

Members of Parliament  
House of Representatives  
Parliament of Malta  
Freedom Square  
Valletta VLT 1010

6<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Subject: Formal Complaint Regarding Severe Discrimination and Misconduct at the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools**

Dear Members of Parliament,

We are writing to you to convey our profound concern regarding the state of our employment at the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools. Despite our previous attempts to communicate and address the unacceptable circumstances we are facing, we regrettably received no assistance, and no measures were taken. Feeling compelled to formally document our grievances, we hope to finally garner the attention and action that this matter rightfully deserves.

Repeatedly, Dr Neville Young, the CEO and Mr Jonathan Brimmer, the Human Resources Manager has demonstrated unprofessional conduct towards several employees. We endure verbal abuse, intimidation and manipulation on a daily basis. Under their leadership, the Foundation (FTS) operates in a dictatorial manner, and it's crucial to highlight that this situation is deteriorating rapidly. In the past three months alone, four employees, three Architects and a Draughtsman, have resigned due to the intolerable toxicity of the working environment. Since assuming role of Chief Executive Officer, Dr Neville Young, alongside Mr Jonathan Brimmer, has subjected several employees to various unpleasant situations.

The Foundation's (FTS) employees have encountered several incidents that constitute hostility, abuse and discrimination. Some of these incidents include:

- A Cleaner - a 62 year old employee, recently retired and who had been working at the Foundation (FTS) for over 9 years. Dr Neville Young and Mr Jonathan Brimmer made her last two years of working, unbearable. They burdened her with excessive manual tasks, while consistently belittling her. When this employee finally voiced her concerns after enduring the mistreatment, Dr Neville Young and Mr Jonathan Brimmer issued her a written warning. She had to appoint a lawyer to contest the situation as it became evident that Dr Neville Young and Mr Jonathan Brimmer were intent on terminating her employment.

Last year, the same employee was suffering from back pain, prompting her to provide Mr Jonathan Brimmer, the HR Manager, with a doctor's certificate. The certificate outlined her limitations in carrying weight and advised against climbing ladders. Mr Jonathan Brimmer tore up the Doctor's certificate, refusing to accept it. Even after she provided another doctor's certificate, it was still deemed insufficient. Under the instructions of Dr Neville Young, she was directed to consult a specialist for further examination and tests. Despite her evident back pain, she was expected to continue fulfilling all her duties until she obtained the required certificate as per their request. They both contributed to making her situation challenging and fostered an uncomfortable working environment. This incident occurred during the employee's final months of employment leading up to her retirement.

