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Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland for Information Only

To: Secretaries of Branches with members in Further Education Colleges
Further Education Contacts
National FE/6th Form Colleges Committee

FE/18/10

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UNISON Slams Coalition's Savage FE Funding Cuts

The government has announced savage cuts to Further Education (FE) funding in England. These cuts announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review include:

- A 25% cut in the adult education and skills budget, or £1.1 billion, by 2014
- The axing of the Educational Maintenance Allowance
- The axing of the Level 2 entitlement for adult learners over 25
- Abolition of Train to Gain

These cuts will have a devastating impact on our colleges and our communities and they are only the tip of the iceberg. We expect the government to announce soon an increase in fees for adult FE students.

We must take a stand against these savage cuts. Please see the attached briefing "College funding cuts – there is an alternative" (Appendix 1).

We need to make our local communities and politicians aware of the damage that these cuts will do.

Please help by:

- Writing to your MP urging them to oppose education cuts - You could use our model letter to MP's (attached as Appendix 2). Please adapt this to include local facts and your own views on the cuts.
- Write to your local paper letting readers know about the impact these cuts will have on your local communities – (Model letter attached as appendix 3)

Demonstrate against the cuts

UNISON is supporting the NUS/UCU national demonstration against cuts to Further and Higher Education in London on the 10 November:

For more detail visit <http://www.demo2010.org/>

Contact your local NUS to ask about travel arrangements for the demonstration.

You could also contact your local UNISON Higher Education branch to see if they have travel arrangements in place.

FE colleges pay 2010/11

UNISON members in FE Colleges have voted very narrowly to accept the Association of College's Pay Recommendation offer for 2010/11. Members voted by 53% to 47% to accept the AoC final offer of 0.2% or £50 whichever is the greater.

The very narrow acceptance of the pay offer should be seen by government and employers as a warning. Our members are reasonable people but their patience is wearing very thin.

ATL, ACM and GMB have also accepted the offer. UCU and UNITE members have rejected. We are therefore seeking a meeting with the AoC to try and find a way forward. We will keep members updated on any developments.

Sixth form colleges pay

Pay talks with the employers for 2010/11 will resume on the 23 November

FE staff governors' conference 2010

The 2010 UCU-LSIS-UNISON FE staff governors' conference will take place on Thursday 2 December in London. This is a really important event for all staff governors. The paperwork and registration details for the conference will be issued shortly. In the meantime please put this date in your diary.

UNISON FE and sixth form seminar 2011

Another date for your diary. The UNISON FE and sixth form seminar will take place in Manchester on 8/9th April 2011. This year the focus will be on 'campaigning against the cuts'. Registration and agenda details will be issued before Christmas.

Appendix 1

College funding cuts – there is an alternative

The Coalition government has announced savage cuts to Further Education (FE) funding in England. These cuts will be devastating for learners, staff and our local communities.

UNISON is campaigning for an alternative to these cuts and we need you to join our campaign.

Summary of cuts announced:

Colleges are funded separately for the work they do with adults (19+) and young learners (16 – 18).

The following cuts in these national budgets were announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

- The Further Education adult education and skills budget will be cut by 25%, or £1.1 billion, by 2014.
- This budget covers both participation funding (i.e. the money colleges get for learners) and other costs associated with the administration of the adult system. So it is not yet clear at this stage how this budget cut will filter through to colleges – (we expect more details in the coming months).
- The Educational Maintenance Allowance, which provides up to £30 a week support for 16 – 19 year old students from low-income backgrounds, is being axed.
- The amount of money that colleges get for each individual learner age 16 – 18 is set to be cut. We should know more on this in the coming weeks.
- The Train to Gain workplace training programme is to be abolished. Under the previous government this programme saw at least a million employees receive training to develop their workplace skills.
- There will be an extra 75 000 apprenticeship places. The problem for colleges however, is that the majority of apprenticeship work currently goes through business and private providers. There is also good chance that the government will cut the rate of funding per apprenticeship place.
- Adult learners over 25 who do not possess a Level 2 qualification (equivalent to 5 GCSE's at grade's A – C) will no longer be able to study for these qualifications free of charge.
- Further Education students age 24 and over taking A Level equivalent qualifications for the first time will be asked to pay fees - a new student loan system will be introduced .
- Adult learners overall face the prospect of higher fees and increased debt levels.

- English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) funding is to be restricted to “settled communities”. The government has not yet spelt out what this means in practice (We are sure it won’t be good and could have a particularly harsh effect in areas such as London).
- Further efficiencies will also be expected in Further Education including pay restraint - (its hard to see how more restrained over pay the sector could be – the 2010/11 AoC pay offer is just 0.2% or £50 whichever is the greater).

