established it can start bidding for work from neighbouring institutions and take over other services and departments.
- It can effect the quality of service delivery and ultimately the student experience.
- Projected income rarely achieved - A new £18,000-a-year private university College of Humanities failed to fill courses ahead of its opening week in September 2012

7. Questions Branches need to ask about shared services and privatisation

Branches need to be satisfied that there is a valid answer to all of the questions below which can ensure that there is vigorous testing in the process of good decision-making.

In the zeal for restructure positive impacts may be exaggerated and negative impacts minimised. In some cases there may be a valid case for shared services, for example, when it is genuinely unsustainable for a single institution to deliver a service by itself and the service would otherwise close.

1. What does the proposed shared service/privatisation restructure propose to address? Is it serious enough to warrant the scale of upheaval and distress the proposals will involve?
2. What is the evidence of the problem and is it robust? Does it come from actual people, including staff and students at the front line?
3. Who is making the proposals? Are you confident that they have a good grasp of the situation they are intervening to be assured that their proposals are the right thing?
4. Are the proposals shaped by serious conversations and consultation with people using and delivering the services i.e. staff and students?
5. What are the expected rewards of realising the proposals? Are the drivers solely financial or are there other motivating factors?
6. If outsourcing is involved have all the costs been considered? Is it possible that an in-house solution could be cheaper and has this been seriously explored?
7. Have the proposals undergone an Equality Impact Assessment?
8. What is the expected process for undergoing the restructure? How does it involve consultation with staff and students? What will be the timeframe for response to concerns and questions?

9. What is the legal burden on the institution in terms of ethical procurement? How will external organisations be subject to scrutiny and how will they be held to a high standard of service?
10. How will staff be protected and at-risk staff represented throughout the process?

8. Effective campaigning by UNISON Branches against shared services and outsourcing

Branches need to work with all the campus unions and the local NUS to campaign against privatisation – you will be stronger together. Branches will probably need to invest some time in identifying shared goals, since staff and students will be coming from slightly different places and have somewhat different concerns. If you are unsure of the best approach then branches should contact your regional organising staff for advice and support.

Work on clarifying your position on the privatisation/shared service option and why you oppose the changes. Talk to affected staff to ensure you understand the issues that they have. It is important to take time to scrutinise proposals, especially any expected cash savings, and offset these against cost of industrial action, student protest and any prospective decreases in student satisfaction. Branches can work with organisations such as APSE who can provide specialist support on this area, and your region can advise how to progress with this.

Explain clearly to decision-makers at your institution why you feel the need to campaign against their decision, your mandate for the campaign in terms of evidence that students don't want it, and what actions you want your institution to undertake as a result of your campaign. Communicate regularly with your members and the staff that will be affected. If they are not members, this is an opportunity to speak to potential members and encourage them to join. This will not happen overnight but will take time and sensitivity. Make contact with your local NUS. Students need to understand the issues if you are going to be effective in your campaign, especially if it involves direct action. Develop a clear and simple message that students can rally behind and don't assume all students are innately opposed to privatisation – some will need some explanation and persuasion.

Engage with the wider community on the issue. Communicate with local and student press, community groups and local councillors and your local MP. The more publicity your campaign can win the more likely you are to be successful. Remember your institution can also communicate in this way so make sure your side of the story is getting out there. If you need any support then regional organising staff can offer advice and guidance.

Map out your potential campaign timetable that will influence decision-makers including who is responsible for taking action. Flash mobs, stunts, viral videos, walkouts and demonstrations alongside lobbying, policy analysis and press activity can send a strong message.

