



College  
Employers  
Scotland

# Annual Report

1 August 2022 –  
31 July 2023

# Introduction



The past year for myself as Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland and College Employers Scotland stands out as a year of progress and change, alongside

some challenging circumstances for our members.

There has been marked progress in our interaction with Scottish Government on the future of the college sector. Our staff and members have made significant contributions to landmark reports and reviews which are sure to see major structural changes coming to colleges in the future.

On the theme of change, as an organisation we have adapted to new ways of working following the pandemic and fully embraced our strategic plan, bringing good results for our members.

But conditions for our members are undoubtedly challenging. Colleges Scotland has worked tirelessly to promote the college story and to advocate for more resources for our members, even as our own running costs are impacted by inflation.

Colleges Scotland has collaborated with Ministers, civil servants, Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and other key partners, such as Skills Development Scotland, training agencies, and College Development Network, to ensure the sector is best placed to continue to provide world-class and inclusive learning opportunities for everyone.

The brand of College Employers Scotland has matured during 2022/23 to become the recognised voice of the employers for industrial relations in the college sector.

Finally, I would like to thank the senior leadership teams and boards within each of our colleges and regional strategic bodies for their continued support and I look forward to working closely with each of you over the next 12 months.

When colleges thrive, Scotland thrives.

Shona Struthers  
Chief Executive



# Corporate

Colleges Scotland has continued using a hybrid working model throughout 2022/23 which has allowed staff to work more flexibly between the office and other locations depending on the needs of the business. Following the return to office working, we have also seen an increase in engagement and participation with staff regularly attending face-to-face meetings with members and key stakeholders.

As at 31 July 2023, Colleges Scotland employs 19 (16.9) full-time equivalent (FTE) members of staff which includes a secondee from the sector. The Policy, Corporate, Communications and Public Affairs teams comprise 10 members of staff (9.3 FTE). The College Employers Scotland team comprises 9 members of staff (7.6 FTE) and is continuing to recruit to fill vacancies.

Colleges Scotland has been an accredited **Living Wage Employer** since November 2020.



Corporate Social Responsibility is a key part of the Colleges Scotland strategy. Staff are supported to volunteer and take part in fundraising which reflects their personal interests and encourage professional development. A number of our staff also sit on charity boards as trustees.

Colleges Scotland welcomed four **new board members** during the year – Laurie O'Donnell (Regional Chair, Dundee and Angus College), Nora Senior (Regional Chair, Edinburgh College), Trudi Craggs (Interim Chair, Forth Valley College), and Susan Elston (Regional Chair, North East Scotland College).

The Colleges Scotland board met **4** times during 2022/23 and the Annual General Meeting was held in March 2023.



Colleges Scotland achieved a successful audit for Year End 31 July 2022.

Our digitally connected meeting rooms at Argyll Court, Stirling have been utilised throughout the year for sector meetings and events. It has also been used by members as a hub, as well as being offered as a commercial venue for non-members.

We continue to provide accommodation for two sub-tenants – ESP (Energy Skills Partnership) and WorldSkills UK, Scotland.

# Policy Activity

Colleges Scotland has invested significant time throughout the year advocating for the future direction of the college sector through the opportunities provided by both the various reviews and workstreams that occurred during the course of the year, as well as through supporting the Think the Unthinkable workstream.

Colleges Scotland co-ordinated the timings and ensured consistent messaging in relation to these pivotal areas. We sought college sector views, input these into the consultation processes, and spoke directly to individuals involved in the following key work areas this year:

- National Discussion on Education
- Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape
- Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment
- Scottish Government's Purpose and Principles for Post-school Education, Research and Skills.

Colleges Scotland facilitated and steered the work of the senior sector leaders over the past 12 months regarding the Think the Unthinkable work. Colleges Scotland convened **5 Conventions** during the year with all chairs and principals, and co-ordinated **4 Working Groups** with the purpose of drawing on the sector's appetite for the changes envisaged and desired. By the end of the year, these initial thoughts were crystalising, and implementation plans starting to form, to ensure the continued input into the thinking of the Scottish Government at this critical time.

The work around Think the Unthinkable included facilitating a webinar for sector leaders with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to hear case study evidence of other vocational and tertiary systems. This was a well appreciated session and offered members valuable information of other country systems.

