

03 August 2021

**FURTHER EDUCATION NJNC SUPPORT STAFF:
PAY CLAIM 2021/22 (date of effect 1 September 2021)
Submitted by UNISON, UNITE, GMB**



A Terms of Claim

- 1 UNISON, UNITE, GMB seek £2000 consolidated flat rate payment added to all Support Staff Salary points with effect from 1 September 2021.
- 2 Additionally, we seek:
 - (a) Pursuance of negotiations on a strategy to achieve a **four-day week** for all Support Staff. This to include the pursuance of joint “trials” in agreed colleges during academic year 2021/2. No progress has been made on this matter which is outstanding from the 2020/2021 claim last year.

Many more nations, and employers in Scotland, are pursuing the notion of the full-time working week being over 4 days rather than 5. Glasgow based private company Itison is currently piloting a four-day week with its staff and First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon pledged ten million pounds worth of support to employers who were willing to pilot this. Success stories around this issue for employers and employees alike come from far and wide including Iceland and Northern Ireland, where a legal firm successfully reduced the working week to 30 hours (with no reduction in pay) and benefited from both an increase in productivity and an improvement in staff well-being.

We are also keen to explore and agree suitable pro-rata provisions for part-time staff. Some useful links to support this aspect of the claim are as follows:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/four-day-week-pilot-iceland-b1877171.html>

[Call for four day working week pilot in Northern Ireland - Belfast Live](#)

- (b) Payment of the **homeworking allowances** which formed part of the 2020/21 pay claim with effect from 1 April 2020 and remains outstanding. Over this period staff have offered and maintained their own homes as mini campuses of colleges and ensured that colleges have been able to maintain delivery of student services to our students to the highest standards possible. This provision has come at no small cost in terms of disruption to work life balance, family life, stress levels, isolation and financial costs. These financial costs have included increased utilities costs and for many the use of their own personal equipment. Tax relief for COVID homeworking from HMRC does not off-set the full extent of these costs and therefore, the pay offer should reflect an element of compensation for such additional costs.

- (c) Two additional support staff career development days per year for self-directed career development planning and research. Such days would be for staff to take and use outside the working environment to focus on career development/planning which may otherwise not be possible within the constraints and distractions of a busy working week. Staff may use this time to meet with career advisors, agencies and speak to educational bodies to research career development / change options and could be linked to the staff appraisal process. The same provision should apply in colleges who do not have annual appraisal processes. This would show real investment in the development of support staff and should be in line with the sectors ethos.
- (d) As we approach World Mental Health Day on the 10th of October, we request two flexible days per year well being days to support staff mental health and to reward for unpaid / overwork conditions (endemic amongst support staff in FE) particularly during the COVID pandemic and in view of the circa four million pounds of public funds recently awarded to the sector to support staff and student mental health. We believe such an award would offer a demonstrable commitment to mitigating the effects of the COVID crisis, in particular, on staff and would create a safe time and space for anyone suffering from stress/burn-out to take some much needed recovery time to recharge before returning to work re-energised. We believe that this could reduce sickness days across the sector by offering staff an alternative to use of sick leave. The management side committed back in June 2019 to addressing the findings of the UNISON FE National Stress Survey, which is indicative of a worsening of stress in Scotland's colleges. That discussion has yet to take place despite the passage of time. However such an initiative might go a small way towards restoring staff faith that the reports findings are being taken seriously pending the joint work being undertaken to address the issue across the sector.

In response to the National Stress Survey press release, Colleges Scotland responded as follows:

Heather Stevenson, Interim, Interim Director of Colleges Scotland Employers' Association, said:

“The mental health and wellbeing of staff in the college sector is a very important matter. That is precisely why colleges work proactively with members of staff and their representatives to help establish a positive working environment which is conducive to a healthy work-life balance.” “We would like to work with the trade unions to help address any issues arising from the survey.”

Key findings from the survey were:

37% of support staff reported having taken sick leave due to stress or partially due to stress (at least 17% increase since 2016).

Almost 69% of respondents felt that their stress issues were not dealt with by the colleges in a satisfactory way.

- (e) **Agreement on national pay and grading for support staff.**

A national JE scheme logically leads to the creation of a single unitary standardised pay and grading model. The harmonisation of pay and grading for the sector which was/is a cornerstone objective of national bargaining as per Scottish Government policy

The position of the Staff Side is that a unitary national grading framework structure should be created from the outcome results of the approximately 2,400 jobs scored and in scope of the current exercise (i.e the roles ratified by the NJNC machinery).

