

UCU members employed by A4e will be aware of the situation in Kent where A4e have given notice to the LSC that they wish to terminate their contract from 31 July 2008. This is because of a heavy financial loss.

UCU have been in consultation with A4e about this and so far all we know is that negotiations between the LSC and A4e are still ongoing. A4e held a meeting with UCU on 23 June to start the TUPE consultation process but when we met there was no consultation as they did not know how much the LSC would give them.

They told us that the LSC were making demands A4e found unacceptable. No details were given except that these were linked to 'quality'.

UCU is extremely unhappy and concerned about this. We are now just over 4 weeks away from the possible termination date and we still do not know what is likely to happen. Even if the contract is to pass to another provider under a TUPE transfer arrangement, it is still totally unsatisfactory that members are left in the dark about their future employment.

UCU has made representations to the regional and national LSCs about this and has also pointed out that it was unreasonable to give more public money to a company that is unable to cross subsidise its OLASS work.

A4e complains that the Kent contract was underpriced and that colleges are better placed to support their OLASS work. UCU

**A4e
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disagrees. We are aware that all OLASS providers have had great difficulty with the level of funding for this but have found ways to fund the shortfalls. We are not aware that any other provider has had to pull out of the contract. We do not accept that A4e should have special consideration.

UCU's preferred option for the situation in Kent is that the work should be transferred to a college with a track record of delivering education and training in prisons. We believe this would give stability to staff and learners. We will continue to press for a satisfactory outcome to this crisis.

See UCU's website for a fuller report on this at www.ucu.org.uk

Pensions

It has been brought to our attention that members in Kent and possibly East of England who were able to take advantage of the CAY provisions of the Teachers Pensions Fund have had their own contributions initially 6% increased without any notice or warning. UCU is looking into this and we would like to hear from you if this is the case. Please let me know if this had happened to you and also if you were told by A4e that there were going to increase your contributions.

UCU is still looking at what the situation will be for members contributing to the CAY as this runs out next year and will issue advice.

CPD

We have had a number of queries regarding lack of clarity over A4e's training policy and provisions for CPD. I have been told that the company is currently in the process of putting together a training procedure and policy; however, staff need to know where they stand re CPD. We will be carrying out a full survey of members in the near future but in the meantime it would be helpful if members could let me know where they stand with regards to this.

Pay

A4e say that they have paid the annual pay increases in accordance with the pay increases made by the pre transfer colleges and might move to PRP (performance related pay) next year. This is unacceptable to UCU and we will need to look at how we handle this. We have been told that (transferred) part-time sessional staff, have not had a pay increase is this true? If so, please let me know.

UCU organisation

In order for UCU to be able to assist members we need a strong membership and strong organisation. Recruitment remains a priority – if you know of any colleague who is not in the union – ask them to join they can do it online at www.ucu.org.uk

Also we need local reps and Health and Safety Reps. We have reps in almost all the Kent A4e prisons and quite a few in the East of England area but we need to formalise the arrangements and provide training for the reps. Have you thought of becoming a rep? Training and support will be provided. We also need to sort out our organisation in the South West as we have no A4e reps. If you want more information about becoming a rep please contact me or your Regional office.

Retendering

The process has started and invitations to tender will go out in October 2008. The contract specifications are being drawn up and will be based around the OSCARS. For more information and queries please contact Christiane Ohsan, National Official at cohsan@ucu.org.uk

From: Andrew Wilson [mailto:AndrewWilson@a4e.co.uk]
Sent: 08 July 2008 10:34
To: Christiane Ohsan
Cc: Bill Whitehouse
Subject: Update on Kent - Monday 7th July

Dear Christiane

Unfortunately I am still unable to give you a definitive update on the issue in Kent.

We have been continuing our discussions and negotiations with the SE LSC and have a high level meeting planned for 14th July where I am hopeful we will reach a final decision.

I can only apologise for the inconvenience and distress that this situation is causing to your members and can assure you that the company is doing everything it can to bring the matter to a conclusion.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Wilson, Head of Employment Services, A4e Ltd

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