Colleges Scotland also supported meetings of the College Principals' Group.





Other significant areas of policy work included:

- Working in partnership with the Mental Health Foundation Scotland to deliver a report on student mental health and wellbeing. The **Thriving Learners** research, funded by The Robertson Trust, prompted a series of recommendations from the Mental Health Foundation and Colleges Scotland including calls for sustained Scottish Government investment in mental health and wellbeing support in colleges.
- Collaborating and influencing the Scottish Government to ensure continued funding for the college sector from the **Young Person's Guarantee**.
- Assembling and delivering thematic documents, communications, and papers to the Scottish **Covid-19 Inquiry**, as well as leading on three roundtables with college principals to enable early input into the direction of the ongoing Inquiry.
- Continuing to engage with the SFC regarding implementing various workstreams emanating from the **SFC Review on Cohesion and Sustainability**, including advocating for the sector on working groups covering topics such as the review of the Funding Model and a new Tertiary Quality Framework, as well as the development of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the college sector and updated estates conditions survey.
- Developing deeper relationships with the **UK Government** at a time of increased direct funding and interventions from Westminster. This has included developing strong links with both the Scotland Office and the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as well as establishing a regular stakeholder engagement meetings with the Under Secretary of State for Scotland.
- Facilitating knowledge exchange and research related to the opportunities for the college sector in relation to the green industries and mitigation of **climate change**.

- Commissioning the **Fraser of Allander Institute** to undertake updated research to show the economic value of the college sector.

Colleges Scotland worked throughout the year to secure new and additional funding for the college sector. The outcomes this year included:

- Successful advocacy resulting in £2.4m funding for mental health counsellors, which was funded until July 2023, with a further one-off fund of £3.21m for colleges and universities to utilise in 2023/24.
- Working in partnership with sportscotland and Scottish Student Sport to secure investment of up to £1.45m over the next two years to create a new Active Campus Network in colleges across the country through

the appointment of new Active Campus Coordinators who will work to increase participation opportunities for students.

- Strong engagement with the Scottish Government to secure a continuation of £10m from the Young Person’s Guarantee, which was not available to the sector at the start of the year.
- Sustained intervention and advocacy resulting in the SFC prioritising additional funding of £350k for WorldSkills to allow its work to continue in Scotland. This funding solution also allows candidates from Scotland to continue in the competitions.

These are summarised in the table below.

<b>New and Additional Funding Stream</b>	<b>Amount for 2022/23</b>
Young Person’s Guarantee	£10.00m
Mental Health	£2.40m
Active Campus Network	£1.45m
WorldSkills	£350k
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£14.2m</b>



Provided sector responses to the following consultations:

- Delivering Scotland's Circular Economy: A Consultation on Proposals for a Circular Economy Bill – August 2022
- National Care Service (Scotland) Bill (Detailed) – August 2022
- A Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Scotland – September 2022
- National Discussion on Education – December 2022
- Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape – December 2022
- Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment – Response to Phase 2 – December 2022
- Policy Proposals to Add Trade Union Nominees to the Boards of College Institutions – January 2023
- Changes to Residency Criteria for Access to Financial Support in Further and Higher Education – March 2023
- Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment – Response to Phase 3 – April 2023
- Levelling Up Fund – April 2023
- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan – May 2023

Provided attendance and support to the following meetings:

<b>3</b> Covid-19 related meetings	<b>3</b> Covid-19 Inquiry related meetings	<b>9</b> National Transition Training Fund and Young Person's Guarantee meetings
<b>11</b> Mental Health related meetings	<b>6</b> College Principals' Group meetings	<b>7</b> Digital meetings
<b>4</b> Capital and Infrastructure meetings (including college sector workshops)	<b>14</b> Modern Apprenticeship Working Group/sub-group meetings	<b>3</b> Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland meetings

4 College Sector Finances Committee	2 College Funding Group meeting	9 Foundation Apprenticeship meetings
6 Articulation meetings	2 Adult Learning Strategic Forum for Scotland	1 Ministerial PACE Partnership meeting
2 Funding Model Review Focus Group meetings	17 Think the Unthinkable (including Transformational Theme working group meetings)	4 Careers Review related meetings
3 Tertiary Quality Framework Steering Group	4 CDN Research & Enhancement Centre Advisory Group	6 Fraser Allander Institute Project (FAI)
2 Student Support Stakeholder Engagement Group	5 National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy – Strategic Working Group	1 Further Education Student Support Advisory Group
2 Prevent Sub-group	4 WorldSkills meetings	4 SCDI Policy Committee meetings
3 New Deal for Business – Wellbeing Economy Sub-group	3 New Deal for Business – Sharing Key Metrics Sub-group	5 UK Department for Education Turing Scheme Colleges (FE/VET) Stakeholder Panel meetings

Colleges Scotland also supports additional short life working groups that the sector is involved with.



