

## **BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

### **Report to Human Resources Committee**

**8<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

The purpose of this report is to update the Chair of the HR Committee and the Board of Management on ongoing key areas of importance during the COVID 19 pandemic.

#### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 Workforce Planning;
- 1.2 Employee Wellness, Equality and Safety;
- 1.3 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED);
- 1.4 Learning and Development;
- 1.5 National Bargaining;
- 1.6 Staffing changes and current vacancies.

#### **2. Detail of Summary**

##### **2.1 Workforce Planning**

The outbreak of COVID-19 has created resourcing and staffing challenges across the sector, and it is vital that the College maintains a focus on the future planning of staffing but also on current resourcing requirements whilst operating remotely.

It is anticipated that key roles only will be recruited over the coming months and the HR team are working with the College Leadership team to identify any roles deemed critical.

##### **2.1.1. Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)**

New information regarding the application of the UK Government's Job Retention and Loan Schemes for colleges and universities was published on 17 April 2020 by the Department for Education (DfE). The SFC has advised Scottish colleges and universities to give full consideration to these schemes and should apply to them, where allowed, to maximise the contribution to their mitigation strategies.

The DfE document states that institutions should not furlough staff whose salaries are paid from continuing public funds. However, the further SFC Guidance issued has stated that it also recognises the reality of mixed public and private funding sources. It therefore states that where it is difficult to distinguish whether staff are funded through continuing public funding, then the total proportion of staff (based on gross payroll) that are retained (i.e. not furloughed) should, as a minimum, be equivalent to the continuing public income, as a proportion of all income that the institution usually receives.

The College is therefore currently reviewing the application of the Job Retention scheme and will engage with the local trade union representatives at the earliest opportunity if any roles are identified.

### **2.1.2 Alternative Funding**

The Alternative Funding department is split into three main areas:

- Training and Employment (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021)
- Inclusiveness contract (May 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020)
- Rural Academy (June 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020)

The contracts for Inclusiveness and the Rural Academy ended on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

## **2.2 Employee Wellness, Equality and Safety**

The College understands the impact both physically and mentally of operating in this unprecedented time and has been actively developing strategies to address how all staff can stay physically well and psychologically resilient.

### **2.2.1 Employee Wellness, Equality and Safety Initiatives**

#### **Homeworking Guidance**

Prior to the closure of the College building and start of the homeworking, staff were issued with a Temporary Homeworking Arrangements document which provided clear guidance, key information and considerations. All staff were asked to complete and return a home workstation risk assessment and DSE assessment which have been reviewed by the Facilities team.

A follow up communication provided complementary guidance which encouraged a shorter working day, regular breaks and a flexible approach to working from home. Staff were advised the Easter break would be extended for College closure to include Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> of April, encouraging staff to rest following a fast-paced response to difficult circumstances.

A further communication reminded staff to complete their DSE assignment and advised staff to undertake the Homeworking training module available via the WorkRite Health and Safety Platform. Workstation exercises were also recommended to avoid muscle and joint pain and accompanying link to guidance and examples was provided. We continue to support staff with DSE requirements.

### **Health and Safety**

The College is currently reviewing the provision of PPE and sanitising products to ensure there are sufficient supplies for a return to the workplace. A document on 'Safe returning to college' is currently being drafted and will be distributed to all staff prior to the return.

### **Launch of New Employee Assistance Programme Provider**

PAM Assist, our new employee assistance programme is available to all College employees and offers free confidential information, guidance and counselling provided by trained advisors. Services provided include telephone advice and assistance, telephone counselling and up to six face-to-face counselling sessions.

A dedicated helpline is accessible 24/7, 365 days a year. Calls are answered by a PAM Assist Advisor assesses the nature of the enquiry and offers the most suitable assistance. If the query cannot be dealt with immediately or if counselling is required PAM Assist commit to returning the call within a maximum of 24 hours. There are also excellent resources available to all staff through the PAM Assist website and the PAM Assist mobile app. Log in details have been provided to all staff and will appear in our Staff Benefits booklet and Health and Wellbeing Guide.

We have recently supplemented this offer with the purchase of *The Big White Wall* (<https://www.bigwhitewall.com/>), an online service utilised by over 120 organisations world-wide to provide support to those suffering from anxiety, depression and other common mental health issues.

