

# Further Education Noticeboard

Last update: 14 Jul 2025

## Latest Bulletins

### Improving Education Together – Further Education Colleges

Posted on: 14 July 2025

Improving Education Together (IET) is an initiative introduced by the government after the election. It is led by the Department for Education (DfE), and brings together DfE staff, school and academy leaders and trade unions. Further education (FE) colleges are also involved.

Trade unions involved in FE have argued since the initiative started that far too much of the DfE's focus was on schools, their teaching and support staff and OFSTED inspections. Trade unions and, to their credit, college employers have stood up for the sector.

FE college pay (apart from very senior staff) compares poorly with schoolteachers and school support staff. Turnover in FE colleges is high compared to many other education institutions with poor pay, high workload and poor facilities all factors leading to staff leaving.

Trade unions raise issues affecting FE at IET meetings on a regular basis, and recently had a session devoted to FE. GMB has raised the issues referred to above and also included concerns raised directly by members in some colleges about poor provision for women staff returning to work after giving birth, little provision for childcare and for flexible working. There are real concerns that FE is failing to ensure equality between men and women, staff with disabilities and from different ethnic backgrounds.

Members also raised issues about the physical state of some colleges with outdated technology, poor infrastructure and inadequate transport links, particularly in colleges in rural areas.



GMB will shortly send a survey to members in FE Colleges to gather information about the issues in sector and explain how union campaigns can make the difference, including to pay and other terms and conditions of employment.

The next bulletin will include a further update on the work of the IET in further education.

## Further Education Pay 2025



**Posted on: 14 July 2025**

Trade unions met with the Association of Colleges (AoC) to discuss pay 2025. The AoC said that they would not be able to make an offer to trade unions because of financial problems at a number of FE Colleges.

While the sector has had a significant increase in funding for 16-19 year olds, funding for adult education has been reduced. The Department for Education maintained that the demand for further education from those in that age bracket was high, and given the pressure on public finances DfE determined that 16-19 was the priority.

The AoC said that the consequences of the decision were being considered by a number of colleges and as a result the AoC would not be able to make a formal pay offer to trade unions until September.

This will be the third year in a row that an offer had not been made on time.

Trade Unions were reminded by the AoC that the pay offers made were only recommendations to colleges and were not binding, and that colleges with financial problems could propose lower offers.

Trade unions criticised the AoC for their approach and proposed that the AoC bind all colleges to the outcome of negotiations. Trade unions were also critical of college leadership and the pay of college principals, following an FE Week investigation showing that their average salary had risen to £188k in 2023/24, with over 70 principals paid over £200k, and two colleges paying over £300k.

Given that the AoC cannot bind colleges to their offer to trade unions, it is open to trade unions at local level to submit their own pay claims.

Further information on this will be shared with GMB Regions.

## GMB In Further Education March 2025



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**Posted on: 14 March 2025**

This is a summary of GMB activity in support of members in further education.

## **Pay 2025**

GMB is consulting members about a pay claim for the employers for 2025/26.

## **Meeting with Education Minister**

GMB and other support staff unions met with Jacqui Smith MP in February. The meeting was mainly about the financial crisis in universities, but GMB stressed the importance of further education colleges, particularly around the contribution they could make to economic growth and the opportunities which will be afforded by the establishment of Skills England. This is a new body that will be charged with developing apprenticeship programmes to give young people the skills needed to work in emerging industries which drive the economy forwards. GMB said that universities could be well placed to drive regional growth through research and development but that FE colleges were best placed to make more local and focussed contributions to skills development to enable people to secure well paid jobs and improve the local economy.

We were very pleased that the minister agreed with the points we made. Funding announcements are likely in the summer.

## **Improving Education Together**

GMB has been participating in a Department for Education initiative "Improving Education Together" which has brought trade unions, employers and the DfE in meetings to discuss what needs to be done to improve education.

We have been specifically involved in a subgroup looking at support staff issues in further education. GMB has made several contributions to identify problems in the sector:

Further education is poorly resourced

- The teaching workforce is on average older than in schools or universities
- Wages are poor
- Progression is difficult



- Colleges do little to provide any childcare, which impacts on recruitment and retention.
- Colleges need significant investment in the infrastructure and IT to make them good places to work

The employers and the Department understood the points made and recommendations for improvements in the sector will follow. Progress will, however, be dependent on funding and how Skills England intends to rebuild the sector.