Whilst the legal responsibility to ensure equal pay lies with each individual lies with each College employer, the majority funding comes from the single source of SG/SFC funding. Direct new recurring funding for a new harmonised pay and grading structure has been provided by SG for this purpose. Employment contracts of all employees in scope of the NRPA, lecturing and support, are covered by the same collective bargaining arrangements. All individual staff contracts contain the following clause:

“Collective Bargaining – Transfer of terms from local to national bargaining. That with immediate effect the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) is the body with authority to negotiate and agree on the terms and conditions contained within the National Recognition and Procedure Agreement (NRPA), specifically: Pay Working hours Class contact hours Sick pay Annual Leave”

Under **NJNC circular 01/15** these are matters for national determination

This objective has already been achieved cross sector by inter college co-operation by all 21 NRPA signatory employers for: all basic grade lecturers in Scotland and for Senior Lecturers 1, 2 3. There is a moral imperative for the same employers to treat the other 50 % of the same workforce, under the same collective bargaining machinery, by the same principles of equity and fairness.

The national machinery does not currently seek to dictate the size of shape or local college workforces, but it must demand that work of equal value, ranked as equivalent via this historic national JE exercise are paid the same. That the same range of points leads to the same grade and monetary value across all colleges.

This is a historic opportunity to create a pay and grading model for 5,500 Support workers which will be robust, with equal pay in its DNA, and which stands the test of time and the worthy return from the investment of considerable public funds.

Employers and Trade unions must commit to this common direction of travel, ensure fairness and equity within colleges and across the sector and to jointly seek to complete this complex national task over the next 12 months.

- (f) The following elements of last year’s claim remain outstanding despite promises by the employers that they would address with urgency. We seek immediate discussions to progress these matters as promised in light of little progress being made. Employers promised support staff last year that outstanding t’s and c’s elements in the claim would be given “urgent attention” with mental health, flexible working and working from home treated as high priority.

Establish an urgent joint working group to agree resources and measures to support staff mental health and wellbeing. Outputs to be agreed by end of August 2020

Levelling of Annual leave entitlement for all colleges to 49 days, an end to annual

leave embargoes and a permanent agreement to carry forward 5 days annual leave.

£750 allowance to trained Mental Health First Aiders.

Green travel schemes to provide for cycle purchase loans and allowances for cycling to work.

Phase 2 of harmonisation of terms and conditions.

Introduction of a national flexi-time scheme.

Extension of anti-social payments to apply out with core hours. Namely from 18.00 to 08.00.

A. Bargaining Context

At the point of claim, economic indicators show the following picture:



The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in curtailing economic activity are plainly creating a much tougher environment for pay bargaining. However, following the 9.9% contraction of the UK economy in 2020, GDP is expected to grow over this year at over 6.7% and next year at over 5.7%, restoring the economy to an approximation of its former value in 2022. Huge state intervention, including the Furlough Scheme, has cushioned the impact on Further Education.

Support workers have gone beyond the call of duty in sustaining effective services to students and teaching colleagues during a global pandemic in the most challenging circumstances. Surveys have highlighted the financial and mental health costs of this to our members. Unlike other elements of the workforce, the essential work of our members has hitherto gone unrecognised by Scottish Government and employers. Lecturers have received an extra £400 payment on top of pay settlements.

It would be invidious, for employers to further seek to take advantage of the general downturn to try to squeeze wages in a way that cannot be justified by their financial situation and which fails to keep pace with trends in price inflation and average earnings growth.

Over the past decade the average public sector worker has seen a 14% decline in the value of their wages. For the public sector worker who has not benefited from any incremental progression in their pay, the cut has been 18%, leaving their 2020 wage over £6,800 down on the value of their

earnings in 2009 , and the accumulated loss from their wage failing to keep pace with inflation each year standing at over £53,307.

The Treasury average of independent forecasts states that RPI inflation will average escalate to 3.1% in 2022 and continue to run at around the same mark for the following three years. These annual rates show the rate at which pay rises would be needed for wages just to maintain their current value.

Some costs are rising significantly faster, such as bus and coach fares at 21.3%, petrol and oil at 13.8%, electricity bills at 5.5%, council tax and rates at 4%, and telephone services at 4%. The price of housing also remains one of the biggest issues facing employees and their families. House prices in Scotland have risen by 10.6. Private rental prices have also seen a significant increase, taking the average monthly rent for new tenancies in the UK up 2.9%

childcare costs represent a key area of expenditure for many staff (UNISON surveys have consistently found that around a third of staff have child caring responsibilities). Therefore, it is also worth noting that the annual survey for the Family & Childcare Trust for 2021 found that the cost of a nursery place for a child under two rose by 4%.

GMB



UNISON



UNITE