### **Health and Wellbeing Guide**

We recognise the difficulties and challenges presented by the current pandemic, remote working and in turn, the impact this can have on wellbeing. In response, we have tried to be proactive in promoting and prioritising the wellbeing agenda. The SLC Health and Wellbeing guide, Appendix A, has been created to support staff and provide an easily accessible resource that brings together useful activities, information and resources. The booklet is branded with our new Health and Wellbeing design which will be used in all future communications.

### **Staff Benefits and Fitness Activities**

The College is continuing to provide staff benefits and are currently offering yoga, mindfulness and circuits classes virtually via Teams and Zoom. Sessions will be recorded and uploaded to the SLC VLE for staff who are unable to commit to the scheduled times and dates due to teaching commitments and caring responsibilities.

All staff have been included in a SLC Wellbeing Activities Microsoft Teams page which gives them direct access to the sessions and further information. There has been high levels of initial engagement and discussion on the platform and the initiative has been welcomed by staff.

Two Faculty of Care lecturers have also offered staff and students the opportunity to join their fitness workout and dance groups via Facebook.

### **Volunteering**

Whilst most of our staff can work from home, we recognise there may be those who wish to offer their services or have the key skills needed during the virus outbreak. The College offered support to staff who wish to volunteer their services to health and other public services at this time. Information was provided regarding volunteering opportunities and staff were directed to appropriate websites and contacts. All requests for temporary frontline working and volunteering will be considered positively and on a case-by-case basis.

At present only one member of staff has presented interest in volunteering.

### **Bring your Child to Work Day**

In association with the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) the College invited staff to participate in Bring your Child to Work Day on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. Whilst juggling work and home schooling, parents were able to use the opportunity positively to introduce and prepare their children for the world of work 'SLC' style. We were delighted by the engagement from staff and families and received lots of pictures of the new recruits which were promoted via our social media channels.

### **Autism Awareness Day**

'WE ARE celebrating neurodiversity' was used to promote World Autism Awareness Week via our social media channels. As part of our commitment to diversity and inclusion, we encouraged staff and students to watch the video 'what is autism' to increase understanding and awareness. We also included practical advice and tips to help autistic people shared by the National Autistic Society.

### **Gender Based Violence**

As the government and media address an increase in levels of domestic violence, the College has responded with increased signposting on our social media channels to support services available including our own support and information page on the College website, Scottish Women's Aid and South Lanarkshire Council domestic abuse initiatives.

### **International Workers Memorial Day**

Staff were invited to participate in a minute silence at 11am on Tuesday 28th April, International Workers Memorial Day, to pay tribute to the sacrifice made by so many people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Mental Health Awareness Week**

Mental Health Awareness Week will run from 18th - 24th May.

Kindness is the theme for the week in response to coronavirus outbreak and is a moment for us all to focus on mental health and how important kindness is.

The College plans to run the campaign through social media and will begin with a countdown leading up to the week and we will ask the audience to share acts of kindness they have experienced.

We will also use this opportunity to share links for the support that is available in the College for students and staff and also external organisations.

During the week we will share the Mental Health Foundation's campaign links <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/random-acts-kindness>.

### **Carers Week 8-14th June**

The College is also planning to celebrate Carers week and the theme for 2020 is about making Caring visible. <https://www.carersweek.org/>.

This is a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate carers and to signpost to support and services available for students and staff in the College and also external organisations.

### **2.2.2 Absence Management**

The absence report detailing the levels of absence over the first quarter period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 is provided in Appendix B. Appendix C provides the full quarterly report.

The HR department has maintained a focus on absence management and implemented reporting mechanisms to ensure that all COVID-19 related absences were recorded and managed appropriately. This ensured that the College was aware of who was self-isolating and working from home, who's self-isolating and unable to work from home, who's sick and able to work, who's sick and unable to work.

The College currently has two members of staff that are absent due to COVID-19 symptoms and one member of staff that is self-isolating for 12 weeks. Prior to closure of the College there were 52 staff that were unable to attend the workplace due to either underlying health conditions, caring responsibilities or demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19.

Efforts continue to be made to support staff to attending work remotely and formal return to work interviews with the appropriate manager continue to take place remotely. It is anticipated that trigger point meetings with the Principal or Depute Principal and HR staff also take place as appropriate over the coming months.

Professional occupational health and counselling services are used to support staff attendance.

### **2.3 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulation 2012 (as amended) the College is, by 30 April 2021, due to report on our efforts to mainstream the PSED and the progress made to achieve your equality outcomes, and to publish a fresh set of equality outcomes and other equality information.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is aware of the pressures faced by public authorities as a consequence of the global coronavirus pandemic. The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 includes provisions giving relevant public authorities the power to postpone compliance with a statutory duty.