The work of improving the further education sector will be ongoing and GMB would like to hear from members about your experience of working in the sector and the changes you would like to see – please email us at [publicservices@gmb.org.uk](mailto:publicservices@gmb.org.uk)

Further news will follow.

## GMB In Further Education February 2025



**Posted on: 10 February 2025**

GMB has been participating in a working group set up by the Department for Education (DfE) along with employers and other unions in the FE sector to discuss ideas aimed at improving support staff retention, excluding pay which is subject to negotiations.

The group discussed four themes:

- Workload
- Flexible Working
- Diversity
- Raising the status of the profession

GMB and other unions raised issues about poor pay in the sector being one of the key drivers leading staff to leave FE colleges and that FE support staff deserved a significant pay increase.



We also raised the problem of failing infrastructure, given the poor condition of many FE colleges with reduced maintenance budgets not keeping pace with needs. Employers in the group accepted this was an issue. However, many colleges do not have decent IT systems, poor Wi-Fi (or none). There was general agreement that many colleges need significant investment simply to deliver what they already do effectively and that the poor conditions of colleges needs to be tackled.

Having raised these key points, we then discussed the four topics identified by DFE

### **Workload**

There was general agreement that workload was an issue. However, the discussion focused on reducing teacher admin time and improving time for lesson preparation and dealing with problems of low or non-attendance of pupils. The role of support staff in FE is different to schools but it was generally understood that FE Colleges needed more and better trained support staff, possibly modelled on the structure in schools.

### **Flexible Working**

FE Colleges don't share best practice around flexible working and as an example, maternity leave returners seem not to be properly supported on return to work. Some colleges allow hybrid working to allow for home-based lesson preparation, but it's not something support staff have access to.

There was general acceptance that fixed term contracts were used inappropriately, which also contributed to turnover.

### **Diversity**

The employers referred to an ageing workforce (average age of teachers is 45 in FE and 25 in schools) but there is little data on gender, ethnicity and other protected characteristics, or progression of under-represented groups. The DfE agreed to commission some work on this.

### **Raising the status of the professions**

Unions argues that raising the status of the "professions" also applied to the support staff who would need better pay if their roles were enhanced. GMB also raised the issue of the establishment of Skills England, and its role in training thousands of apprentices, and the drive for growth. GMB said that the new Skills England CEO needed to be positive about the importance of FE colleges in developing apprentice programmes and make programmes sound exciting. That might reduce attrition in the sector and encourage new people to join FE.

However, this will also require improved physical infrastructure and more investment in teachers and support staff.



## GMB In Further Education – December 2024



**Posted on: 4 December 2024**

### Funding of the sector

The Chancellor announced an additional £300m of funding for further education (FE) in the 2025/26 Budget. This increase in funding is welcome but there is confusion about how this will be distributed and what it is for. Other welcome news is that FE has been reclassified as part of the public sector and that additional funding will be made available to cover the increase in Employers' National Insurance Contributions. As part of the public sector, outsourcing will become more difficult for colleges and so jobs and terms and conditions of employment can be better protected.

FE in the UK is not a single entity. The Association of Colleges (AoC) is the Employers' Association in England and FE is devolved in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, there are also sixth-form colleges attached to Academy Trusts and independent sixth-form colleges which also deliver FE.

It is not clear whether the additional funding for FE is for the sector as a whole or just whether it will be split between different entities.

We hope to get clarification from the Department for Education early in the New Year.

### Negotiations

In England the AoC and the recognised trade unions met this week to discuss the above issues. The sector faces a crisis of recruitment and retention affecting both teaching and support staff. Poor pay and high workload are the major issues for FE staff at all levels.

Trade unions asked for a formal meeting of the National Joint Forum for Further Education in early 2025, to revive pay negotiations for the 2024 pay round which have been stalled since the election was called, and the Working Group on FE Workload.

### Skills England

This new body will be a driving force for skills development and a crucial part of the efforts to grow the economy and deliver well paid jobs. The Department for Education is currently seeking applications for a Chief Executive for the new organisation which will have a lot of influence over the work of the FE sector.



