

## Update on Negotiations with Support Staff Unions in the College Sector

### Key Facts

- Colleges Scotland Employers' Association is calling on the unions representing college support staff to accept the improved final 2016/17 offer that will see those earning under £22,000 receive £500 and those earning over £22,000 receive an increase of 1.5%.
- Colleges Scotland is urging UNISON, UNITE and GMB to rule out further industrial action and take this offer back to members.
- The revised and final offer is heavily weighted to provide additional benefit to those support staff at the lower end of the pay scale.
- The improved final offer ensures fairness across the sector, with both support and lecturing staff receiving at least the same percentage increase and keeping their pay increases on a par with school teachers.
- Generous holiday provisions will remain in place for all staff, and colleges have already implemented a 35 hour working week where this was not in place previously.
- All directly employed staff will receive the Living Wage.

### Background

Following a decision by the support staff unions to reject the pay offer for 2016/17, the trade unions balloted their members, with a vote in favour of industrial action. Two days of strike action took place during September.

In an effort to resolve the dispute in a timely and equitable manner, both parties invited ACAS in to facilitate. At the initial meeting, we agreed to reconvene. We were very disappointed that a legal notice of further strike action was lodged by UNISON and GMB for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> November 2016, despite the fact that employers and the trade unions were due to meet for further conciliation talks through ACAS.

The employers presented an improved final offer on Wednesday 2 November 2016 at the second ACAS meeting, but this has been rejected. The improved final offer was devised in good faith and we have urged the trade unions and their members to reconsider their position and accept the improved final pay offer that is on the table.

We recognise that college support staff already work extremely hard for the benefit of Scotland's 227,000 students. We are keen to agree this deal and move on to further develop terms & conditions at a national level.

### What has been offered?

Over the two-year period 2015/16 and 2016/17 – the offer equates to 3.6% (£800) for support staff who earn less than £22,000 and a minimum of 2.5% for those earning £22,000 or more. As part of the 2015/16 Pay Award, colleges implemented a reduction in their working week with no reduction in pay and an extra two days unconsolidated leave. The offer of a minimum total leave package of 36 days per year forms part of the 2016/17 pay offer.

This is a fair, reasonable and equitable offer which sees everyone in the sector receive at least a 2.5% pay increase. We are mindful of the current challenging financial environment. **It exceeds Public Sector Pay Policy and is on a par with what school teachers and college lecturers are receiving.** Crucially, it is heavily weighted to benefit those support staff at the lower end of the pay scale.

## **What will the deal mean to ordinary staff members?**

If the full two year reference period (2015/16 and 2016/17) is considered for college support staff, this means:

- For 2015/16 1% or £300 whichever is the greater.
- For 2015/16 all support staff employees had an additional 2 days unconsolidated leave.
- Many employees reduced their working week to 35 hrs per week, with no deduction in pay.
- All directly employed staff receive the Living Wage.
- Employees earning less than £22,000 will receive 3.6% (£800) over the two year pay period.
- In % terms, those above £22,000 will receive a minimum of 2.5%.

## **Next Steps**

We urge the support staff unions to call off the strike and ballot their members on the improved final pay offer.

College employers are committed to reach an agreement as soon as possible so that progress can be made in addressing the wider employment issues in the sector such as a National Job Evaluation Scheme and National Pay Scales. These are key objectives, which are crucial to developing the Workforce for the Future which have been adversely affected by ongoing Cost of Living negotiations.

Colleges Scotland Employers' Association  
2 November 2016