Here is a not exhaustive list of easy and effective campaign actions you could take:

- get in touch with student groups and other unions at the university
- start a petition
- write a letter to your MP

- engage with your employer and governing body - you can find out who is on your governing body from your University website. Find out about their interests and background.
- get in touch with your local newspaper or radio station
- send out your release to local borough, district, county or regional media including newspapers, radio, television and internet news services
- write to the minister of higher education
- identify key alumni to make contact with - Universities are very sensitive to criticism and it is important to recognise the impact potential support from famous alumni can have. Alumni are increasingly important in the UK as they are a source of future income, can generate positive publicity and act as advocates for the university.
- Find out who is on the board of governors or council and find out information and contact details.
- identify potential allies in the House of Lords (contact UNISON for further information)
- identify potential allies within religious and community groups (contact UNISON for further information)
- organise a joint training session on campaigning
- organise a series of open meetings and invite external speakers (academics, campaign groups, politicians, alumni, famous journalists)
- get a supportive quote from other local trade unions/trades councils, local organisations or other interested parties such as MPs, peers, students, parents and alumni to include in a press release
- set up a Facebook group, blog and twitter account use the campaign hashtag to send twitter updates about the campaign

9. Obtain a copy of the options appraisal and find out key dates

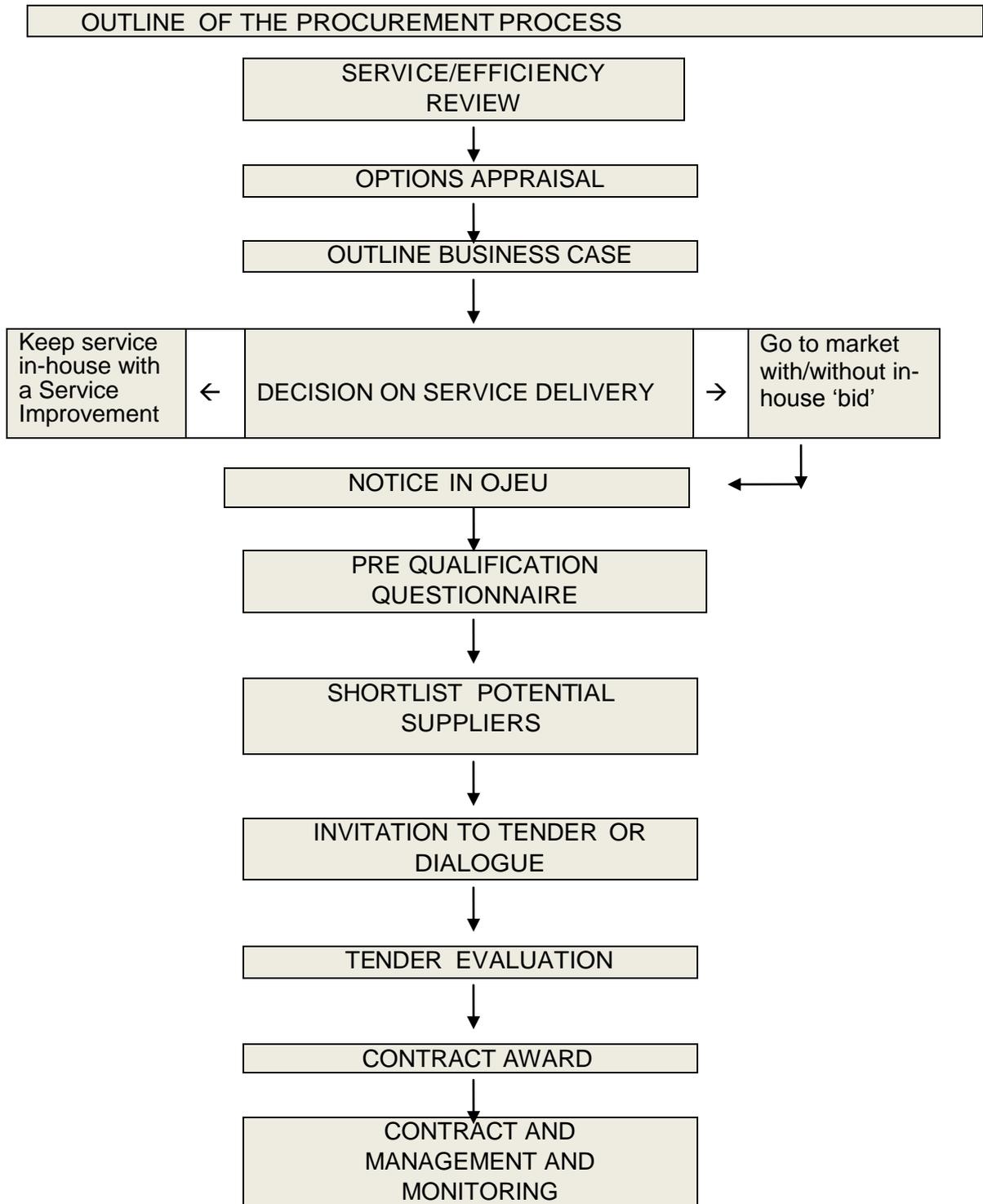
It is vital to find out the key dates in if they are building up a proposal to privatise or develop a shared service. Obtain a copy of the options appraisal; an options appraisal usually occurs when a HEI has been reviewing a service and wants to weigh up different service delivery options for the future. It should be a wide-ranging cost-benefit analysis capable of assessing risks and exploring ideas for improvement. At the point it is carried out, the HEI should already have consulted widely with staff, service users and other stakeholders. It should have considered the objectives it has for the service, including how it can improve economic, social and environmental wellbeing, and promote equality.

