

Our ref: LM/EC/HE/GEN/002
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Dear Richard

Pension Rights at the University of Dundee and Abertay University

We write to highlight drastic attacks on pension rights at the University of Dundee and Abertay University and urge you to intervene strongly to assert the Scottish Government's 'Fair Work' principles and the need to respect the contribution of all workers, including essential workers in support services roles.

At the University of Dundee there is a proposal to close, this summer, the local pension scheme (UoDSS) used by professional and support services staff. Current members of the scheme, many with long years of service to the University, would be forced into a drastically inferior defined contribution scheme, losing many thousands of pounds each, per year, in retirement.

We support quality pensions for all workers and oppose this attack on the pensions of these workers. In the short time before the Scottish Parliament breaks, we urge you to intervene strongly to urge the University of Dundee to withdraw this outrageous attack on the cleaners, library workers and security officers who have done so much in these extraordinarily difficult times.

At Abertay University, there is a proposal to close off access to a quality, defined benefit pension scheme, the Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme, to new starts. This is another example of an attack on the pension provision of workers, with new starts placed on an inferior defined contribution scheme, creating a two-tier workforce - with support staff, professional services staff and research staff deemed unworthy of a secure retirement. The employer is failing to provide full financial proposals for its plans, given that the gradual withdrawal from the local government scheme comes with financial obligations in terms of increased employer contributions and payment of liabilities at the point where there are no active LGPS members. It is also in the Scottish Government's interests to ensure the viability of the Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme. Abertay slowly withdrawing from the SLGPS could set a very damaging precedent for other public service organisations.

Dundee is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland with some of the lowest life expectancy, with the workers affected disproportionately among the lowest paid, women and part-time members of the city's population. Large numbers of these staff live in the most deprived SIMD20 postcodes.

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For two of the major employers in the city to act in a way that drives poverty further into the city is a major blow to the Government's own anti-poverty agenda and will simply undermine government initiatives and actions in other areas of government policy.

In both cases, formal disputes are imminent, and industrial action is a real possibility. Local candidates in the forthcoming election will be pressed to intervene in support of these workers and the communities in Dundee, Fife, Angus and Perthshire that rely on their future pension income. A strong intervention on your part would be greatly appreciated, and would be in line with previous, very welcome interventions on redundancies, furlough use and pandemic sick pay for outsourced workers.

Yours sincerely



Lorcan Mullen
Regional Organiser and
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Alison MacLean
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