This would occur where compliance with the duty would be likely to impede effective action in relation to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus. The Act will expire on 30 September 2020, unless Parliament passes regulations for it to continue until 31 March 2021. If those regulations are passed, Parliament may only pass one further extension until 30 September 2021.

Therefore, unless the Act is extended the College will still be required to:

- Report on progress on mainstreaming the general duty
- Publish equality outcomes and report progress
- Publish employee information
- Publish gender pay gap information and an equal pay statement

The outbreak of the pandemic is likely to limit the extent of involvement and participation that is possible in the short and medium term within the College. However, a focus will remain on progressing equality and the agreed Equality Outcomes. The Equality Group will meet virtually in May 2020 to discuss progress and priority actions for the forthcoming academic session prioritising action to tackle the most significant inequalities in the College sector. An update will subsequently be provided to the Board of Management.

## **2.4 Learning and Development**

The College continues to be committed to delivering a diverse range of activities to encourage all staff to be empowered to develop their own professional learning and to further embed innovation in the teaching and support areas of the College. This is particularly relevant during the current pandemic to keep staff engaged and motivated and the College has been actively developing strategies within this area.

### **Online Learning**

During our period of remote working we want to ensure staff have the opportunity to learn and develop new and existing skills digitally. A list of online learning was circulated to staff which included a variety of courses, resources and webinars providing opportunities for all – this can be found at Appendix D.

We will continue to assess and develop ways in which we can provide staff with continuous professional development during this time.

The Mental Health Awareness Course continues to be delivered to staff virtually with additional self-study resources.

The middle management training has also taken place virtually and the external sessions have now concluded. The feedback has been positive and a further internal session is planned for the 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

### **Staff Development Day**

The next Staff Development Day is due to take place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 and the College is actively looking at sessions that can be delivered virtually to support staff CPD. It is anticipated that this will focus on the skills required to continue to deliver learning and teaching in the next academic session.

The College successfully delivered 14 Staff Development Day sessions on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> of March. The programme focused on high quality learning and teaching, digital and IT skills, wellbeing, equality and financial education. Feedback was overall very positive with 11 courses receiving between 95-100% positive evaluations (rated 3 or 4) and 3 courses between 85-95% positive evaluations.

A new internally developed course, Introduction to Understanding Standards was delivered for the first time. The course will now be incorporated into the lecturer induction process and be delivered regularly as part of future programmes. Promoting Positive Behaviours and Differentiation in the FE Classroom sessions delivered by Dr Anna James of March Training and Development were particularly well received with several lecturers expressing it as one of the most valuable CPD events they have attended. Both staff and management have requested these courses run again in future.

We also continued to promote the wellbeing agenda with Mental Health and Wellbeing delivered by staff within Health and Social Care. The session was full and excellent comments received. We will look to continually raise awareness and provide support to staff in this area.

## **2.5 National Bargaining**

### **2.5.1 Support Staff**

#### **National Collective Dispute – Annual Leave**

UNISON has raised a National Collective Dispute regarding support staff annual leave across the sector. A third dispute meeting has been scheduled to take place on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The College has maintained positive relations with the local UNISON representative and will await further guidance following the meeting.

#### **Job Evaluation**

The job evaluation project is progressing in the first scoring process with around 24% of roles complete at first score stage. The second cohort of analysts completed training at the end of February and are now involved in the scoring of roles. Overall, 91% of questionnaires have been received, but there are some gaps in other documentation. The College has submitted all documentation. The team at Colleges Scotland is continuing to work with the colleges where there are gaps in data to ensure we have the full data set.

It is recognised that there will be a number of posts which have been created or changed since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018 and the NJNC – Job Evaluation Working Group is working on the process to identify and evaluate these roles. A process will be issued in due course, once finalised and agreed.

## **2.6 Staffing Changes**

Details of leavers, new staff and current vacancies are attached in Appendix E.



**3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Human Resources Committee:

- 3.1.1** Note the Workforce Planning update;
- 3.1.2** Note the Employee Wellness, Equality and Safety update;
- 3.1.3** Note the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) update;
- 3.1.4** Note the Learning and Development update;
- 3.1.5** Note the National Bargaining update;
- 3.1.6** Note the staffing changes and current vacancies.