The outcome of an options appraisal is usually to narrow down the options and produce a recommendation for which one or ones should be pursued further. At this point the HEI could decide to move into an active procurement process where it will invite bids from external providers. Or it could decide to focus efforts on developing and improving an in-house service, possibly with other public sector partners or specialist suppliers.

An options appraisal is only as good as the quality of the information that goes into it, and the validity of the criteria that are used to make the decision. There is a danger it can be a very subjective process which can be constructed to support an outcome – privatisation – while dressing it up for as an objective assessment. This means that branches will want to influence and scrutinise the methodology for the options appraisal as far as possible.

Options appraisals offer a critical intervention point for branches seeking to fight off

privatisation. They usually help determine whether a HEI decides to trigger an active procurement process, or not. If branches can intervene successfully, the threat of privatisation is more easily averted at the options appraisal stage than it is when an active procurement process has been triggered. If necessary find this out from a Freedom of Information request. UNISON guidance is available on this – see the reference section in this guide. Draw up a timeline of key university dates to raise the profile of your campaign and to maximise the publicity – these could include open days, governors meetings, high profile events/seminars.



10. Produce an alternative proposal

There are many examples of how in-house services can be reformed with the involvement of trade unions. In January 2009, three district councils - South Holland, East Lindsey and Boston –were looking into merging their front-line support services (IT, HR, revenues and benefits, customer services, finance) to save money. The Local Authorities commissioned a 172 page report completed in 2009 from Tribal (part of the Capita Group) at a cost of £206,000. It claimed that privatising the services (in consultant speak this was called ‘procurement of shared services from a partner organisation’) could save up to £26m over ten years.

It also claimed that privatisation would deliver greater resilience and flexibility and although an in-house service improvement plan would save up to £19.3m, existing staff didn’t have the skills to implement it. Unfortunately all this was done without trade union consultation.

In response to this the three UNISON branches worked together to campaign against it and to develop a counter proposal. An active campaign involving service users took place and they also commissioned a report from independent specialists – the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) - that clearly demonstrated that the Tribal report was flawed. This was widely circulated to the general public and councillors and at a public meeting on the future proposals the Chief Executive opened his report by saying “thank you to the union for telling us how to do this properly”.

The privatisation proposals were dropped and a new proposal was submitted based on two of the three councils setting up a company jointly owned by East Lindsey and South Holland District Councils. Compass Point Business Solution (East Coast) was set up in 2010 and staff were TUPE transferred. This is not a perfect solution, but the situation was transformed. UNISON’s credibility is very high, and it has won the respect of the council officers and councillors. UNISON now has more influence over decisions about what happens to council services, membership has risen, and there are more reps and ULRs. UNISON reps say that key to the successful development of an in-house option was showing management that they were not opposed to change or efficiency improvements. (See: *The value of trade union involvement to service delivery – A UNISON report.*)

Don’t wait to be presented with proposals, but try to maintain a dialogue with your employer about their plans for service change, and encourage them to involve you from the start.