A further briefing will follow when we know more.

Once pay negotiations for 2024 are complete, GMB will begin the process for pay 2025, beginning with a survey of all members.

## Just Transition

Trade Unions and the Employers have been working together on how the sector can contribute to the transition to a low carbon economy. There will be a joint announcement in early 2025, outlining the progress and plans for the future. The role of trade union reps in colleges will be key to the development of local plans.

## 2025

It has been a difficult year for further education, but with a new Government, the return of further education to the public sector and the announcement of additional funding the sector should be on a better footing in 2025.

This is an opportunity to make improvements to pay, terms and conditions and other aspects of working in further education, which trade unions have not had for 14 years.

If you would like to be involved as a GMB rep, please email [publicservices@gmb.org.uk](mailto:publicservices@gmb.org.uk) and we will pass your details on to the appropriate GMB Region.

Please encourage colleagues to join GMB: [www.gmb.org.uk/join](http://www.gmb.org.uk/join).

## Joint FE Trade Union Statement On The Association Of Colleges (AoC) Recommendation On Pay And Related Matters In England



**Posted on: 11 October 2024**

The joint trade unions met with the college employers' representatives from the AoC on 7 October under the National Joint Forum agreement (NJF). The meeting was organised in order that the AoC could make a pay recommendation, which they had failed to do when the NJF met in May.

The joint trade union pay claim submitted in March can be found here: [fejointpayclaim2024final.pdf](#)

The AoC offer on pay and related matters can be found at Appendix 1 below.



Our evaluation of the offer is that it is hugely disappointing. On pay, the recommendation of 2.5% or £750 will make little difference to staff working in FE who have in recent years endured low pay awards during a period of increasing and locked in inflation. The value of the recommendation is also brought into stark focus when it is compared to the 5.5% increase for schoolteachers in England and other public sector workers.

What compounds an already highly unsatisfactory outcome to this year's NJF talks is the fact that there is no mechanism for its implementation in all colleges. The non-binding nature of pay outcomes in FE in England does little to address the cost-of-living crisis faced by our members and pay differentials within and between colleges. We desperately need fully funded and binding national pay bargaining in FE.

All staff need a pay rise and the joint unions' view is that all staff should get at least 2.5%, not only those where employers offer it, and employers that can pay more should pay more.

On national bargaining, we need binding pay outcomes and a new sector level negotiating and funding framework that leads to this. The AoC has started to talk to us about this and the talks are positive. However, we need to use the opportunity that the general election has created and jointly lobby for ringfenced money for pay to close the pay gaps with schools and a new national bargaining settlement where all staff receive the same pay increase and employers cannot ignore it.

On living wage accreditation, our core position is that the NJF should have a reasonable expectation that employers would be accredited. The lack of this commitment is problematic.

On workload, the working group set up last year has stalled and it is some way off concluding its work and making some recommendations.

Overall, it's another very disappointing outcome to a very unsatisfactory process.

## **Appendix 1**

AoC response to 2024/25 pay claim 07 October 2024

At our meeting on 20 May, we responded to your 13-part claim. Our response today remains unaltered with the exception of aspect one of the claim – that relates to pay:

A 10% or £3000 increase in pay, whichever is greater. This is a first step to restore more than the 40% cut in real pay for FE staff over a decade. Our updated response to that part of the claim is set out below. In our response to this part of the Joint Unions claim in May, we were clear that after 14 years of punishing funding cuts, college pay is far below where we believe it should be and needs to be.





In the short term, for 2024/25, we also made it clear that we would wish to at least make a pay recommendation that mirrored the school teachers pay award. At that time, the School Teachers Pay Review report had not been published. Following the summer general election and a new government, the Chancellor announced, on 29 July, that it would fund the STRB recommendation for a pay rise for school teachers of 5.5% from 1 September 2024.

As you are aware, teachers in further education and sixth form colleges were excluded from this announcement. This decision extends the already considerable gap between school and FE salaries and does nothing to address the issues you highlight in your claim.