Timetable

- We are expecting an announcement from the government in mid November on how they intend to implement the cuts announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- Individual adult funding allocations to colleges will not however, be confirmed until early next year. Only at this point will we really be able to identify the scale of the cuts.
- Government plans to axe Level 2 and Level 3 entitlements will require legislation – Labour enshrined the entitlements for adult learners in legislation.
- This means that the government probably couldn’t get rid of the entitlements before September 2012 – (Gives us a good opportunity to run a campaign).

Impact of the cuts

- Even before the cuts 70 – 80 colleges were already in serious financial difficulty. This number will increase as a result of the 25% cut.
- We could now see some colleges under threat and others forced to merge or form federations.
- Local economies could be devastated by the public and private sector job cuts resulting from the Comprehensive Spending Review.

There is an alternative

The Con Dems tell us there is no alternative; don’t believe them

- Other major European economies are increasing not cutting investment in education at this time.
- Instead of closing courses and axing jobs the government should be raising more in taxes from the very people that created the crisis – the bankers and the speculators.
- This government however is making low and middle income individuals and families pay for the banker’s greed and mismanagement.
- They are also cutting too deep, too fast, risking another recession.

- UNISON has produced an 'alternative budget' which sets out how you can reduce the deficit without destroying public services.
<http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/18887.pdf>

What we do can about it

We need to make our local communities and politicians aware of the damage that these cuts will do. Please help by:

Writing to your MP

Urge them to oppose education cuts. You can find your MP's contact details at <http://action.unison.org.uk/page/speakout/cuts>

A 'model letter to Mp's' is attached with this briefing as Appendix 2

Write to your local paper

Let readers know about the impact these cuts will have on your local communities - Model letter attached as Appendix 3

Contact your local radio station

Radio stations will be conducting phone ins on the cuts. Take part and put across your case. Your branch will be able to help you with this

Demonstrating against the cuts

Take part in the national demonstrate against the cuts in London on the 10 November. <http://www.demo2010.org/>

Sign up for campaign email bulletins

Sign up for the UNISON FE news bulletins

<http://www.unison.org.uk/news/maillinglist.asp>

Finally don't forget to join the UNISON Defend Further Education Facebook page
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/group.php?gid=142274199135739>

More details on our campaign will be issued over the coming weeks

Appendix 2

Model letter to MP's

Contact your MP urging them to speak out against education cuts
<http://action.unison.org.uk/page/speakout/cuts>

You could use this model letter and adapt it to make reference to your college and your community

YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS

Date

Dear (*name of your MP*),

I am writing as one of your constituents to express concern over the huge cuts to public services announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

I value my local services and don't want to see them disappear. Cuts on this scale will devastate services, throw people out of work in the public and private sector, and damage my local community.

I am particularly concerned that at such a time this government is slashing funding for colleges. Up to a million people could lose their jobs as a result of the spending cuts and many will need to retrain and develop new skills in a bid to find work. The cuts in Further Education funding will lead to courses and colleges closing denying local people the opportunity to learn and retrain. (*Insert - here you could add what the impact of the cuts will be at your local college*)

At a time of such high youth unemployment I am also shocked that this government has also chosen to axe the Educational Maintenance Allowance for young learners.

There are alternatives to these huge cuts, such as clamping down on tax dodging, and raising more money in tax from the banks. Please consider the long-term effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review on your local constituents.

I would ask that you please write to John Hayes MP Minister of State for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning expressing your concern over these cuts. I would also ask that you write to both the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister expressing concern about the impact of the wider public service cuts on your constituents.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 3

Model letter for local press

Dear Editor,

I work as an X (put name of your job here) in X (put name of college here), and I'm worried that the coalition's big cuts in spending will have a terrible impact on our education system, hitting students, staff and our local community.

Cuts on this scale will see some colleges shut their doors, with others forced to merge. There will be a huge reduction in courses, and tens of thousands of college staff nationally are facing the axe. More people on the dole means less money being spent on our local high street – and spells disaster for our local economy.

It's not fair that today's students, and tomorrow's, will pay the price for the recession, but the bankers that caused it are still getting away with millions in bonuses. There is a much fairer route to recovery. Cracking down on tax avoidance and tax havens, and making the bankers pay their fair share would claw back billions, saving jobs and stimulating recovery.

Yours Sincerely,

Add name here.