11. Hold a Consultative ballot during local negotiations

Before coming to the stage of seeking an official industrial action ballot, and whilst negotiations still continue, a branch could carry out a short, informal ballot of members to seek their views and possible support for a range of strategies, including forms of industrial action, should negotiations fail. Remember, an informal ballot requires no commitment by the member, and so you should expect members to show a high level of support for action if the outcome of the ballot is going to convince the employer that they need to improve their position in order to avoid the real thing. Remember also that no actual industrial action can be authorised or take place on the basis of a consultative ballot. An alternative to this would be to do a survey of staff affected by the proposals or a pledge.

Standard Letter to a potential UNISON member

Dear

Why you should join a union

UNISON, other campus unions and students at ————— university have launched the "Our University's Not for Sale" campaign, a response to the university's proposals to outsource all of the facilities services. The plans aim to use competitive tendering, to reduce some of its service costs in areas like customer contact, revenue and benefits, catering, cleaning, security, cleansing and vehicle and grounds maintenance.

We believe that it could cost the university more money, not less, and that the university is making assumptions about potential savings without clear evidence. The long list of privatisations and outsourcings that have taken place over years shows a corresponding long catalogue of failures and deficiencies. Despite these high-profile failings the drive to privatise continues.

How it will affect your terms and conditions

In the short term, if you transfer to a private company, most of your terms and conditions will be protected under TUPE - the Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment Regulations. But private companies have a poor record of protecting terms and conditions in the long run.

Campaigning to defend you

UNISON is campaigning to oppose the privatisation of university services and to defend our members' hard-won terms and conditions. We will be working with our members, activists, branches, students and campus unions to ensure that services remain in house and that the university looks at other alternative proposals. You can't afford not to get involved.

What does UNISON want?

We want the university to look at alternatives to outsourcing and to work with the campus unions to put together a service improvement plan.

Join UNISON

UNISON has lots of experience in fighting privatisation and protecting members who get transferred to the private sector. We are the leading union for support staff in higher education. If you are not yet a member of a union, join UNISON now to protect your job and the vital services you provide. We will be visiting your place of work but if you would like to contact a member of the UNISON branch team or meet with us to discuss any concerns about proposals then please contact xxxxxxx

JOIN online <http://www.unison.org.uk/for-members/joining-unison/> or ring UNISON Direct 0845 355 0845

ORGANISING EFFECTIVE BRANCH MEETINGS TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

There are many ways to effectively communicate with members on issues that affect them in the workplace. A mass workplace meeting is still one of the best ways to establish a proper dialogue with members to find out what they feel about an issue. Often the problem is ensuring that members attend a meeting.

How Often?

Every Branch should aim to organise one workplace meeting before the end of September to ensure that members can be alerted to the dispute, aware of the ballot process, and also of the need to take strike action over pay this year.

Open or Closed?

Open meetings on pay can be held at your workplace. Recruitment materials should always be available at meetings with non members actively encouraged to join the union. Members can take recruitment forms and materials back to their workplace to distribute to colleagues.

Open meetings are an opportunity to highlight the work of the union and should focus on:

1. What the employers have said about the proposals
2. What UNISON and other HE trade unions say about proposals
3. What UNISON and other unions are doing to challenge the proposals
4. What members can do to help i.e. check membership records, talk to colleagues in the workplace, sign petitions, use their vote and send back their ballot paper
5. The importance of more people joining UNISON!

Running your meeting:

- Keep the meeting focussed on the issue of the proposals
- – lengthy reports on other issues can be discussed at the regular branch committee meetings.
- Keep the issue of privatisation/shared services at the forefront and make this the focus: update your members, give them the union's view and tell them what you need them to do to help.
- Invite guest speakers, either from the national union, your Regional Head of Higher Education, Regional Organiser or other campus unions. Talk to your Regional Organiser who will be happy to help.
- Provide food and drink as this often helps with the turnout.
- Keep to the issue and also to your timings and make sure that the key union business about times and dates for any action is not left to the end when people are leaving.

Always include closing remarks about what members can do to help the union, whether that is becoming a workplace contact, steward, health and safety rep, recruiting a colleague or taking part in industrial action that shows solidarity and supports the campaign

Model letter to university leadership team

Dear

The trade unions are aware of the financial pressures on the university, and of the need to improve and develop services that support the student community and serve the ambitions of the institution overall. We are also aware that the procurement of services from external providers is increasingly seen as a route to achieving efficiency savings, and that universities are being encouraged to seek commercial partners as part of the move to a free market in education.