- A Project Manager - a 62 year old employee, who has been working at the Foundation (FTS) for over 8 years. Dr Neville Young has repeatedly made derogatory remarks about this employee. He has faced mistreatment and discrimination at the hands of both Dr Neville Young and Mr Jonathan Brimmer. Over the past three years, Dr Neville Young deliberately relocated his responsibilities to Gozo, where he has been stationed full-time. Despite being required to arrive in Gozo by 7.30am, he must first punch-in at the FTS offices in Pembroke. Notably, he is the sole Project Manager subject to a punch-in, punch-out system and the only one working full-time in Gozo. The Foundation (FTS) has various on-going projects in Gozo and the Project Management for these projects were all outsourced, having all other Project Managers employed by the Foundation (FTS) stationed in Malta.
- An Administration Officer, a 61 year old employee, who has been working at the Foundation (FTS) for over 8 years. Mr Jonathan Brimmer exhibits a consistently negative attitude towards this employee, often ridiculing and belittling her behind her back. Mr Jonathan Brimmer with the help of Dr Neville Young has made various attempts to dismiss her. They have systematically removed all her duties and responsibilities at the Foundation (FTS), rendering her position effectively redundant. Furthermore, they have initiated procedures for her transfer to another entity without her knowledge.
- Professional and Technical Officers that have experienced discriminated, mistreatment and manipulation throughout the negotiation process of the Collective Agreement. The General Workers Union led them to believe that signing the collective agreement would put an end to all favouritism and abuse within the Foundation (FTS). However this turned out to be a manipulative tactic orchestrated by Dr Neville Young and Mr Jonathan Brimmer, in collusion with the General Workers Union. Unfortunately, the situation worsened significantly after the collective agreement was signed. As a result, these employees were compelled to pursue legal action against the Foundation (FTS). These court cases are currently on-going.
- Managing Officers, exempt from the collective agreement due to their grade, have been misled by Dr Neville Young. There were assured of a separate agreement aimed at enhancing their working conditions and remuneration once the collective agreement for the other employees was finalized. However, following the signing of the collective agreement, Dr Neville Young informed these employees that their roles were no longer necessary and suggested demoting them to a lower position instead. Despite being entrusted with the negotiation of this agreement, the General Workers Union failed to advocate for or protect the positions of these employees. This unresolved situation has lingered for over two years, leading to feelings of frustration and uncertainty.
- A Project Supervisor, aged 64 with over 12 years of service at the Foundation (FTS), had his employment abruptly terminated while on sick leave. Throughout his final years with the Foundation (FTS), the employee struggled with various health issues, necessitating extended periods of sick leave on doctor's orders. Despite this, Mr Jonathan Brimmer, the Human Resources Manager, refused to acknowledge his condition. Instead Mr Brimmer resorted to harassment and threats, warning the employee that failure to return to work immediately would result in termination. Mr Brimmer ultimately terminated his employment. Subsequently, the employee pursued legal action against the Foundation (FTS) and successfully won the case. As a result, the Foundation (FTS) was compelled to compensate the employee €22,000, with the court condemning Mr Jonathan Brimmer, the Human Resources Manager. *Industrial Tribunal - Case number 3673/ET.*

In an attempt to conceal the on-going issues at the Foundation (FTS), Mr Jonathan Brimmer sought the Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD) to secure the HR Quality Mark for the Foundation (FTS). This accolade was bestowed by Ms Karen Muscat Baldacchino, the FHRD CEO, and Mr Matthew Naudi, the FHRD President. Such actions were reckless and irresponsible on the part of the FHRD and manipulative on the part of Mr Jonathan Brimmer. It serves as a mere façade to conceal the prevailing hostility, abuse and discrimination. Shockingly, this undeserved HR Quality Mark achievement was disseminated to all government employees by the office of the Permanent Secretary.

The General Workers Union is fully aware of this situation. Despite employees approaching the GWU Secretary, Ms Riccarda Darmanin numerous times, she has opted to remain silent, unwilling to oppose Dr Neville Young and Mr Jonathan Brimmer. Compounding the issue, the Shop Steward chosen by the employees, Ms Maria Cutajar, misled her colleagues during the negotiations of the collective agreement. The CEO, Dr Neville Young had enticed Ms Maria Cutajar by promoting her to a managerial position with a salary of sixty thousand euro, in exchange for influencing and controlling the collective agreement. With a charming façade and persuasive rhetoric, she skilfully manipulated employees into voting in favour of the collective agreement, ultimately harming other employees. Her actions revealed lack of empathy as she callously exploited trust and vulnerability for personal gain. Despite various requests, the collective agreement was never provided to the employees for analysis before signing. Ms Maria Cutajar continues to hold her role as Shop Steward and will also be involved in negotiating the new collective agreement. However, questioning her position would likely result in abuse and harassment, leaving employees hesitant to challenge her authority.

We have witnessed and experienced several incidents of abuse and misconduct. Such conduct has created a hostile and intimidating atmosphere, which is detrimental to employee morale and well-being. Therefore, we are formally requesting that a thorough investigation be conducted into these matters. All the above mentioned incidents have been well documented. We are prepared to provide any additional information and evidence that may assist in this process. Additionally, we are requesting protection from retaliation as we bring these concerns forward.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to a prompt and effective resolution.

Sincerely,

Employees of the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools