



FE England – National Pay Talks 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](#)

Its 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.