As the recognised unions for staff at _____, we are naturally supportive of efforts to improve services and our members are keen to contribute to those improvements and raise the quality of what is offered. However, research shows that the privatisation of services does not always help to achieve such objectives. In many other institutions there has been a dramatic deterioration in service levels, and a loss of strategic control with resulting over-spends. Frequently, services have been brought back in-house to restore the level of service and to ensure that services are responsive to changing demands.

You have laid out your stated plans to privatise _____ services, but you have not as yet provided any background information or financial data on which your proposals are based.

We request an urgent series of meetings with all the trade unions in order to fully explore the plans and to ensure that we have access to the information we require in order to participate in meaningful consultation. We have helpful suggestions and proposals to input to the process, and it is important that this dialogue takes place. We propose that the first joint meeting should be arranged for early next week.

We would appreciate an urgent response to the following information requests:

1. Details of recent reviews of existing services, and when these were carried out.
2. The annual costs of current in-house service provision, and the anticipated savings to be made through transfer of undertakings, and how those have been calculated.
3. The turnover and profit for the services.
4. Staff numbers in all affected areas, categorised by grade, by gender, by contract type, by service area, including numbers of part-time staff and overall FTE.
5. Aggregate details of pension provision by scheme of affected employees and the employer's cost of provision.
6. A complete list of current outsourced areas and the costs of provision, and numbers of contract staff filling the service roles or functions.
7. Have equality analyses been carried out, and if so, when can copies be made available to the trade unions?
8. Is there a completed business case for the decision, and when can we expect to receive a copy of this?
9. How has the university explored the alternatives that could provide the required level of service to satisfy increased student demand, including an in-house bid, shared services, new management team, or other approach which would retain staff as university employees?

10. Will the university undertake a campus wide consultation to explore alternatives to outsourcing, and how might this be carried out?
11. The trade unions seek a clear commitment that potential providers will meet, as a minimum, the Cabinet Office Statement of Practice re Staff Transfers in the Public Sector, the "Fair Deal", and wish to know how the university would provide evidence that a private partner would maintain an ethical approach to employment relations, and maintain existing pay, conditions and pension rights for those transferring, covering the duration of the contract and beyond?

An early response would be much appreciated and we would hope that a meeting can be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Model Letter to MP

Keep the letter brief, ideally to one of A4.

- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- Avoid jargon.
- Write in your own words – be sure to make your letter personal and explain how and why this issue relates to you, as a constituent. The impact of your letter will be blunted if it is identical to 50 others on his/her desk.
- Request that your letter is forwarded to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. That way the Minister and her civil servants are reminded of the issue as well as your MP. By convention, a letter forwarded by an MP to a Minister must receive a reply – and remember that the response from a Minister can be used for publicity.
- Keep a copy and ask for a reply.

Regular contact with your MP makes sense as part of a long-term communications plan. Keep him or her updated throughout the year on local adult learning developments, and make a point of sending newsletters and/or inviting them to events and awards ceremonies. Even if they don't attend, they'll remember that you invited them. Your MP can be contacted at:

The House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

[You can also find contact details for the your MP from this website link](#)

Finding out about your MP

Don't assume an MP automatically accepts their party's position. You can persuade them away from the party line, if they understand the impact a policy has on their constituents.

Find out as much as possible about your MP. Use the internet, phone the House of Commons Information desk on 020 7219 4272, or visit www.theyworkforyou.com or www.parliament.uk or <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/>

Model letter to MP

I am writing to express UNISON's concern at developments at xxxxx University which involve proposals to privatise/develop shared services. This will have an adverse impact on the local economy, the quality of the student experience and the reputation of xxxx university. The university plays a vital role in the local economy and should be the hub of good practice and economic growth. We would like to meet with you to discuss the adverse impact these proposals will have to your constituents and to the university.

We would also like you to write to the Minister for Universities and Science to raise our concerns.