Over the past two months, the Association of Colleges and individual college leaders have made strenuous efforts to lobby government for appropriate funding so that the school teachers pay award can be extended to further education as it was in 2023. You will be aware that 173 college leaders have written, jointly, to the Chancellor on this and other funding issues. Direct meetings with MPs and ministers, locally and at the Labour Party conference last month, have sought to bring the issue of pay to the widest audience.

Further it is of note that the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Philipson, is chairing a new social partnership body with employers (including AoC) and the unions covering schools and colleges. This will launch in January 2025. There are three priority areas of work that this new body is focusing on - workforce, SEND and accountability. A working group is being convened on each, and we will work closely with union and government colleagues to make as much progress as we can. The workforce subgroup will not replace or duplicate the pay arrangements in schools and colleges but will seek to make progress in a range of issues, including workload. The work that has been carried out in schools may help us make progress for colleges.

Also, the recent letter to the STRB from the Education Secretary asks the STRB to consider the impact of its recommendations on the FE workforce. This is a very helpful step and will allow DfE to provide evidence of the pay, recruitment and retention challenges in college alongside that of schools. The contrast will be stark and should help us put even more pressure on DfE and on Treasury to address the pay gap. We should expect that the new pay review body for other staff in schools might be asked to have the same consideration of pay in colleges. David Hughes and Gerry McDonald, Chair of AoC Employment Policy Group have written to the Chair of the STRB to offer assistance.

The Chancellor will deliver her first budget on 30 October with a further fiscal event in Spring 2025. We have taken the view that it would be unhelpful to delay a pay recommendation to the sector today in the hope that either of these two events addresses the current and urgent issue of pay. It is worth noting, however that the AoC's submission to Treasury ahead of the Budget makes clear that pay is a barrier to the government achieving its broader goals for the skills system with a request for £250m to ensure the pay gap between schools and colleges does not get any bigger. We will also continue our work to influence the government's spending review, which is due to report in the spring of next year. For that we will make a much more ambitious bid for mainstream college funding which enables colleges to make



progress to closing the pay gap with schools and with industry. The college pay position is not justifiable, other than by reference to the inadequate funding colleges have had to live with. Our work nationally will continue to make the case for a step change in college pay both because it is fair and right to do so, but also because colleges are central to delivering the government's missions and ambitions, and without better pay, colleges will struggle to step up.

Given this context, we wish to make a pay recommendation today for all FE staff which is above both inflation and above the 1.9% increase to 2024/25 funding rates for 16-18 year olds. The recommendation will be challenging for some colleges, particularly those with high volumes of adult provision or other financial pressures.

**Our recommendation for the 2024/25 academic year is 2.5% or £750, whichever is greater.**

Should our collective pressure, whether that be through lobbying or influence, be successful in the current academic year, we would seek to reconvene and consider the issue of pay again. In the circumstances that additional funding is received by the sector we would envisage making a further recommendation on pay with an expectation that colleges use such funding exclusively for pay.

## Letter From Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson



**Posted on: 10 July 2024**

Dear Members,

*Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson has written a letter to the education workforces to make clear the valuable role they will play in the government's agenda for change.*

To all working in early years, children's services, schools, further and higher education,

It's a huge privilege to write to you today to introduce myself as your new Secretary of State for Education and to thank you for your vital work. I want this moment to mark a reset in our relationship: under this new government, education will once again be at the heart of change and the forefront of national life. I can't wait to start working together with you as we begin to transform our system so that young people get the skills, care and opportunities they deserve.

I know how hard you work to support our learners and families; you are key to breaking down barriers to opportunity and improving life chances for every child. You have supported our children and young people through a great deal of disruption – guiding their curiosity, building their resilience, and helping



them achieve and thrive. You and your work are essential to the change this government wants to achieve across the country, and I want our renewed relationship to reflect that.

My commitment to the sector is deeply personal. I grew up in a family that knew the value of a good education. I was also fortunate enough to go to great local state schools filled with committed staff who saw the value and worth in each and every one of us. I'm so grateful for all the people in my life who nurtured within me a love of learning and the confidence to succeed – I would not be here without them.

I know that I was very lucky, but life shouldn't come down to luck. Lives are shaped by opportunity, but too many people simply don't have the opportunities to succeed.