*“This has been another significant year for Colleges Scotland as it continued to see positive outcomes for the college sector from its advocacy. I was particularly pleased with the opportunity taken to ensure co-ordination and consistent messaging between the various Reviews and the Think the Unthinkable work. I am also delighted with the additional funding that my team’s sustained interventions delivered for the colleges.”*

— Andy Witty,  
Director of Strategic Policy and Corporate Governance

# Communications and Public Affairs Activity

Throughout 2022/23, **political engagement** remained high with MPs, MSPs, civil servants, and government Ministers. Colleges Scotland in this period held **15** meetings with Scottish Ministers and MSPs to discuss the college sector.

Humza Yousaf MSP was appointed as the **new First Minister of Scotland** in March 2023 and a **cabinet reshuffle** followed with Jenny Gilruth MSP being appointed as the new Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and Graeme Dey MSP as the new Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans. Colleges Scotland facilitated early engagement with the sector through an all chairs and principals' meeting in Stirling with both the Cabinet Secretary and Minister.



**Parliamentary activity** has been high throughout the year, in particular with the Education, Children and Young People Committee conducting an inquiry into College Regionalisation. The Chief Executive and Director of Strategic Policy gave evidence to the Education, Children and Young People's Committee, and Colleges Scotland offered support to the seven college representatives who also gave evidence to the same Committee, culminating in a report being published

in March 2023 which reinforced the financial challenges of the sector.

We participated in and arranged speakers from the sector for **6** parliamentary Cross Party Groups in 2022/23 and providing the secretariat to the **Cross Party Group on Skills**, as well as supporting Universities Scotland with the **Cross Party Group on Colleges and Universities**.

Our annual **Parliamentary Reception**, hosted by Michael Marra MSP, did not go ahead as planned due to parliamentary business running late into the night, however, the evening did allow for some great networking and the opportunity to meet many colleagues from across the sector face-to-face for the first time since the pandemic.

We held a successful event in **March 2023** – an all chairs and principals' session in Stirling with two panel discussions followed and a dinner in the evening at Forth Valley College which was attended by a range of stakeholders.



Colleges Scotland has been working closely with CDN on a variety of initiatives and events throughout the year. This has included setting out a range of joint projects around **data and research** with their Enhancement Centre, our Chair

and Chief Executive presenting at the CDN Poverty Symposium, and Colleges Scotland exhibiting at the CDN College Expo.

Colleges Scotland has been an active part of designing and delivering the successful annual **#ChooseCollege** and **#LoveScotlandsColleges** marketing campaigns in partnership with CDN and the Marketing Development Network.

A **Summer Blog Series** was created and published on the Colleges Scotland website in July 2023, where thinkers and experts outwith the sector were invited to give their views on colleges in Scotland and on what the future may hold.

Our Head of Communications and Public Affairs sat on the **judging panel** for the NUS Scotland Annual Awards and we attended the ceremony in Edinburgh to celebrate with the nominated college students.

In person **events and networking** returned in 2022/23, providing Colleges Scotland many opportunities to advocate for the sector. These included attending SCDI events, the Scottish Women in Business Reception, AoC Parliamentary Reception, NUS 50th Anniversary, Universities Scotland Parliamentary Reception, Commonwealth Education Day, Holyrood Festival of Education, Skills and Employability Summit, ESP Climate Emergency Skills Event, CDN College Awards, and the first Four Nations Study Visit to Belfast.

**Media activity** remained high and we continued to provide members with regular communications.

54

media releases and statements on a range key policy issues including student mental health, college infrastructure, climate change, and the Scottish Budget

4

broadcast interviews given to news media on key policy issues including sector funding and student poverty

248

Daily Monitoring Reports issued to members

12

Policy Updates issued to members

12

Lines to Take briefings issued to members

The Colleges Scotland website averaged

1,792 users per month.