Why we oppose the privatisation

- UNISON believes that outsourcing these services to the private sector could cost the university more money, not less;
- We are concerned that the plan will lead to a loss of control and autonomy by the university, for example if the contract is long, inflexible and expensive to amend;
- By fragmenting the workforce, we believe that there will be a negative impact on the quality of service, academic flexibility and the student experience;
- We believe this privatisation is a worrying step towards the further commercialisation of the university sector.

A full briefing on the concerns we have around the universities' proposals is enclosed with this letter.

What do we want?

We want the university to look at alternatives to outsourcing and to work with the campus unions to put together a service improvement plan for campus services.

What you can do to help

- Please write to the Vice Chancellor cc'ed to UNISON Branch Secretary
- Highlight this issue at any suitable time in the House of Commons / Lords, or directly with Ministers
- Come and meet the staff at the University and learn more about the proposals and our campaign.

I do hope you will be able to support our campaign.

Yours sincerely

Holding a meeting with your MP

All MPs, even Ministers, hold regular “surgeries” where they listen to constituents’ concerns – usually on a weekly basis. To find out when and where your local surgery takes place, check your local paper for details, or phone your local council or your MP in the House of Commons on 0207 219 3000.

- Arrange the meeting in advance – don’t just turn up.
- Make your MP aware in advance of what you would like to discuss.
- Tell your MP who will be coming – between two and four people in total is a good size. It will do your cause no good at all if the meeting is swamped by a dozen campaigners.
- Be professional – arrive early for your meeting, thank your MP for agreeing to see you and do not exceed the agreed time limit.
- You may only get a half-hour meeting, so make time count by preparing carefully and deciding which issues are the most relevant. Don’t worry if you don’t cover every point you hoped to make – write a thank-you note as a follow up.
- Your MP is unlikely to be an expert on all areas of Government policy, including adult learning, nor fully understand the consequences of policy. Be prepared to explain the issues and the background, but make it relevant to your constituency. Leave a piece of prepared information that your MP can use to help make your case.
- Be prepared to answer questions, not just ask them. After all, a successful dialogue is never one-sided.
- Offer solutions, don’t be wholly negative.
- Make your MP aware that you are willing to act as a local resource on higher education issues. This offer is likely to please and surprise your MP, as it will set you apart from other campaigners who may only want to “take” from their MP.
- Invite your MP to any campaign/rallies that are being held, and make sure you invite your local newspaper photographer along.
- End the meeting by recapping on the points you have both agreed to undertake.
 - Send a follow-up letter within a week to 10 days. It should be both short and cordial, re-iterating what was said in the meeting, and suggesting that you continue to meet periodically.
 - Remember you are trying to build a long-term relationship, so be positive, polite and friendly. Remember, too, that you are the expert on the campaign issues, not your MP, so don’t be overawed.

What should you ask your MP to do?

- Write to the Minister
- Ask a written or parliamentary question
- Initiate a short debate
- Speak in a Government or Opposition debate
- Opt in to the ballot for Private Members’ Bills and if he or she is successful, seek to promote a Bill on adult learning.
- Participate in local events such as:
 - attending an event such as a teach-in;
 - speaking at a meeting;
 - accepting a copy of your alternative prospectus;

- helping with publicity such as speaking to the local media and showing that they care about employment practices in their constituency.
- Suggest that your MP visits your organisation to pledge his/her support, see the impact of proposals and find out more about the campaign.

Model press release

————— University is Not for Sale

UNISON/NUS and students at ————— University have launched the "Our University's Not For Sale" campaign, a response to the university's proposals to outsource all of the facilities services. The plans aim to use competitive tendering, to reduce some of its service costs in areas like customer contact, revenue and benefits, catering, cleaning, security, cleansing and vehicle and grounds maintenance.

A student spokesperson believes that it could cost the university more money, not less, and that the university is making assumptions about potential savings without clear evidence.

"The only way that you can get cheaper services by farming them out is cheaper wages and poorer service conditions. "And your tax, instead of paying for services, is paying for a private companies profits."