I grew up on a council street in the Northeast of England. At that time in the 1980s and early '90s, it was a place with many challenges, where far too many children were held back by their background. But background should be no barrier to getting on.

I am determined that we will drive change together. Working with all of you, we want to build a fairer society with a government that delivers the best life chances for every child. That's what motivates me and that's why we will work tirelessly to deliver on our opportunity mission, tackling barriers like inadequate housing and child poverty that undermine family security and make it so hard for children to learn.

There's a lot of work to be done to realise this mission against some major challenges. A huge part of my role is to understand the scale of the challenges you are facing, and the support needed to fix them. The scar of child poverty, severe financial pressures squeezing all your budgets, high workload, climbing vacancy rates, strain on care, mental health and SEND services, among many other issues, have made your jobs increasingly difficult. This is a tough inheritance – none of these have quick and easy solutions but I will work with and for you to find practical ways forward.

Supported by your experience and expertise, this government will expand our early years education system, drive high and rising standards and reform curriculum and assessment. Work to recruit 6,500 new expert teachers for our schools and colleges starts now, and we will bring forward a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education, work with local government to provide loving, secure homes for children in care, provide support for children with SEND and their families, and create higher-quality training and employment paths by empowering local communities to develop the skills people need. We will secure the future of our world class universities as engines of growth, ambition and opportunity for all.

This change is simple to describe, but vast to deliver. Government can't do it alone – we will work with you as essential and valued partners to deliver our shared mission. I want to renew the trust and respect we hold for each other. My commitment to you is to listen, to draw on your wealth of experience and to act on your honest feedback.



As an initial step, I want to invite you to join me for a live event at 4pm on Tuesday 16th July where I'll share more about my vision for the education system, but I really want to hear from you too. There will be a chance for you to share your views and ask me questions in the live chat function.

I very much look forward to meeting as many of you as possible and working together to break down barriers to opportunity, give all children the best life chances and make sure there is no ceiling on the ambitions of our young people.

Yours sincerely,

**Bridget Phillipson**

Secretary of State for Education

## Update On FE Pay Negotiations England 2024-25



**Posted on: 5 June 2024**

Dear Members,

The joint unions met with the Association of Colleges (AoC) on Monday 20 May to begin pay negotiations for 2024/25. Discussions focussed on the headline pay claim of 10% or £3000, whichever is greater, and progress towards achieving binding national agreements.

In response to the joint union claim the employers indicated that since in 2023/24 the government was able to find additional funding to ensure that in particular the pay gap between school and college teachers did not get even wider, they wanted to give the government the chance to do so again this year. AoC informed the joint unions that it will not be making a pay offer until the STRB report has been published.

The joint unions expressed frustration and disappointment that AoC was unable to make a pay offer at the NJF meeting and made it clear that the next meeting of the National Joint Forum on Monday 10th June had to make progress on the key issue of achieving binding national agreements.

Kevin Brandstatter, National Officer for Further Education said "With the General Election and the dissolution of Parliament any plans of the AoC in England to ask the Government for additional funding for the sector to prevent the gap between School staff and FE staff getting any wider will have to await the outcome of the General Election and the appointment of new ministers. GMB will demand that the



sector for post-school education is finally recognised as an important provider of educational and life skills to fill some of the critical shortages in the 2024 labour market."

## FE England – National Pay Talks 11 May 2023



Posted on: 11 May 2023



### No offer on pay

The joint FE trade unions met with the sector employer representatives from the AoC on 11 May for the second England FE pay negotiations. You can find a report of the first meeting here: [the first pay negotiating meeting for 2023/24](#). The joint union claim can be found here: [our claim](#)

It's deeply disappointing to report that the AoC failed to make any recommendation on pay. The AoC did comment on the fact that the union's claim was reasonable, and they recognise that staff pay needs to improve. Further to these points the AoC commented that it was the fault of the UK government for not adequately funding the sector which restricted their negotiating position.

While it is a fact that FE in England is underfunded, employers can and do make choices regarding what they prioritise to invest in, and for far too long employers have deprioritised investing in staff pay. The joint unions stressed the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on staff and the increasing strain of inflation on food and bills, and the damage to staff wellbeing and mental health.

The AoC position is to a large extent a function of the broken national bargaining arrangements in FE, where pay increases are only recommended, unlike in schools or sixth form where pay increases are implemented.

