

Payments

Communication and involvement of UNISON

- No discussion was held with UNISON, despite the clear and substantial difficulties of the last effort at retention payments in late 2018. The Branch Secretary made HR and John Readman aware of our expectations in this regard after the initial email came out but prior to the detailed terms and conditions document, but this made no difference and no approach was made.
- This is taken as a clear signal of intent that there is no real commitment to work in partnership with the staff's recognised trade union.
- UNISON submitted detailed feedback on the December 2018 communication failure at a subsequent JCC meeting. 8 points UNISON raised within that paper were repeated. This seems to show an inability for the council to learn lessons.
- The offer communication ignores the work done by and with UNISON for the last two years, and the extensive feedback from social workers about recruitment and retention. These were ideas UNISON has raised previously – but no credit is given: Interest free loans, MRS (i.e. more pay), car lease. This will feel like an active attempt to side line the union and marginalise it in eyes of staff.
- There is a commitment to work with partners in the WSCC press release on Ofsted.
- Any reasonable employer would talk to their recognised union about such matters. We expect a process to be in place for UNISON to be involved: where we see a business proposal, see an EIA, have necessary oversight for equal pay reasons.

Framework for such payments

- What policy is this payment expedited under?
- The paper for staff says "(in accordance with Financial Support for Recruitment and Retention Policy)". This does not appear to be on the Intranet (and is not available via normal searching) and is not a policy that has been discussed with UNISON. What is this policy and is there a commitment to work with UNISON on it?
- If the payment is expedited under the MRS policy, this provides for the involvement of UNISON under a collective agreement. UNISON is required to see a rationale/evidence for the payments.

Clarity required

- If you do not take this offer up, but have previously opted into the 3K x 5 years offer, can you stay on that for future years? (This is a worse offer than what went before for many staff)

- If you do not accept the offer, will you still be eligible for a free parking permit, and be able to retain a permit if you already have one?
- What 'sanction' can you have in place if you have been managed via the sickness process?
 - Why should staff be penalised for sickness and not be eligible for the payment?
 - Are we only rewarding staff with good genes/environmental factors which mitigate against long-term sickness?
 - How will WSCC ensure disabled staff are not penalised as a result?
 - Will there be any effort to differentiate sickness which is caused by work (e.g. workplace stress)?
 - Are staff on long-term sickness able to apply or not?
 - What happens if staff have time off work for gender reassignment or same-sex adoption? Will they not be eligible?
 - Is there an Equality Impact Assessment for the offer?
- What happens if you do not hear about the offer by the deadline due to sickness or other absence e.g. maternity? Or have other personal circumstances that make you want to reflect before committing?
 - How is WSCC alerting staff who are absent from the workplace? Will the council send letters to the home address?
- Restructures: if a staff member is impacted negatively by a restructure, is it reasonable to apply the same repayment terms? Should repayment be waived in those circumstances?
 - Staff should be able to opt in at any point in next 6-12 months, when matters are clearer. At a minimum there should be a 2-3 week extension to take account of the need to clarify the offer, and to ensure all relevant staff have been contacted.
 - Staff believe that they are effectively being 'tied into' potentially unwanted team moves after a restructure.
 - This also does little to incentivise a good restructure with robust consultation, as management know staff are tied in.
- What happens to these repayments if you are outsourced due to Ofsted direction, and these matters are non-contractual?
- For some staff this feels designed to trap them as they have no sense of what they are committing too.
- There is concern that the offer could lock staff in for 18 months and then the MRS could be withdrawn.
- What payments will be offered to new staff who arrive after June 2018?

Non-eligible staff

- What alternatives have been considered for unqualified staff?
- What about alternatives for social workers who do not hold a caseload?
- Unqualified staff have already told that a recruitment and retention offer will be considered for them. What will this look like, and when and how will it be discussed with UNISON?

Extension of notice

- Affecting Grades 9, 10 and 11 social workers. An extended notice period will be used to reclaim all the monies from the last 3 salary payments, which could leave social workers and their families destitute. Staff are unaware of this.
 - WSCC should make it clear to staff they would be unwise to spend the money until after the 18-month pay-back point has passed
 - This is a dereliction of WSCC duty to look after the welfare of staff, and we are bound to see instances of staff not having their anticipated final salary payments to feed, house and clothe their family.
 - Consideration should be given to extended repayment periods not least because there are a range of circumstances which could arise that mean the social worker has to leave WSCC employment which are not of the worker's own choice or preference
 - What about staff who are dismissed without notice?
- Will notice periods revert after the expiration of the 18-months?
- WSCC is saying this is a non-contractual payment. But how will WSCC vary the contract of employment to account for the change to the notice period?
 - Is this via a variation of contract agreement staff are expected to sign? If so, please can we see a copy.
 - Or is it to be done through a collective agreement?

UNISON West Sussex
20th May 2019