Staff, students and the unions at ————— are shocked and disappointed at the university's sudden proposal to privatise its estates and catering services. It will affect the dedicated and loyal staff who have worked hard to support students, and improve services for the university are devastated at the news their jobs may be transferred to a commercial provider. This will involve loss of pension rights, and possible future changes to their working conditions, pay and job security.

Senior managers have simply accepted the groundless myth that private services are more efficient and cost-effective than public ones. They believe that external providers cannot only transform services but significantly cut costs. However, outsourcing can be very expensive, it can lower standards, and the pressure to return a profit means private sector management is less likely to value long-term investment. On the other hand, in-house services can be run efficiently, and studies show that people who work in the public sector have a greater commitment and emotional attachment to their work. Services such as security, health, safety and welfare, may be especially unsuitable for profit-oriented businesses to run.

How you can help

Please sign the petition at xxxx

Join the Facebook and twitter group to find out how you can support the campaign (name xxxx)

See the blog at xxx

Write and tweet/email the vice chancellor

Model letter to alumni

Dear

———— **University is not for sale – Please support our campaign**

As a former student at ———— University we are seeking your support in our joint campaign to prevent the outsourcing of the facilities services. I am sure you have fond memories of studying at the university and also recognise the vital role that the support staff played in this. To replace these with agency and casual workers is an issue of concern to the students not only for quality reasons but also security reasons.

We also have concerns about the impact this could have on academic integrity and image of the university. There is much evidence to demonstrate how outsourcing can diminish an organisations autonomy and ability to enact changes. We fear that this could lead to a more prominent role by private companies in the shaping of the future of our higher education system.

The proposals seek to use competitive tendering, to reduce service costs in customer contact, revenue and benefits, catering, cleaning, security, cleansing and vehicle and grounds maintenance. The Olympics G4S security debacle has further increased public opposition to privatisation. The long list of privatisations and outsourcings that have taken place over years shows a corresponding long catalogue of failures and deficiencies. Instead of paying tax for services these will now be channelled into paying for a private company profit margin. There are alternative options and we believe that the university has not given any attention to this.

How you can help

Please write to the vice chancellor (pro former letter attached)

- please send a letter/message of support to UNISON and NUS at the university
- please sign the petition at xxxxx
- tweet/email the vice chancellor

I do hope you will be able to support our campaign.

Yours sincerely

UNISON branch secretary

Model Letters

Indicative ballot in relation to the University xxx proposals to consult over its plans to outsource services:

UNISON, the recognised unions at the University of xxxx, have attempted to engage in discussions with management about the proposals to outsource various Estates, Catering and Conference functions. We are now consulting with union members regarding a potential dispute over the University's failure to properly consult in relation to the proposal to outsource these services.

Throughout this process, the campus unions have objected to management's failure to provide basic information necessary for us to fulfil our fundamental responsibilities in collective bargaining to protect our members.

- The university management have ignored recommendations contained in the independent APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) report that would have enabled it to conduct a proper review of its service and avoid these errors of process, as well as a 'gateway review' that would allow the university to pause and test its proposals against changed market conditions.
- The jobs, pay, pensions and terms and conditions of members of staff are at risk and the unions have serious concerns about the manner in which the university is conducting industrial relations with the campus unions over an issue of fundamental importance to the future and financial health of the university.

If we move to a dispute, we need to be able to show that we have the support of members, including for industrial action.

Please indicate below whether in principle you are prepared to take industrial action. This is NOT a formal ballot, but an indicative ballot which the unions will use to develop their strategy.

I would be prepared to take industrial action, up to and including strike action:

YES

NO

Organising a Public Meeting

It is easier than one might imagine to organise a public meeting to campaign against cuts in adult learning locally. With a little bit of advance planning you can organise a successful event that will raise awareness of the issues and motivate people to get involved.

The key ingredients to a successful public meeting are to:

- Find a central venue (ask a local adult education centre or college for a room)
- Give plenty of notice
- Recruit a good speaker
- Generate lots of publicity

A good way to start is to organise a small committee and allocate the tasks around the group – that way, no-one is overburdened. Tasks will include finding and booking a suitable venue, organising the on-the-night details such as refreshments, etc., finding and briefing two or three speakers, and organising the publicity, such as leaflets, and getting the press along. However, it's EVERYONE'S task to get people along to the meeting.