We challenged the AoC to publicly state their support for the principle of binding national negotiations; regrettably, they did not agree to our proposal. It is the joint trade union's view that the sector desperately needs a new settlement which covers funding, staff pay, negotiating frameworks and workloads. The reclassification of FE provides the opportunity for the AoC and the DfE to work with us to reset FE. Pressing repeat is not working.



We also called on the AoC to work with us on these matters, and instead of criticising the unions for taking action to defend the sector and our members, support us publicly and join us when we move to take joint action in the autumn. They declined that offer.

Regarding another important element of the claim on a national workload agreement, the offer is to work on a Charter of good practice. Regarding a Just Transition Commission for FE, the AoC's view is that the national bargaining table isn't the appropriate place for these demands, and they should be discussed separately.

Members in all five unions will have expected much more. The joint unions are now actively discussing how we can work together with a view to building for joint action in the autumn. We encourage branches to contact their principals and inform them that unless something significant changes quickly, a dispute now seems unavoidable.

## FE England – National Pay Talks 19 April 2023



Posted on: 20 April 2023



### No offer from the employers

The joint FE trade unions GMB, NEU, UCU, UNISON & Unite met with the sector employer representatives from the AoC on 19 April for the first England FE pay negotiations.

The unions pressed the AoC on their **claim** which is timely, ambitious and necessary as it not only aims to start to restore the loss in staff pay over recent years but also addresses unsustainable workloads, aims to establish meaningful sector level bargaining and create a pathway to a just transition in FE.

The AoC response, **that no meaningful offer could yet be made**, despite the claim being submitted on 17 March 2023, will understandably generate anger among the respective memberships during a cost of living crisis.



No serious offer was made on the other elements in the claim. The AoC did agree to consider their position further and respond in more detail at the next negotiation meeting on 11 May.

The joint trade unions are encouraging members and branches to contact their principals and press them to ensure a full and serious offer is made by the AoC at the next meeting.

Members in all five unions will expect much more from the next meeting and are actively considering the next steps they will take if one isn't made.

If any of your colleagues are not yet in GMB Trade Union, ask them to join on the link below.

[Join GMB](#)

## Association Of Colleges Makes Pay Offer, Refuses Living Wage Commitment



Posted on: 31 May 2022

**GMB and sister unions met with the Association of Colleges (AOC) for a negotiating meeting on Thursday 26 May.**

At that meeting, AOC informed union negotiators it would be recommending a pay offer of 2.25% for the year 2022/23. The offer is not binding, meaning individual colleges are under no obligation to implement it.

In March, the unions jointly submitted a claim for a pay rise of 10% on all points with a minimum uplift of £2000, all colleges to become accredited Foundation Living wage employers and for significant movement towards agreements on workload in colleges.

As well as failing to meet the unions' pay demands, AOC refused to commit to ensuring all colleges become Living Wage employers and on workload offered only to set up a working group to investigate further.

[Read the full joint union statement here.](#)

**GMB**

**U N I O N**

### Joint FE Unions Case To Government For Staff Vaccination Priority



Posted on: 13 January 2021

The joint unions in Further Education **have written to the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment, and Secretary of State for Education** to make the case for prioritising staff in Early Years, Schools, Colleges and Adult Education settings for vaccination.

In brief, their rationale was:

- Fully reopening education settings is a national priority – the moment it is safe to do so.
- Learning often takes place indoors and in close contact with large numbers of students in multiple groups, putting staff at high risk of both catching and transmitting the virus.
- Vaccination prioritisation, combined with mass testing, would be a sure way to reduce transmissions, remove any further disruption to the education of our young people and to support the resumption of economic activity by reducing the burden of home schooling on working parents.

The government has set the priority list for phase one of the vaccination programme based on Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice focused on reducing risk of preventable mortality. JCVI have said that more occupations could be prioritised in phase two as it moves to a transmission reduction programme.

You can **[read the full correspondence here](#)**.

