

J.Mooney@unison.co.uk

Graeme Dey MSP  
Minister for Higher Education and Further Education;  
and Minister for Veterans  
Scottish Government  
[ministerhefev@gov.scot](mailto:ministerhefev@gov.scot)

5 September 2023

Dear Mr Dey

**Industrial Action in the College Sector**

I refer to your letter of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in which you advised of your disappointment at “...further disruption to essentially the same cohort of learners”, and reiterated that the Scottish Government is unable to intervene to finance any agreement on pay.

UNISON members across Further Education continue to be disappointed at the lack of intervention in this dispute by Scottish Government. It is clear that the Scottish Government decision to distance the sector from Public Sector Pay Policy has had a very real and detrimental impact on pay negotiations this year as our members are the only staff across public services in Scotland who are being asked to pay for a below inflation pay offer with their own jobs.

UNISON members do not take Industrial Action lightly; our Further Education Branch has negotiated in good faith, seeking numerous ways to achieve an offer that can be put to UNISON members, including involving ACAS in dispute talks. It is only now when it is clear that the Employers will not move their position that we choose to use our right to strike.

With reference to your comments on “...further disruption to essentially the same cohort of learners” I must advise that I am unsure of what you refer to as UNISON members have not taken industrial action on pay since 2016. However, irrespective of this it is every worker’s legal right to take action to achieve a fair pay deal, defend jobs, and more generally improve college services for students - particularly if their employers refuse to meaningfully engage with them.

It is clear that the only resolution to this dispute is for the Scottish Government to work with both parties on what would be required to reach an agreement that can be put to UNISON members. I would urge you to focus on this as this is what will avoid disruption to students and other clients of colleges across Scotland.

The UNISON negotiating team stands ready for talks at any time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Mooney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

**JOHN MOONEY  
REGIONAL ORGANISER  
UNISON SCOTLAND FE & HE LEAD**