It's a good idea to make sure that other groups in your area, such as trade unions, student groups voluntary and community organisations, adult learning centres, colleges, etc. are aware of your plans. They can help drum up support and get people along, including speakers.

You shouldn't need to spend much money to organise the meeting, and it's always worth asking people to lend their facilities or help free of charge.

The format of the evening is up to you, but its atmosphere should be welcoming and the meeting run in a business-like manner. Ideally it shouldn't last more than 90 minutes, consisting, perhaps, of an introduction, two or three speakers, a Q and A session, and refreshments. Your speakers should make it clear to the audience what actions you want them to undertake to support the campaign.

Try to mix voices — students, lecturers, former students (try to get a well known alumni)

UNISON Support for Branches.

Training

UNISON has developed a training programme for activists and organising staff, on campaigning and organising around privatisation and shared services. The course is intended to provide practical advice to accompany UNISON's procurement toolkit. If you are interested in this two-day training course, please contact your Regional Education Officer or Jim Lewis (j.lewis@unison.co.uk), National Education Officer.

Specialist advice

If you are faced with proposals full of technical details and jargon, you could apply for funding for specialist help in analysing the proposals, and developing an alternative proposal to outsourcing, such as an in-house bid, or working together with the HEI on a service improvement plan. For further details on this please contact d.bertuchi@unison.co.uk.

Branch Negotiators Updates

UNISON Bargaining Information Services provide monthly updates for branches which provides links to factsheets, guidance, news and information to provide help in bargaining activities. If you're not receiving this bulletin direct and you'd like to sign up to our mailing list, you can do so by emailing bsq@unison.co.uk

Advice on Companies – contact bsq@unison.co.uk

General Political Fund

UNISON uses the General Political Fund (GPF) to pay for political campaigning at branch, regional and national level, including research and lobbying in Parliament to pursue UNISON's objectives and priorities. Any branch that has members who contribute to the GPF can apply for financial support for a local campaign or activity. Requests for GPF money to support campaigning must demonstrate how the proposed activity supports the union's objectives and must be submitted to the Regional Secretary. Further advice from your regional higher education lead.

Further information

If your branch is facing outsourcing or privatisation, get in touch with your Regional Officer. For guidance, information and model documents, the following links may be useful:

Organising guide to transfers of employment - information and advice for dealing with transfers **UNISON TUPE branch guidance**

Many useful UNISON resources can be found by searching the UNISON website (unison.org.uk).

UNISON members can also order stock items through our online catalogue <http://86.188.184.25/fmi/iwp/cgi?-db=Online%20Catalogue&-loadframes> quoting the relevant stock number (unison.org.uk/resources). Most items are free to UNISON members.

Effective Campaigning – A UNISON Guide (stock number 2916)
<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19308.pdf>

UNISON Branch Guide to Negotiating a Procurement Agreement (stock number 3207) www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/21274.pdf

UNISON Guidance on Making a Freedom of Information request (stock number 2781)

<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/18420.pdf>

Using Social Media in Campaigning

<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/20760.pdf>

Working with Local Communities to Fight Cuts and Privatisation – A practical guide (stock number 3006)

<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19910.pdf>

Branch guide to ethical procurement (stock number 3278)

Branch guide to options appraisals (stock number 3256)

Branch guide to securing in-house services:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/upload/sharepoint/On%20line%20Catalogue/21278.pdf> or order hard copy stock no. 3253

Branch guide to securing in-house services stock number 3253

The Case for In-house Services: A UNISON branch guide (stock number 2859)

<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/18714.pdf>

The Value of Trade Union Involvement to Service Delivery – A UNISON report (stock number 2917)

<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/19226.pdf>

Insourcing update: The value of returning local authority services in-house in an era of budget constraints (stock number 3016)

<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/20122.pdf>

The Living Wage campaign

alivingWage.co.uk

Keep in touch education@unison.co.uk

website <http://www.unison.org.uk/at-work/education-services/>

facebook <https://www.facebook.com/#!/UNISONinHigherEducation>

Twitter @UNISONinHE