### Joint Union Pay Claim 2020/21



Posted on: 1 October 2020





GMB as part of the joint trade unions in further education have submitted a pay claim for the next financial year. You can read the full claim below:



1 October 2020

**Further Education England Joint Trade Unions 2020/21 Claim**

**Further education at the heart of national recovery – full restoration**

Dear Gerry,

Further Education is unique, the space it provides for its students to learn, discover and realise their full potential is the reason why we all care about it as we do.

We are all rightly proud of what our sector achieved at very short notice, pulling together to move successfully to online and remote learning under lock down as required. Then followed by the enormous efforts by all staff to make sites safe and clean in readiness for the return of larger numbers of learners back to sites. While effort and achievement have been recognised and celebrated

The joint trade unions also wrote to the Michelle Donnelan, Minister for Further Education on 23/09/2020, to express urgent concerns around the September return and the risks faced by staff, you can read the full letter here:





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23 September 2020

Michelle Donelan MP  
Minister for Higher Education  
Department for Education  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

By email: [michelle.donelan.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:michelle.donelan.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Minister,

We are writing with our concerns about the urgent situation facing large numbers of university staff.

During lockdown, most universities made use of the job retention scheme so they could continue to employ staff unable to work during the pandemic. A significant proportion remain on furlough with the scheme due to end in a matter of weeks.

With universities unable to offer full face-to-face learning that has been the hallmark of UK higher education to date, there are far fewer people on campus. With infection rates increasing sharply, it's clear universities will have to continue to offer more virtual teaching for many months to come.

This has clear implications for staff. There are thousands of catering, events, student union, technicians and reception staff, deeply concerned as to whether they will have jobs to return to after furlough ends. Some staff have already been served notification of redundancies.

Urgent government intervention on behalf of the higher education sector is desperately needed. Universities are proud to be some of the largest employers in their communities, with staff equally proud to work for their local university. The government must do all it can to safeguard the jobs and livelihoods of these individuals.

Employees who have been recruited, trained and built up years of experience working in higher education face imminent redundancy - affecting them, their families and their communities. The sector needs an extension to the job retention scheme for those employees

General Secretary Dave Prentis



## GMB & Joint Trade Unions/National Association Of Colleges



Posted on: 13 August 2020

### RETURN TO SITE – JOINT PLANNING GUIDE: SEPTEMBER 2020 UPDATE

**GMB** and 5 joint FE trade unions nationally have worked with the NAC, in order to produce this guidance on planning any return to FE colleges, as well as specific guidance for the return in September:



# Planning guide for further education colleges from September 2020

Commentary and checklist



## FE England Joint Trades Unions Open Webinar



Posted on: 8 June 2020

Working together to make any return to onsite working safe in FE.

Register [here](#). Registrations will close at **12 noon** Monday 8 June.



Full details [here](#).

**Date: 04/06/2020**

**GMB, NEU, UCU Unite, and Unison**, the 5 joint FE trade unions nationally have put to the government 5 tests it must pass before onsite learning or working is safe to begin:

- 1. Significantly Lower Numbers of C-19 Cases**
- 2. A National Plan for Social Distancing**
- 3. Comprehensive Testing**
- 4. A Whole College Strategy for Health & Safety**
- 5. Protection for the Vulnerable**

You can read the full statement [here](#):





## FE England joint

### Test 3: Comprehensive testing

Comprehensive testing to monitor

## March 2020

GMB and sister unions have been discussing the current problems facing everyone in FE.

GMB continues to push for the best possible deal for workers in these extremely challenging times we are working with the employers to achieve this end.

The employers association is the Association of Colleges, and covers 95% of colleges involved in further education.



Government advice to slow down and halt the spread of the virus will continue to change, and you should follow it. The advice is to stay at home unless absolutely necessary, practice social distancing if you go out (a minimum of 2 mtrs), and frequent hand washing, all of which will help.

We have discussed FE college access to the job retention scheme

## **Key Workers**

If any FE staff are formally in the key worker category, you will already have been written to to confirm your status.

The employers association and trade unions are jointly seeking advice on the application of the furlough scheme to FE Colleges.

The employers consult unions on a regular basis and their up to date guidance can be found here

## **Employers guidance**

## **FE Pay 2020**

Initial pay discussions have begun, but have been put into abeyance while the Covid 19 problems are with us.

Further bulletins will be issued shortly.

If you need any further information, please  
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