Colleges Scotland Tweets were seen on average

10,565 times per month.



*"During 2022/23 there was increased parliamentary interest in colleges, providing briefings and information to elected members of the college funding model and some of the other challenges facing the sector. The cost-of-living crisis and student mental health have been a media focus throughout the year and Colleges Scotland has worked with many news outlets to tell the college story."*

— Jenifer Johnston, Head of Communications and Public Affairs

# College Employers Scotland Activity

**Enhanced delivery of National Bargaining activity** for the benefit of the college sector was supported through SFC confirmation of £800k in funding for Academic Year 2022/23. This increased resource allowed College Employers Scotland (CES) to recruit a new National Bargaining Lead (Lecturing and Central Committee) and a full-time Communications and Public Affairs Officer, while also strengthening administrative support.

David Watt, Regional Chair of Fife College's Board of Governors, was appointed **Chair of CES** in November 2022. He took over from Alex Linkston, Regional Chair of the Board of West Lothian College, who stepped down after five years as CES Chair.

A new **National Menopause Policy** was developed and agreed in partnership with the trade unions and adopted by all colleges in Scotland. It will ensure every colleague experiencing the menopause receives adequate levels of support, including reasonable adjustments to working arrangements if required.

Significant progress has been made on the development of a **National Disciplinary Policy** and work has now begun on the model procedure for all college staff. This is being developed within the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC), in partnership with trade unions and employers.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) approved the new **Provisional (Conditional) Registration** route for college lecturers, supporting staff professional development and underpinning the world-class learning offer at colleges. This achievement has been secured thanks to close partnership working between GTCS, CES, the Scottish Government, and the EIS-FELA.

A full and final **Lecturing Staff Pay Offer** of a £3,500 cumulative rise over AYS 2022/23 and 2023/24 was made. This was promoted with strong communications across CES digital and social media channels, and through written correspondence.

A full and final **Support Staff Pay Offer** of a £3,500 cumulative rise over AYS 2022/23 and 2023/24, along with commitments regarding Terms and Conditions, Job Evaluation and job security, was made. This was promoted with strong communications across CES digital and social media channels, and through written correspondence.

As part of the **National Job Evaluation Scheme**, progress was made with rank orders which were issued to 22 colleges. Proposals were agreed by employers to take forward two workstreams and commence discussions with the support staff trade unions.



Attendance and support were provided to the following meetings:

<p><b>39</b> Management Side Meetings and Briefing Sessions</p>		<p><b>5</b> College Employers Scotland Executive Group Meetings</p>
<p><b>6</b> College Employers Scotland Meetings</p>	<p><b>15</b> NJNC Side Table (Lecturing) Meetings</p>	<p><b>11</b> NJNC Side Table (Support) Meetings</p>
<p><b>1</b> Central Committee</p>	<p><b>5</b> Full Secretariat Meetings</p>	<p><b>1</b> NJNC Support Staff Job Evaluation Working Group Meeting</p>
<p><b>5</b> CES Representatives Meetings with Support Staff on Job Evaluation</p>	<p><b>4</b> Job Evaluation Management Side Meetings</p>	<p><b>4</b> NJNC Support Staff Terms and Conditions Working Group Meetings</p>
<p><b>4</b> NJNC Lecturing Staff Hybrid Working and Learning Practices Working Group Meetings</p>	<p><b>2</b> Fair Work Working Group Meetings</p>	<p><b>3</b> National Policies Working Group Meetings</p>
<p><b>1</b> NJNC Central Committee Meeting</p>	<p><b>1</b> National Policies HR Strategic Group/CES Team Full Day Fair Work Session</p>	<p><b>1</b> Negotiation Training Session</p>

**31** Communications briefings and email updates were provided to members: Updates following Side Table and Central Committees (25); Circulars issued to the sector (1); Industrial Action Guides (2) and Job Evaluation joint sector comms (3).

**28** media releases and statements (including an extended comment piece in The Scotsman) were issued on pay negotiations, as well as other developments such as GTCS approval for Provisional (Conditional) Registration for college lecturers and the appointment of a new CES Chair.

**3** broadcast news interviews involving the CES Director were facilitated, including one with Channel 4 News for a UK-wide TV news package.

**6** in-person visits to colleges to hear directly from Principals and Senior Leadership Teams.

**6** sets of Key Facts and a Q&A guide were issued to support local communications activity during the 2022/23 industrial dispute period.

**10** engagement meetings were held with MSPs (7) and Ministers (3). Separate engagement meetings were also held with NUS Scotland, SQA, and Universities Scotland.

**Letters** providing updates on pay negotiations for AYs 2022/23 and 2023/24 were sent to the Further Education Minister (1) and to college principals (1) to issue to staff. In addition, a joint letter from CES and the EIS-FELA was sent to the then Minister to express concern over funding for TQFE given the financial challenges facing colleges.

CES provided written evidence to the **College Regionalisation Inquiry** undertaken by the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee. A detailed response was also submitted to the Committee that set out how colleges have addressed the recommendations of the Strathesk **Lessons Learned Report**.



*"This academic year has been another challenging period for National Bargaining in Scotland's colleges, especially set against a backdrop of increased inflationary pressures and industrial unrest across the public sector. Despite this, College Employers Scotland has sought to assist and advise members and has made some real progress, especially in the area of national policy development".*

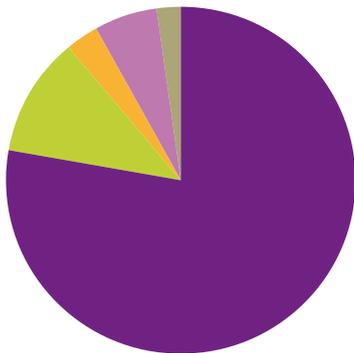
— Gavin Donoghue, Director of College Employers Scotland

# Funding

Colleges Scotland funding comes from two sources – sector subscriptions for Policy, Communications and Corporate, and funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for College Employers Scotland.

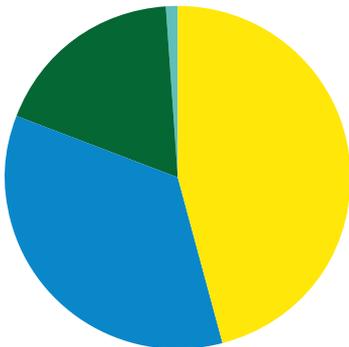
In 2022/23, income from sector subscriptions was £893k for Policy, Communications, Public Affairs and Corporate activity. **Every £1 invested in Colleges Scotland yields a £14 return.** Income from the SFC for College Employers Scotland was £400k, and a proportion is for corporate service support.

A breakdown of spend and analysis of key activities is outlined below:



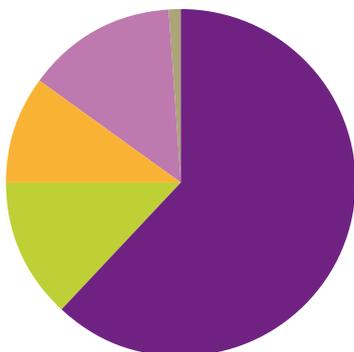
## Colleges Scotland Spend

- Staffing = 78%
- Service Level Agreement and Office Facilities = 11%
- Communications, Hospitality and Consumables = 3%
- Other Staffing and Professional Fees = 6%
- Depreciation = 2%



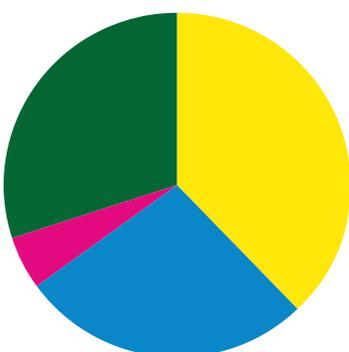
## Colleges Scotland Activity

- Policy and Advocacy Activity = 46%
- Colleges Scotland Board and Committees = 35%
- Communications, Parliamentary and Stakeholder Engagement = 18%
- Servicing National Bargaining = 1%



## College Employers Scotland Spend

- Staffing 62%
- Service Level Agreement and Office Facilities 13%
- Communications, Hospitality and Consumables 10%
- Other Staffing and Professional Fees 14%
- Depreciation 1%



## College Employers Scotland Activity

- Supporting the NJNC = 38%
- Supporting CES Activity = 27%
- Job Evaluation = 5%
- Communications, Parliamentary and Stakeholder Engagement = 30%



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